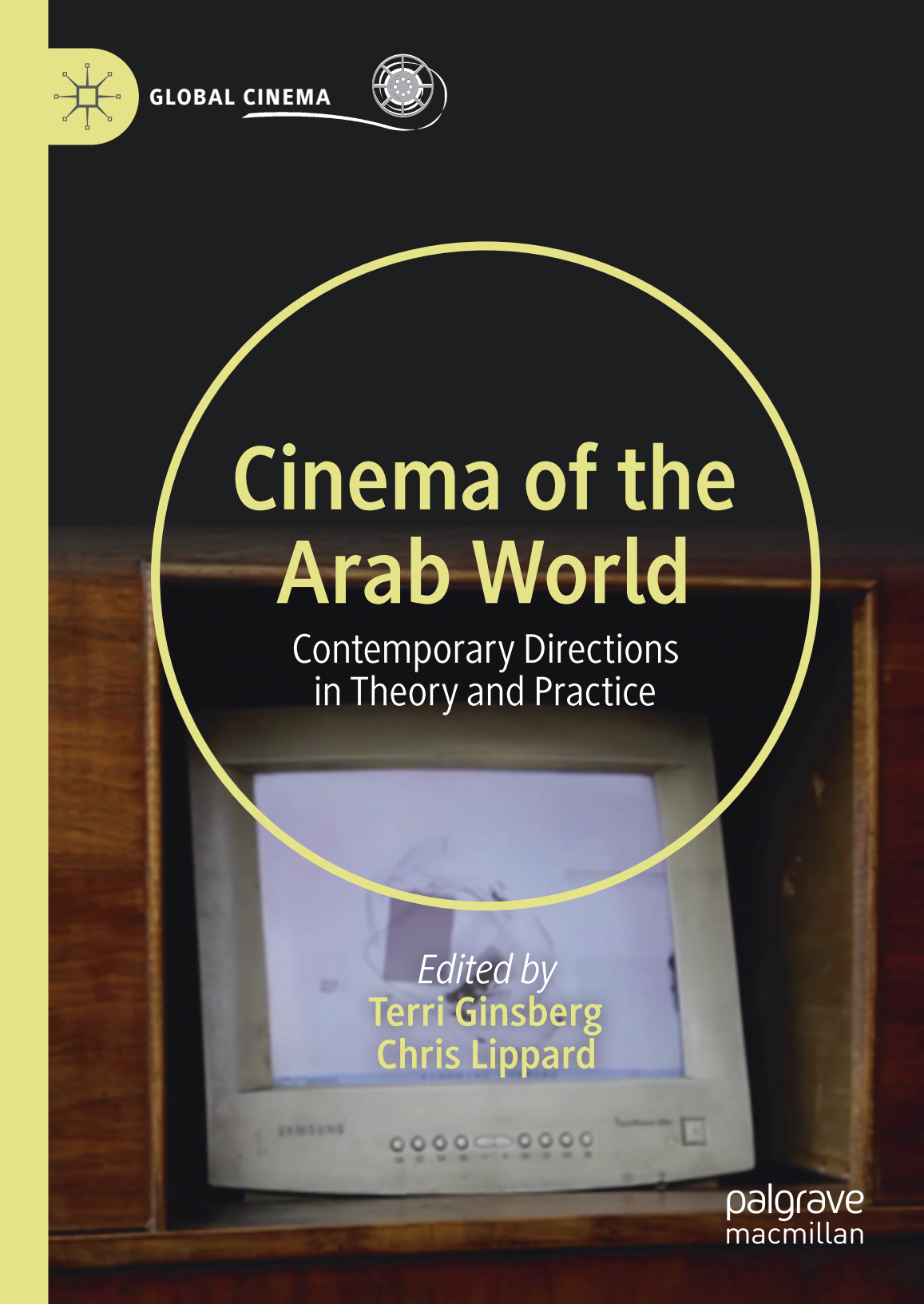

GLOBAL CINEMA
Cinema of the Arab World
Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice
Edited by
Terri Ginsberg
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Global Cinema

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Cinema of the Arab World

Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice

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Introduction

Why now an edited scholarly collection on cinema of the Arab world? The answer may seem obvious considering the recent burgeoning of attention to new Arab filmmaking within the international mediascape, notwithstanding—perhaps because of—the inauspicious political and economic conditions which continue to position the Arab world precariously on the global geopolitical map. Yet it is precisely on account of such conditions, their ideological determinants and their very real effects, that academic scholarship on Arab cinema remains relatively limited, both in substance and frequency. The present volume is an attempt to lend redress to this limitation, although, as we shall explain, the collection as a whole pushes against horizons not easily, or always effectively, traversed.

The volume is conceived at a moment during which Middle Eastern film theory and criticism have begun to take on previously ignored challenges. A modest increase is visible in scholarly engagement with topics and modes of inquiry often considered beyond the pale of acceptable academic discourse. These include engagement with film critical texts written in Arabic (e.g., Yaqub) and moves into cross-cultural translation (e.g., Malas); and historiographic approaches to Arab film history, with particular focus on the militant period (Ginsberg, *Visualizing*; Yaqub; Dickinson, *Arab Film*; Burris), the development of early film industries (e.g., Ghawanmeh), and the "controversial" areas of Palestine (e.g., Ginsberg op cit.; Yaqub; Burris; Saglier, *Paradoxical*; Begbie), Iraq (e.g., Damluji, "The Image"; "Visualizing"; "Power"; Ginsberg, "Media"; "Film"; Makhzoumi and Damluji), and Syria (e.g., Dickinson,

Arab Cinema; Alkassim and Andary; Della Ratta, *Shooting*). One likely reason for this increase is the development of Arab film studies into a bonafide area of academic scholarship, a turn which typically calls out for more substantive historicization and a broader, more inclusive frame of reference. Another determinant is the heightened neoliberalism of Arab regional economies, the neocolonial effects of which are prompting, on one hand, reconsideration of the Arab world's engagement with Third Cinema and, on the other hand, investigations of early, relatively successful attempts within the Arab region to facilitate the growth of national cinemas vis-à-vis Western interference and imperial advance. The long-overdue establishment of cinema studies as an emerging field of academic inquiry within universities located in the Arab world, the vast majority of them U.S.-accredited,[1] has also affected the character and visibility of previously unproblematized issues now circulating within the field. As Suzi Mirgani's and Hadi Gharabaghi's contributions to this volume indicate from albeit divergent perspectives, this phenomenon, too, is overdetermined by, within, and against Western neocolonial enterprise.

Despite this greater interest, publishing in Middle East film studies has not experienced significant growth during this period of renewed attention, and scholarly work on *Arab* cinema in particular remains even scarcer. Recent volumes, most of them published within the past five years, include *Roots of the New Arab Cinema* (Roy Armes, 2018), a phenomenological survey with limited interpretive inclination; *Surviving Images* (Kamran Rastegar, 2015), which extends its scope to the Middle East generally and focuses centrally on cultures of war; *Humor in Middle Eastern Cinema* (Gayatri Devi and Najat Rahman, 2014), which also extends to the region in general and focuses primarily on literary themes; *Film in the Middle East and North Africa* (Joseph Gugler, 2011) and *10 Arab Filmmakers* (Joseph Gugler, 2015), both sociologically inclined edited collections; and *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution* (Nadia Yaqub, 2018), also sociologically inclined; as well as a new edition of *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Viola Shafik, 2016), which updates its discussion of Arab cinemas outside of Egypt in a lengthy new section on 21st-century Arab cinema by country that perforce remains restricted to a survey of current circumstances and developments. *Algerian National Cinema* (Guy Austin, 2012), *Moroccan Noir* (Jonathan Smolin, 2013), *New Tunisian Cinema* (Robert Lang, 2014), *Maghrebs in Motion* (Suzanne Gauch, 2016), *Arab Cinema Travels* (Kay Dickinson, 2016), *The Films of Muhammad Malas* (Samirah Alkassim and Nezar Andary, 2018), *Visualizing the Palestinian*

Struggle (Terri Ginsberg, 2016), *The Palestinian Idea: Film, Media, and the Radical Imagination* (Greg Burris, 2019), and *Arab Modernism as World Cinema: The Films of Moumen Smihi* (Peter Limbrick, 2020), although closer in orientation to our volume for their albeit varied integration of film theoretical approaches to their subjects, are monographs which confine their analyses to particular national cinemas in North Africa, to Syria, or to Palestine and international films regarding it.[2] Similarly, *Hanan al-Cinema* (Laura Marks, 2017) focuses strictly on avant-garde and experimental film and video in the Arab region.

The purpose of this edited collection, by contrast and extension, is to further demarcate and critique the shifting terrain of *Arab* filmmaking and film studies in particular, against its larger social enabling conditions, with an eye to avoiding tendencies that commonly conflate Arab cinema with Middle Eastern cinema—or the cinema of the Muslim world more broadly, in effect reducing the important particularities of respective Arab countries and regions and their interactions and various potentialities for sustaining pan-Arab culture and society. In this context, the distribution of Arab films, themselves increasing in number for reasons similar to those involving Arab film studies, remains minimal within the North American public sphere, even as it has increased somewhat in Europe, often showcased under the rubric of "world cinema." The former phenomenon may well partly be the effect of shifts, overdetermined by neoliberal interests, toward area studies more fully concentrated on East Asian and sub-Saharan African regions, together with heightened, politically motivated resistance to Arab culture within the United States and its regional spheres of influence. Another factor, however, would seem to be a shift in Arab filmmaking itself, necessitated by war-induced economic deprivations and not-unrelated IMF/World Bank structural adjustment initiatives, away from independent and international art vehicles (the latter often funded by European sources, epitomized by Fonds Sud)[3] toward more sustained, less expensive, digital-industrial production, especially local and regional private television-funded works—soap operas,[4] documentaries—aimed at an economically privatized Arab public sphere, along with a concomitant growth in the higher educational training of digital media workers (videographers, graphic designers, animators) in the Arab world.[5] (See Sayfo; Armes 1–8; also Van de Peer.) Whereas the book-length texts cited above do evidence a persistence of critical theoretical interest in Arab film aesthetics and critical traditions, the lack of U.S. interest—and decline in its influence throughout the region[6]—has opened space for an evident E.U.-influenced marketing turn toward audiences located on Europe's own

geopolitical and neocolonial periphery, namely Arab and Muslim communities within the former Eastern bloc, central and western Asia, and North Africa, as well as within Western Europe itself.

The recent Arab uprisings, new and continuing Western interventions,[7] the continued escalating militarization of the region, and the consequent attempts by refugees, either from the region or compelled to pass through it, to reach Europe (resulting in their encampment outside the Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta and exploitation in post-Qaddafi Libya and elsewhere)[8] all bespeak the contemporary pertinence of further attention to Arab cinema. So, too, does the influence of Saudi and Gulf state concerns in the wider Arab world, and various potential geopolitical realignments in the wake of the European and U.S. agreement with Iran—and its abandonment by the United States.[9] The noticeable persistence of films concerning the status and conditions of Arab women, migrant workers and refugees,[10] and the growing importance of documentary and other alternative stylistic approaches[11] are not only evidence of this shifting, contradictory terrain but provide reason to support rather than to further marginalize academic studies in the general area.

Meanwhile attempts, based internally as well as externally, to destroy Middle Eastern cultures and artifacts have become all too common, yet this situation remains under-theorized when not unremarked. One need only consider the destruction of the ancient ruins of Palmyra in Syria, and of numerous Baghdadi museums, both historical and modern (see Baker, Ismael, and Ismael), and, by the same token, the wholesale gentrification of urban centers such as Beirut and Cairo by real estate development companies. More metaphorically, the construction of New Cairo, 20 miles east of the old city, fragments and further displaces the latter's rich history. Indeed, the very fragility of cinema in the digital era invites comparison with such losses. The Arab Image Institute in Beirut has begun attempts to archive primarily photographic images, while films by its co-founder, Palestinian filmmaker Akram Zaatari, have acted as archival documentaries of earlier visual practices.

Still, film archives remain few and far between in the Arab world, at least partially because of the fragility of film institutions—and exhibition venues, the example of apparently declining Gulf region film festivals being most instructive.[12] One consequence of such instability is the difficulty of accessing work that is effectively irretrievable, a phenomenon described by film scholar Peter Limbrick who, in his attempt to recover and exhibit the works of Moroccan filmmaker Mouman Smihi,

must turn to the director himself and then organize screenings, thus also acting as a curator (Limbrick, "Moumen").[13] Along similar lines, Nadia Shabout, discussing Arab visual art in a work which, like ours, draws a distinction between the specificities of the Arab world and the exigencies of Islamic perspectives, suggests provocatively that predominant perceptions of Arab art, in the West as well as in the Arab region, among scholars as well as laypersons, continue to betray a preference for living in the past or the future, not the present (42). In terms of cinema, this claim is perhaps less possible to sustain, but the contradictions and correlations between the colonial, Ottoman, and Islamic past; the neocolonial/liberal, autocratic, and Islamist present; and the uncertain future of the medium, both within and beyond the region, do bespeak a need for problematizing temptations to simply re-emphasize earlier perspectives or speculate on prospective endeavors.

In this context, it bears mentioning that the decline of cinemas providing spaces for the public exhibition of films is an especially acute dilemma in the Arab world. The problem is starkly visible in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where, according to Shafik, the number of screens has fallen to three—with none of them in Gaza (287). In Algeria, fewer than two dozen of the 450-odd theaters extant at the end of the French occupation in 1962 remain in operation today (Rondeleux). In Morocco, any pleasure in the relative success of domestic productions must be substantially qualified by the continued lack of investment in screening facilities; Nadir Bouhmouch and Elias Terrass note that 27 functioning theaters remain, down from a peak number of 240 in 1980, and add that ciné-clubs have almost disappeared. By contrast, in Saudi Arabia, following the first public screening of *Black Panther* (Ryan Coogler) in Riyadh in April 2018 after many years of Saudi Wahhabism's resistance to the medium, plans are underway and infrastructure is being prepared for the construction of hundreds of new movie theaters under the auspices of transnational chains AMC and Vox; clearly the pattern here, unlike most of the region, will be away from private DVD and satellite viewings toward public screenings, a reflection on a national level of the inequalities of income and neoliberal economic policies that have been largely responsible for the decline in screens elsewhere (see "Cinemas in Saudi Arabia"). This trend may well be followed in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where a 2018 exhibit of photographs, among related artifacts, of Emirati movie theaters from the 1940s–1960s, curated by Emirati artist Ammar Al Attarat the NYU Abu

Dhabi Art Gallery ("Cinemas in the UAE"), portends a revival of public film culture in that country.

Historically, however, the intellectually most forceful and convincing advocacy for Arab cinema—and film criticism—has come from outside the state-run structures empowering private enterprise. Nouri Bouzid's "New Realism in Arab Cinema: The Defeat-Conscious Cinema," which first appeared in Arabic in 1988, with an English translation published in *Alif* in 1995, remains to this day the best-known and most discussed manifesto for Arab cinema. Bouzid sets himself firmly on the side of the auteur and against the Egyptian melodramatic tradition, as he explicates the nature of Arab cinema that he sees as characterized by the inescapable awareness of defeat and weakness. As Nouri Gana has argued, "the value of cinema for Bouzid wagers on the powers of powerlessness, its visual politics of intervention in and interpellation of the triumphal hold of global capitalism. Cinema in the Arab world may remain for some a form of popular entertainment, a kind of detour from the daily chores, but in the case of Bouzid, it is a necessary and vital detour—really, a retour to the pressing preoccupations of Arab contemporaneity in an increasingly globalized and globalizing modernity" (271).

In the spirit of Bouzid's argument, though also moving beyond the politics of auteurism per se and of cinematic realism, the essays comprising this volume have been selected for their dual function of contesting and filling gaps within the extant scholarship from and regarding the Arab region. While all of the contributions share a generalized critique of Eurocentric and orientalist approaches to the subject matter, the existence between and among them of occasional discursive and theoretical differences partly motivates our decision to arrange them into four interrogative "blocs" which frame particular, intertextually related discursive areas, as suggested by their titles: "History, Positionality, Critique"; "Festival and Nation Reconsidered"; "From Resistance to Entrenchment and Back Again"; and "Political Aesthetics of State and Revolution in Egypt." Within this framework, the relational character of the chapters is emphasized; they do not represent separate units but are positioned differentially in order to foreground their salient epistemological dis/connections and thus their critical challenges to one another, especially with respect to the persisting problematics of neocolonialism, racism, patriarchy, and transnationalism.

So, for example, in Bloc I ("History, Positionality, Critique"), Suzi Mirgani's critical appreciation of films produced by Gulf state film and

educational institutes, specifically the Doha Film Institute, is juxtaposed on one side with Hadi Gharabaghi's critical genealogy of U.S. government interference in the Arab filmmaking sector, focusing on the Syracuse University Audiovisual Mission's "documentary diplomacy" project, and on the other side with Wissam Mouawad's critique of the "postcard effect" of transnational funding on the Lebanese film industry. Similarly in Bloc II ("Festival and Nation Reconsidered"), Patricia Caillé's tracing of the relationship between national and international film culture activated through historical analysis of the left-wing *Fédération Tunisienne des ciné-clubs* and the annual *Festival international du film amateur de Kélibia* is placed into epistemological dialogue with Viviane Saglier's exploration of the politics and paradoxes underlying recent instances of Palestinian film festivals; and, in dialectical turn, with Chris Lippard's critique of tropes of mobility and visibility in the newly emergent, still heavily marginalized (trans)national cinema of the increasingly settler-colonized, Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara, as sometimes presented at the FiSahara Human Rights Film Festival.

At the same time, connections between the essays serve to qualify and, in some instances, transcend such divisions. Although Bloc IV ("Political Aesthetics of State and Revolution in Egypt"), for example, does in fact direct a contemporary gaze at Egyptian cinema, thus suggesting a national focus, its theoretical politics are inflected by, and harken back to, those of Gharabaghi; while essays that discuss Maghrebi and Levantine cinema are not delimited by section, as prompted by our interest in problematizing a predominantly national(ist) focus and in encouraging the sort of pan-regional comparisons that are indeed necessitated within most scholarship in those areas. As perhaps any collection devoted to Arab culture must, then, these essays represent critically intersecting challenges to those persisting discourses that rehearse prevailing perspectives on film and film criticism from and regarding the Arab world on the basis of absented and marginalized, often misrecognized, concepts, categories, subject positions, and practices—such as those revolving around ideologically loaded terms: women, Islam, terrorism, colonialism, censorship, homosexuality, Palestine, labor, revolution, and Third World.

It is also for this reason that the essays selected for inclusion in this collection represent perspectives from scholars of and from the region as well as from its outside. These include established scholars as well as new scholars, all of whom are engaged actively in the analysis and critique of the region's cinematic public sphere. Their contributions employ

a range of philosophical and critical theories and methodologies and vary, sometimes divergently, in their rhetorical approaches as well as in the breadth—and depth—of their analyses. Notwithstanding their diversity and, at times, contestatory positioning regarding the mentioned key issues, they also converge in their intellectual aim to shed much needed critical light on contemporary conditions of cinematic production and reception in the Arab world.

A critical awareness of the transnational entanglements of filmmaking in the Arab world is in this way a constant presence in this volume. Whereas Roy Armes argues in his most recent book on the region that foreign-trained Arab filmmakers "have been able to bring an intelligence shaped partly by foreign education and training to bear on the problems of their countries of origin and to offer real and original insights based on their unique insider/outsider status" (xix), the picture is less rosy when one shifts focus from the value of gaining a foreign eye on domestic problems to the obverse matter of pursuing foreign funding (primarily though not exclusively from French sources). Hence, Suzanne Gauch in her book on North African cinema argues that European-funded films have been assumed by Maghrebi audiences "to pander to Euro-American stereotypes and colonial and imperialist interests," though she identifies other problems besetting domestically produced films, typically seen as propaganda for the government and often produced at the expense of variously marginalized communities in an effort to bolster human rights and liberal credentials abroad (4). In the face of this contradiction, evident across much of the Arab world, we are tempted to recall the late Egyptian director Youssef Chahine's dictum that "the money can come from Hell if it wants to" (Chahine and Massad 90). However, figures like Chahine—and now, perhaps Bouzid—constitute a tiny minority of established film auteurs who have had the power to resist both censorship and self-censorship. As Armes' work over several volumes has made clear, and as the cinematic output of Egyptian director Tawfik Saleh remains a paradigmatic instance,[14] the majority of Arab filmmakers have not been able to sustain such careers and make substantial bodies of work outside of the still-dominant Egyptian industry or of international funding circuits.

A relatively new trend in this general direction is the receipt of financial backing by many Arab filmmakers today—sometimes predominantly or exclusively—from Gulf-housed, and formerly film festival-associated funds (see Note 12), such as the Doha Film Institute and SANAD in Abu Dhabi. For example, important new films released in 2017 by established

filmmakers with multiple narrative features to their credit, including Annemarie Jacir's *Wajib*, Faouzi Bendsaidi's *Volubilis*, and Nacer Khemir's *Whispering Sands*, all received completion money from the Doha Film Institute. *Wajib* also benefited from SANAD, Enjaaz (Dubai), the Busan Film Festival fund, the Tribeca Film Institute, and the Palestinian Film Fund—yet it is ostensibly a film about *Palestinian* identity.[15]

The volume returns in its final section (Bloc 4) to a selection of mostly domestically funded and produced Egyptian works that also confront contradictions of contemporary Arab socio-culture. Isabelle Freda's essay on the famed Egyptian film industry comedy starring Adel Imam, *Terrorism and Kebab* (Sherif Arafa, 1992), deploys concepts drawn from the writings of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Hannah Arendt to reveal the film's "Chaplinesque" critique of the Egyptian state apparatus. Likewise, Iman Hamam's theorization of technologies of violence and surveillance in Egyptian films about the October 1973 war, the prison industrial complex, and the state media apparatus draws from contemporary scholarship on media, forensic architecture, and space to provide a critical historiography of the role of cinematic *technē* in simulating interpellations of institutionalized nation-statism. Similarly, Terri Ginsberg's comparative analysis of the differently positioned Egyptian documentaries, *Cairo Chronicles* (Tania Kamal-Eldin, 2004) and *Out on the Street* (Jasmina Metwaly/Philip Rizk, 2015), the first one released in the years leading up to the 2011 Arab uprisings, and the second produced after their repression, draws from decolonial, feminist, queer, Marxist and critical theory to interrogate common misrecognitions which have failed to understand adequately these films' political–aesthetic interventions into the effects of neoliberalism in the Egyptian socio-economic sphere.

Furthermore, while the collection as a whole acknowledges the current state of narrative fiction filmmaking in the region, as, for example, Wissam Mouawad's essay on Lebanese national cinema attests, it also foregrounds the increasing significance of documentary practice to state-based strategies of exploiting film to increase national influence and prestige in and beyond the region. This aim is also reflected in a preponderance of essays in the volume on documentary movements and modalities. In addition to the already mentioned contributions by Caillé and Ginsberg are the essays gathered in the volume's third section, consisting of Kevin Dwyer's self-questioning reevaluation of anthropological methods in the context of a burgeoning of Moroccan documentaries both state-supported and state-monitored; Samirah Alkassim's critical

auteurist approach to the *oeuvre* of Syrian documentarian Omar Amiralay as it converges intellectually, at the register of performativity, and politically, as a projection of Palestine solidarity, with the fictional works of Lebanese filmmaker Randal Chahal Sabbagh; and Jeremy Randall's political–aesthetic analysis of the interpellation of collective subjectivity in the Palestine solidarity documentaries of revolutionary Lebanese Druze filmmaker and activist Maroun Baghdadi.

As the latter two descriptions elucidate, the volume's interventionism is likewise evident in the importance of Palestine to the concerns of several of the contributions—not only Alkassim and Randall but also Saglier's nuanced critique of the contemporary international Palestine film festival phenomena, as well as the comparisons established in Hamam's interrogation of how 1973 October war films and their legacy in post-2013 independent filmmaking signify Egyptian state control and the problematics of the national interest in Palestine. In view of this attention to Palestine across the collection, it is fair to say, apropos of John Pilger's by-now proverbial claim in his 2002 documentary, *Palestine Is Still the Issue*, that if the serious study of Arab cinema turns on an epistemological axis that articulates the dialectical relationship of the region to its (neo)colonial history, Palestine may very well lay at its crux. Radiating out from the collection's overlapping and intersecting layers are questions of Arab cinematic representation of an array of issues representing moments in the dialectic, with its ramifications for cinematic indigeneity (e.g., Lippard), popular struggles and social movements, whether for an entire people or for labor or sex-gender rights and recognition (e.g., Ginsberg; Randall; Freda), and the development of autonomous, potentially socially transformative modes of national (e.g., Mouawad; Mirgani; Dwyer), independent (e.g., Alkassim; Hamam), transnational (e.g., Saglier; Lippard), and collective (e.g., Caillé; Ginsberg) cinematic production.

The volume's interventionist character is also reflected in a narrative thread, woven throughout the collection (and this Introduction), concerning the political economy of cinematic funding and exhibition. While Caillé traces certain contradictory developments within the Tunisian ciné-club movement, Saglier renders salient the contradictions of international film festival culture as they overdetermine the tenor and direction of Palestinian cinema; and Lippard problematizes the reappropriated cinema-caravan phenomenon that has nonetheless enabled Sahrawi cinema to build both national and international audience and

critical attention amidst ongoing conditions of displacement and dispossession. Dwyer, questioning the role of the participant-observers, considers what anthropology can—but has largely failed to—learn from cinema; while the focus of Alkassim, Randall, Hamam, Caillé, and Ginsberg on independent, amateur, and experimental films stands to call into question the "world cinema" phenomenon, with its preference for hybridizations of Hollywood, European art cinema, and Third World cinema. Similarly, whereas Mirgani asserts the subversive potentials of transnationally funded film institutes, the essays by Mouawad—and in a somewhat different context by Gharabaghi—are wary of the ways in which such funding may condition the possibilities of (inter)national cinema development.[16]

Control of movement is yet another thread, related to the problematics of transnationalism, that runs through several of the essays. Explored explicitly and in detail in Lippard's account of Sahrawi cinema, it is also important to Saglier's analysis of the potentialities of Palestine film festivals and in Hamam's mapping of technologies of war and peace in Egyptian cinema. Accordingly, restrictions on movement created by the Israeli apartheid wall and checkpoints in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in the Moroccan berm that runs the length of Western Sahara provide the most obvious manifestations of such control, but it is important, too, to note the reorganization and diminishment of public space following the "Arab Spring," in which the gathering of people in public squares was a common link during the protests.[17]

Generally speaking, then, the contributions to this volume signal a call to re-envision the ways in which Arab cinema has been looked at previously. While we continue to recognize the importance of the signature Arab films—*Chronicle of the Years of Embers*, *The Mummy*, *The Dupes*, *Wedding in Galilee*, *The Nightingale's Prayer*, *Silences of the Palace*—we turn more often in this volume to analysis of both the more popular (*Terrorism and Kebab*, *Where Do We Go Now ?*) and the less so (*Cairo Chronicles*, *Out on the Street*, the films of Baghdadi and of Sabbagh), and from the better known festivals to those that do not fit the standard model. At the aesthetic register, this re-envisaging bespeaks a much-needed appreciation of, and respect for, theoretical praxis in both filmmaking and film criticism—in a sense, as Kay Dickinson ("At What Cost") has argued, that should not be constrained by the dictates of European rationalism, phenomenological reductionism, or the idealist universalism which serves as their philosophical foundation. Hence

Gharabaghi's excavation of the U.S. National Security Archives (USIS, or, in the Arab world and elsewhere, the U.S. Information Agency [USIA]) does not simply fill a knowledge gap but demands a fundamental re-understanding of the very enabling conditions of coming to know films produced in the Arab region. In the context of this radical problematization, Mirgani's, Saglier's, and Mouawad's respective critiques of transnational production, distribution, and exhibition tendencies and practices are illuminated. Likewise, Hamam's discursive and creative historiographic tracing of the military–industrial apparatus within a range of Egyptian war films enables constructive reinterpretations of Randall's and Alkassim's analyses of, respectively, affectivity and performativity in Palestine solidarity films. Similarly, Freda's intertextually mediated exposure and critique of radical excess in a popular mainstream Egyptian film renders salient the class component of Lippard's critical exposition of the newly emergent Sahrawi cinema, and the queer component of Ginsberg's re-reading of propaganda, nostalgia, performance, and observationalism in two contemporary Egyptian documentaries. Last but not least, Dwyer's self-reflexive positioning of his anthropological gaze at recent Moroccan documentaries reminds us how impossible it is to read any of the volume's contributions—or any of their subject films—in ideological abstraction.

It is this series of significatory effects, facilitated by the conceptual organization and arrangement of the collection, which qualifies our titular claim to offering "contemporary directions" in the field of Arab film studies as one that is substantive rather than trivial.

Terri Ginsberg
Chris Lippard

Notes

1. Namely, The American University in Cairo, American University of Beirut, and, much more recently, New York University Abu Dhabi, Northwestern University in Qatar, Georgetown University in Qatar, Zayed University, American University of Kuwait, and American University of Sharjah.
2. A related area of research has begun to produce texts on new visual media practices in the Arab world, for example Downey, which carries a decidedly activist bent.

3. Additional examples of European funding vehicles are: Eurimages; Creative Europe; Euromed Audiovisual; Hubert Bals Fund; World Cinema Fund; Creative Europe—MEDIA; IBF Europe—IDFA Bertha Fund; Soros Foundation—Middle East and North Africa Initiative Grants; Francophone Film Development Fund; and ACP Cultures Plus. As Roy Armes has stated, "an absolutely crucial role in the shifting definition of what constitutes an Arab film has been played by French government policies" (xix). See also Mouawad (in this volume).
4. Soap operas (*musulsalat*) traditionally air on Arab television during Ramadan. Egyptian television has long produced them, increasingly with financial backing from the Gulf states, which also produce their own. Syrian soap operas have flourished since the 1990s; for discussion of their current direction in light of the civil war, see Della Ratta ("What"). Turkishsoap operas also maintain their popularity in the Arab world (see Tokyay).
5. Training centers and programs that exemplify this development include Doha Film Institute, Cairo Higher Institute of Cinema, and the now largely abandoned Red Sea Institute of Cinematic Arts in Aqaba, Jordan, jointly administered by the University of Southern California and the Jordanian Royal Film Commission.
6. The question of declining U.S. influence in the Arab region is a controversial one. Looked at militarily, the U.S. is still certainly a global imperium (see Note 7 below). In recent years, however, U.S. *economic* influence has been seriously challenged insofar as international geopolitical alignments have shifted from centers of power based in the nation-state structures rooted in capitalist industry to those based in and around the transnational (including media) corporations and cartels, an increasing number of which are led by Europeans as well as Arabs from the region and which are rooted in conditions that have enabled financial speculation to become the dominant means for producing surplus-value (Wolff).
7. Although the U.S. government has recently announced the withdrawal of troops from Syria, President Trump vetoed Congress's calls for withdrawing support from the Saudi- and UAE-led actions against the Houthi rebels in Yemen which have led to wretched conditions in the country. U.S. support for this war followed many years of drone attacks in the country. Notably, the current U.S. administration also recently recognized Israeli control of the Golan Heights, captured from Syria during the Six-Day War of 1967. (Incidents such as a U.S.-facilitated meeting between Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabiaand the UAE in Warsaw in 2019 would appear to illustrate some convergence in foreign policy goals between the parties involved,

principally in regard to opposition to Iran. Israeli ambitions to further marginalize the Palestinians and sunder pan-Arab support for their cause clearly dovetail with this alliance.) These recent activities both reflect and refute aspects of Zionist ideologue Bernard-Henri Lévy's commentary in his 2019 book, *The Empire and the Five Kings: America's Abdication and the Fate of the World*, which dissimulates the world-systemic determinants of changes in U.S. military and economic strategy, in a manner reminiscent of Cold War rhetoric, as an abandonment of Israel (which Lévy conflates with Jews) in favor of "Chinese, Arabs, Iranians, Ottomans (Turks) and Russians" (Hobson).

8. European ambitions to create processing centers for potential migrants in north Africa, especially in the Sahel, have met with push-back from African Union states; however, the promise of development funding may yet lead some countries to sign up for the proposal (see Boffey).
9. See Landler.
10. Examples of films concerning the status and conditions of Arab women, migrant workers and refugees include *Fatenah* (Ahmad Habash, Palestine, 2009), *Champ of the Camp* (Mahmoud Kaabour, UAE/Qatar/Lebanon, 2013), *Feminism Inshallah: A History of Arab Feminism* (Feriel Ben Mahmoud, France, 2014), *The Nile Hilton Incident* [*Cairo Confidential*] (Tarik Saleh, Morocco/Sweden/Denmark/Germany/France, 2017), *The Feeling of Being Watched* (Assia Boundaoui, US, 2018), and *Aziza* (Soudada Kaadan, Lebanon/Syria, 2019).
11. Examples of documentaries and "alternative" stylistic approaches include *Crop* (Johanna Domke/Marouan Omara, Egypt/Germany/Denmark, 2013) and *Nation Estate* (Larissa Sansour, Palestine/Denmark, 2013). See Hamam (in this volume).
12. Following the demise of the short-lived Doha-Tribeca film festivalin Qatar (2009–2012) in 2015, at a time when many commentators had begun to see the Abu Dhabi International Film Festival (ADIFF) as potentially more adventurous than its older rival in Dubai, the ADIFF stopped operation quite suddenly (Fahim). In 2019, following a postponement the previous year supposedly motivated by a need to "redefine" the event, the Dubai International Film Festival followed suit, with commentators reporting unanswered and unreturned phone calls in a scenario eerily reminiscent of 2016 ("Dubai"). The Marrakesh festival in Morocco also skipped a year—in 2017—but resumed, as star-studded as ever, in 2018. More long-standing, less glitzy, Arab festivals such as Carthage and Cairo continue however, with rumors rife regarding the possibility of fresh initiatives including a reinvention of ADIFF, potential new festivals in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and a more expansive Cairo under its new director, Mohamed Hefzy—himself having come under widespread local criticism,

his audience counts plummeting on account of a resulting boycott, for cow-towing to censorship requests and for involving Israelis in the festival (Fekry) in an effort to compete with Egyptian billionaire Naguib Sawiris' exclusive, red-carpet El Gouna Film Festival, held in the titular Red Sea resort city.

13. Other examples of grappling with such loss include the "Lost" Archives of Palestinian Films, which have become the subject of several documentaries, most recently *Trip along Exodus* [*Rihla fil Rahil*] (Hind Shoufani, Palestine/Lebanon/Syria/UAE/US, 2014) and *Looted and Hidden: Palestinian Archives in Israel* (Rona Sela, Israel, 2017) (see Yaqub 198–202), and the new online Egyptian media archive, *858* (Resch). Of relevance in this context is the new availability of USIS/USIA films produced in the Arab region as revealed by research being conducted by Hadi Gharabaghi (in this volume).
14. Following the censorship of two films he made that were critical of the Free Officers regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Saleh decided leave Egypt for Syria and Iraq, where he made some of his most renowned cinematic works—that were nonetheless so controversial that his career would never regain its earlier momentum (Ginsberg and Lippard 352–353).
15. A "user review" of *Wajib* on *Imdb* is entitled "Good World Cinema About Palestine" (https://m.imdb.com/title/tt6695212/).
16. As suggested above, much previous optimism about the future of film exhibition in the Gulf region has been tempered not only by the lack of availability of non-mainstream films in the luxurious theater network but also by signs of backtracking with regard to the support of cinema more generally.
17. Most notable in this regard has been the demolition of the central monument and subsequent redesign of the Pearl Roundabout in Manama after the violent suppression of protests in Bahrain.

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BLOC I

History, Positionality, Critique

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CHAPTER 1

Documentary Diplomacy and Audiovisual Modernization: A Cold War Genealogy of Arab Cinema during the 1950s through American Declassified Archives

Hadi Gharabaghi

1.1 Documentary Diplomacy

During the 1940s and in the course of the transition from World War II to the Cold War, a governing investment in the wartime weaponizing of documentary format and value emerged and led to a global proliferation of documentaries transmitted through embassies by the U.S. government and the contractual services of many American applied academic knowledge-intelligence and philanthropic think tanks, university film programs, and nongovernmental documentary entities. These missions invested in nontheatrical distribution and local filmmaking, trained filmmakers, and established pockets of documentary infrastructure that inevitably played a role in media governance and the making and transformation of national cinemas. These practices of documentary discourse

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all shared a diplomatic feature that packaged weaponizing strategies of psychological warfare for foreigners behind the euphemistic facade of cultural, notably film, diplomacy. As a result, pockets of documentary culture emerged among the Arab states, as in other parts of the world, through the bureaucratic involvement of the U.S. government, first within embassies and subsequently in separate centers of cultural and informational activity such as the United States Information Service (USIS). This chapter employs the concept of documentary diplomacy to draw attention to and take account of uneven power relations among binational documentary operations; the multiplicity of practices involved in the unfolding of documentary cultures; the fundamental role of diplomatic discourse as a strategy of funding film technology, infrastructure, expertise, and ideological control; and the role of individual and collective agencies such as American and Arab media experts, Arab talent, and Arab audiences at various levels of bureaucratic discourse.

The U.S. government had limited interest in any diplomatic involvement in the Middle East prior to World War II (J. Hart 56). Furthermore, the country was among the last Western powers to establish government-run cultural centers through embassies by the late 1930s (McMurry 57–60; J. Hart 54–56). Through a range of media events, these centers also organized nontheatrical screenings of various documentaries, including anti-Nazi political propaganda (Mayer 206–208). For the U.S. government, wartime documentary campaigns served training, instructional, and propaganda purposes. During this era, a governing investment in weaponizing documentary format and value emerged with the help of growing applied academic knowledge-intelligence through academic think tanks and domestic and overseas documentary campaigns. This effort continued with even greater intensity after the war, despite the termination of domestic propaganda in the United States (Simpson 5–9; Thomson 11). In addition to earlier functions, documentary's purported claim to truth and its link to representing real people (exemplified as working-class Americans) enabled the U.S. government to claim that it was defending the "typical American" against stereotyping and misrepresentation in the Hollywood gangster genre by taking over not only the distribution but also the production of documentaries after the war (Gilman 45; Hansen 28; Fitzpatrick 582–592; Benton 378; Woelfel 88–94; Wanger 109–110; Shuster 12–13; Lehman 26; Priory A1).

The wartime experience of cultural diplomacy through embassies and the rise of the doctrine of Cold War containment emboldened the U.S.

government to expand its governing investment in diplomatic spheres not through formal channels of foreign diplomacy but through direct involvement in the funding and sponsorship of media events, including documentary, and modernization programs. By 1951 this method had become an alternative approach to traditional practices of official foreign policy. A spokesperson in the Department of State explained this strategy to the newly formed Film Advisory Committee[1] comprised of representatives of the motion picture industry to justify the use of film as an arm of diplomacy:

> The essential thing about these programs we are talking about here is that they are new arms of foreign policy, that this is a new kind of diplomacy, that we talk about showing films or having educational exchange or running a *Voice of America* because we are going over the heads of governments, we are going through governments, we are going around governments, we are talking very directly to their people. ("Transcript of Proceedings" A57)

The emerging euphemism of media diplomacy that succeeded a wartime era of direct anti-Nazi political propaganda differed in one fundamental respect: it operated more diffusely under the facade of an apolitical campaign of modernization as a new propaganda strategy in order to ensure its apparent break from earlier techniques. Technical assistance and mass education became the containment campaign for a Cold War era in the hope of publicizing capitalist tropes normatively and rendering the communist ones as abnormal. Binational documentary projects passed as technical assistance as well; they satisfied strategically the postwar era's desperate need for modernization throughout the world, including the Arab states. In this respect, campaigns of cultural and economic diplomacy went hand in hand after the war. They enforced a strategy of setting up aid packages and using them as instruments of hegemonic control. They demonstrate a pattern of welfare imperialism via invitation during this era.

Most noticeably, the early Cold War saw a governing investment in documentary format and value for its purported association with training, instruction, voice-over newsreel journalism, and lecture-format education. The following passage is unambiguous with respect to the U.S. Government's intentions to exploit the concept of education as a strategy

of psychological warfare by Cold War media diplomacy planners, while also demonstrating the limited effectiveness of weaponizing education and technical assistance among a group of American contractors on the ground:

> Welfare workers, educationalists, technicians occasionally confuse means (improving health, education; demonstrating "techniques") with the end (to contain communism). In the field, technical ability in personnel is of major importance compared with dependability and judgment, and the tendency to think of USIE [United States Information and Educational Exchange Program] as a welfare service is conspicuous. When such confusion of purpose enters policy it confirms the misunderstanding…Personnel in USIE might test every project by the question: IS IT THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS AVAILABLE TO CONTAIN COMMUNISM? This fundamental purpose must be impressed on our minds. Recruiting must not neglect it…At the war's end U.S.I.E. replaced O.W.I. and Psychological Warfare. It was planned and organized for a peace-time job. Since the Cold War developed, U.S.I.E. has not undergone the retooling required to meet it. ("Supplement to Cairo U.S.I.E." 4)

Embedded within binational contractual programs of technical assistance and modernization, documentary operations led to the development and growth of cultures of film viewing, production, and training that inevitably influenced, one way or another, the emergence and growth of national cinemas and top-down institutions of media governance, often in the midst of revolutionary changes and solidifying power in Arab nation-states. Funding these and other campaigns of documentary diplomacy throughout the world was proposed to U.S. lawmakers and passed as the Smith-Mundt Act in 1948 (Parry-Giles).[2] Accordingly, documentary missions under the rubric of cultural diplomacy functioned primarily as a euphemism for overt and covert means of disrupting, weakening, and primarily containing communist ideology among Arab populations. The normalizing discourse, which justified the ideology of Cold War capitalism, in many memoranda identified the young generation as having to face "anarchic distractions and threats" of leftist politics in addition to the threats posed by Hollywood films. Despite the propaganda warfare protocol of these operations, however, a majority of the documentary output was cultural, modernizing, and how-to agricultural films. These documentary

missions promoted institutionally and bureaucratically a Cold War ideology of liberal capitalism, and as such, their influence over the development of national cinemas should be investigated through geographically situated inquiries into production culture, aesthetics, and infrastructure within and among Arab states.

Thematically, documentary films introduced to Arab audiences served a number of objectives. They operated at the level of scientific explanation, technical and agricultural instruction, hygiene training, and newsreel journalism, the last of which sometimes aroused suspicions of propaganda. At the level of the infrastructure of screening, processing, and production, documentary discourse became firmly involved in the broader modernization package of audiovisual education and screen culture as well.

1.2 The Historical Context

This period of the late 1940s–1950s marks a shift in the perception of the United States among Arab countries from anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist to being an emerging imperial state. In the late 1940s, the Israel–Palestine conflict opened a wound at the heart of the Arab world. Arab public held the U.S. government responsible for the takeover of Palestinian lands and the unfolding crisis of Palestinian refugees. In turn, the U.S. government responded by establishing modernization aid packages for both the newly established state of Israel and for Arab states.

More than any other factor, including the various coups d'état in the region, the entry of the U.S. government into a relation of documentary diplomacy with the Arab region was influenced by the crisis of Palestinian refugee camps during the early 1950s. Mention of this issue is peppered throughout the bureaucratic memoranda of the offices of USIS and USIE in Arab countries. The available paper trail often documents in detail how a continuous concern with the Palestinian crisis influences local press responses to U.S. publicity events that involve humanitarian aid and documentary projects about Palestinian refugees. One memorandum, titled "The First Semiannual Evaluation Report for USIS–Baghdad in June of 1950," reflects this shift. The memorandum recognizes the pro-Zionist American diplomatic position with regard to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands as a serious obstacle to the USIS objective of promoting friendship through educational programs:

> The political scene in Iraq presents a background for USIE activities which is unique because of one factor: a pervading sense of antagonism towards the United States for its Palestine policy. It is this single factor—which undoubtedly has similar ramifications in all other Arab states—that requires information and educational work to be carried out in a strange combination of friendliness and resentful emotion. The latter feeling, while now well below the surface reactions of the majority of Iraqis, is still a large stumbling block for the USIE program. It is always apparent that this political consideration is deep-rooted at the present time and that it is likely to remain so indefinitely. There is, nevertheless, a basic friendliness among most Iraqis for things American, and it is this attitude nurtured on a personal plane which enables the USIE program to meet with varying success in all media except radio.
>
> The economic conditions of Iraq are notably bad though potentially very good. Set against this background, a wealthy, well-developed country such as the United States comes up for the usual reactions, both those of admiration and of defensive dislike. Epithets referring to the United States as imperialistic, capitalistic, monopolistic, money-mad, ring out constantly from a small but vocal minority. ("First Semi-Annual Evaluation 1")

This type of self-aggrandizing diplomatic position pervades the American assessment of Iraqis and other Arab states throughout these years. This period marks the emergence of a hegemonic American diplomacy that is well aware of the charges of imperialism against it yet embarks on pursuing imperialistic policy as if in utter self-denial. Gestures of friendship, accordingly, are theorized through such discourse without any ethical concern about tarnishing the founding anti-imperialist narrative of American independence through which the people of the Middle East and elsewhere have measured the contribution of the American experience to global democracy.

Furthermore, a USIE Cairo memorandum of approximate date reports on the planning of a photographic exhibition of a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza and the visit of the United States ambassador for publicity purposes:

> This was his first contact and opportunity to comment on refugee matters. Excellent reaction from the press was secured and it was remarked upon that but one other Chief of Mission in Cairo took the trouble to attend. In connection with this visit a cooperation was worked out for distribution of a special issue of *Proche-Orient* with these pictures to individuals and organizations in the United States. ("Press Publications" 4)

Another USIE Cairo memorandum of May 1950 reports a wave of over 50 percent critical responses to "American pro-Israelism [and] impeialism [sic]" in the aftermath of an offensive article in *Life* (April 10) and *Saturday Evening Post* (April 29). As the report states, the articles were received in Egypt as "insulting to the throne and to national pride." The USIE memorandum's assessment and recommendation is that "Egyptian emotions rise quickly but subside easily if left unstimulated. It is hoped the target will steady again, permitting U.S.I.E. media to resume whatever effectiveness they may have" ("Semi-Annual Evaluation" 2).

A USIS article on George Washington in early 1950 prompted a nuanced critical response from *Al-Nasr*, a Damascus daily, that held the U.S. government accountable for the reputation of Americans among Arab people for their democratic values:

> George Washington had a strong belief in his country's right to independence and union. In the history of his country, he stands as an ideal and excellent figure. In congratulating the American nation on the occasion of its celebrating the anniversary of the birthday of its first emancipator, we find ourselves strongly inclined to express a faithful and frank feeling that makes us sorry for the deviation of the American policy from the principles established by Washington. When such principles appeal to the American nation as to "justice and good will toward all nations…," we enquire whether America has complied with these principles in handling the Palestine question in causing thousands to leave their homes, children to lose their parents and possessions, and lands to be encroached upon. ("Report…March, 1950" 1)

Another notable example is *Al-Nasr*'s response to the USIE's release of the speech by Undersecretary of Defense Dean Acheson in November 1950: "The wording and style of the release indicate that the State Department views Zionist atrocities with little concern as though they were slight incidents which did not require any action other than an informal discussion of the matter with a representative of the Israeli Embassy in Washington" ("Report … June, 1950" 1). Similarly, *Al-Ayyam*, another Damascus daily, addresses the U.S. support of Palestinian refugees in June 1950:

> The allotment of a few dozens of millions of dollars to the refugees are a sign of sympathetic feeling which should be appreciated, despite the unfortunate memories which are associated with it. However, President

> Truman's feelings would have been nobler had he or his Government made efforts to repatriate the refugees to their homes and to help them recover their property and cultivate their own lands. The repatriation of the refugees would not cost so many millions of dollars. It could be achieved were America to exert pressure on Israel and urge it to execute the United Nations resolutions and abandon its attitude of disregard and indifference to this international organization. If America exerted such pressure, it would save one million Arab refugees from remaining in a state of permanent need for assistance. As it is, the refugees are now desperate and resentful and they yearn to see justice done to them. (ibid. 2)

Official memoranda of documentary diplomacy usually treat Arabs' collective resentment with bureaucratic processing and solutions in the form of manipulative media packages that aim at either distraction and collective forgetting or humanistic glorification while documentaries sponsored by both the United States Operation Mission (USOM) and the USIS aim to generate goodwill among Arab people about Americans.[3]

1.3 The Sponsoring Institutions

Managing documentary operations often fell under the jurisdiction of multiple national institutions. The exemplary U.S. government institutions involved in the early Cold War development projects in the Arab world were those responsible for the planning and implementation of both technical assistance and media governance. Besides the early role played by embassies during and shortly after World War II and the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) covert media operations during the 1950s and after, the most important institutions were the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR), associated with Columbia University; the Syracuse Audiovisual Center, associated with Syracuse University; International Motion Picture within the Department of State (IMP); the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), known as the Point Four Program in the Middle East; USOM; the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA); USIE; and the United States Information Agency (USIA).[4] (Point Four changed names several times until it was stabilized under the title of the United States Agency for International Development [USAID] by the late 1950s.)[5] Nongovernmental entities such as philanthropic foundations and universities also participated either directly or indirectly in documentary operations among the Arab states. Most notably, the Syracuse Audiovisual Center started its binational government contract

of documentary film production and training in Iran in 1950 and soon expanded its projects to documentary missions and audiovisual education in Arab countries. Several other universities also provided personnel and equipment for these missions. Collectively, these institutions oversaw various projects while working with other American governmental and nongovernmental entities. Nongovernmental entities started with binational contracts and gradually expanded their regional influence through additional documentary or audiovisual projects. On the other side of the contract, the local governments—often in desperate need of modernization—plugged into campaign packages of documentary diplomacy as means of facilitating and training. The multinational documentary missions were managed primarily by governmental organizations in Arab states, generally ministries of culture, education, information, or the interior.

1.4 The Public Opinion Survey as Intelligence Gathering in the Arab Region (1950–1951)

Gathering intelligence in the form of public opinion research quantified populations and turned them into audiences. BASR, the academic think tank based at Columbia University, was actively involved with government contracts in 1951 in order to produce public opinion surveys in the Middle Eastern countries, including the Arab region. The questionnaires were primarily intended to assess Western media coverage in the region via the press, radio (for example, Voice of America [VOA], BBC), and film. Siegfried Kracauer prepared a 57-page report on BASR's survey, "Appeals to the Near and Middle East: Implications of the Communications Studies along the Soviet Periphery," in 1952, in which he synthesized the findings into a workable manual of mass media diplomacy for the Department of State. As part of a long imperial practice of gathering intelligence from the region, surveys and bibliographies had often served the crucial function of supplying intelligence. They paved the way for larger operations that built from small-scale, private data-gathering examples. Kracauer's report, in this respect, acquires its significance both as a continuation of intelligence surveys in general and as the first public opinion study of its kind. His report, however, also serves a synthesizing function of bringing together various surveys and offering intelligence observations in support of American propaganda within the Arab world without ethical concerns for Arab perspectives or agency. Serving a classified discourse, in fact, the orientalist tone of Kracauer's document is unabashedly clear

and direct. For instance, it describes the rising political sphere within the Arab region using humiliating language that relegates the value of Arabs to their geopolitical utility and demonstrates the author's ignorance of histories of political uprising in the region. His discourse is noticeably clinical when referring to the Palestinian refugee crisis as well:

> The poverty-stricken masses along the Soviet periphery seem to gain in political consciousness…[T]he Lebanese villagers, it appears, are in a stage of transition; the disconnected Egyptian farmers are undoubtedly aware of the need for economic and social reforms. It is as if inertia were slowly receding. In the Arabic world this desire for change at the bottom, which inevitably affects the urban middle strata, is fostered by unsettled refugees from Palestine. To be sure, nationalist passions may prolong the dozing, but their drugging affect is bound to wear off. In short, broad Middle East populations are about to enter into the political arena. And since an opinion vacuum is as dangerous as a power vacuum, their appearance on the scene alone would account for the necessity of establishing contacts with them. Such early contacts are especially needed to immunize the masses against the potential impact of Communist propaganda. (5)

Later in his report, Kracauer incorporates voices of concern and critiques of U.S. foreign policy by Arab interviewees. The Ministry of Education in Jordan is quoted as follows: "[T]he U.S.A is becoming and working to be an imperialistic state and thus are losing the love and respect they had in the hearts of men" (44). A Jordanian lawyer expresses similar concern that the U.S. government is "becoming more imperialistic than those of Great Britain" (45). Many Egyptians interviewed in the survey expressed concern that the U.S. government was helping them only in order to conquer "international markets" (ibid.).

The Arab states included in the BASR report were Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. While separate reports exist for Greece, Turkey, and Iran, Arab countries are bundled under the "Arab Region" in a single report. The film section of the survey examined movie-watching practices, accessibility, resistance, and opinion about documentary films. The survey classified the audiences by rural/urban, class, age, gender, and "religious devoutness" ("Communication Behavior" 35). A curiosity and concern about Islam among the BASR Group then led to a special report titled "The Influence of Islam on Communications Behavior in the Middle East." By navigating between abstractions of Arab and Islamic identity, this report amplifies a notion of regional ideology that transcends national

boundaries and cannot be reduced to a purported leftist threat: "Tribal and national differences are supposed to play a secondary role in the large community. Islam, in principle, does not recognize nations" (2–3). Citing a recently held Islamic congress in Karachi, the report emphasizes the regional force of Islamic identity to unite various nations in the region despite their national and other differences. It also explains Islamic governing in which religion and politics are "hopelessly intertwined." The report even quotes a passage of Quran to make its point (3).[6]

The survey separates films into two categories: generic movies and documentaries. Only a few people responded in the affirmative to the question: "Have you ever seen any foreign documentary films?" The report specifies that "many respondents had difficulty in understanding what was meant by documentary films" ("Communication Behavior" 4). Kracauer particularly foregrounds the importance of documentary as a means of instruction for appeasing "anti-imperialist sentiments" among Middle Eastern people, for distracting them from Soviet propaganda, and for assisting them with economic and cultural modernization programs. A survey in Egypt reports twice as much familiarity with documentary as in other Arab countries. Kracauer distinguishes Arabs for their imperialist charges against the United States despite the U.S. government's aid package, primarily due to the plight of the Palestinians. One educated Egyptian interviewee frames this sentiment aptly: "All the nations of the East loved the Americans, but after that case (Palestine) they became in doubt of it" (44). Kracauer also identifies Egypt as a major site of cultural and political influence within the Arab region:

> Even though the Egyptian elite do not believe the Americans to be as snobbish as the hated British, they nevertheless reproach them with being prejudiced against colored people… "Would my dark color be a handicap to me there?" asks an interviewee whose misgivings in this respect dampen his desire to live in the U.S.…The tribute a woman doctor pays to America's economic and scientific standards adds to the bitterness of her criticism: "What I cannot understand about them is that they go on talking about human rights and they violate these rights by their marked attitude of hostility toward the colored in America." (42)

Instead of addressing such criticisms of hypocrisy and capitalist opportunism, Kracauer evades the issue, instead suggesting methods of manipulating the Egyptians by exposing them to specific films, including "*The*

Quiet One, a full-length documentary about a Negro boy, in seriousness of intention" (43). Indeed, he forcefully supports the American propaganda project in the Middle East: "Free-world solidarity requires goodwill on grass-roots levels. This more than anything else makes for a sustained effort to reach the depressed and less educated" (6).

However, the most troubling aspect of Kracauer's assessment is his bluntly orientalist treatment of Arab peoples when referring to peasant populations:

> Because of the Arab's gift for imagining propaganda traps it is further advisable to proceed like the buyer in an antique shop who cunningly avoids manifesting a special interest in the object he covets…A good way of sustaining or arousing anti-Communist moods through documentary films is to insert in them such footage from Soviet films as is apt to impress Middle-Eastern audiences unfavorably. It would be difficult for any spectator to deny the authenticity of these self-portrayals. The method has been successfully used in the Nazi war documentaries and the American army morale films. (31)

And again, this time more weaponized:

> Practically all strata of population are imbued with a mentality which for lack of another expression may be called Oriental—a compound of traits and attitudes palpably at variance with Western values and preferences. Even the elite cannot completely rid themselves of it, in spite of their aversion to Koran [sic] readings and their affinity for a more modern style of life. (19)

1.5 Nontheatrical Documentary Campaigns

American documentary diplomacy in the Arab region started through nontheatrical campaigns involving embassies during World War II. These centers arranged for public viewing either through available urban sites such as schools, universities, and cultural centers or via mobile screenings for villagers. Very few of these films were specifically produced for foreign audiences. They were part of the wartime industry of private American nontheatrical production that government officials purchased and customized through re-cutting and adding new titles and translated commentary. Despite an end to domestic government propaganda film

operations after the war, the international campaigns of nontheatrical distribution continued with added governing demand for statistical verification of the usefulness of such campaigns based upon the number and socioeconomic demographic of foreign audiences. A 1950 USIE film report in Cairo signed by a "film officer" refers to the "Department's circular instruction dated July 19, 1946 [for a] 'Monthly Report on Information and Cultural Activities'" (Adamson). Offices of International Motion Picture (IMP) in local and central branches of the USIE and USIS managed nontheatrical distribution and prepared reports. These screenings established a governmental infrastructure to support the American diplomatic influence in the region. The bureaucratic rationale of this postwar phase of governing investment in nontheatrical distribution was based on a generic assumption of the American documentary's attractiveness for foreigners and the specific strategy of fine-tuning the scope and content through ongoing effectiveness studies and statistical assessment.

A new phase of more intensified campaigns of mobile screening went into operation in 1948 after the passage of the Smith–Mundt Act, which increased the budget for overseas media propaganda. In particular, the year 1950 marks an intensification of surveillance and documentation of nontheatrical documentary campaigns.

1.6 Regional Audiovisual Centers (RAVC) and the Standardization of the Arab Dialect

One of the major contributions of documentary missions in the Middle East and elsewhere was the establishment of audiovisual centers among government institutions, often within ministries of education and in affiliation with an institution of higher education. The development of audiovisual programs gradually took form around 1953. Operations spread country by country until they covered nearly all territories in the Arab region. Audiovisual centers housed audiovisual aids to help with development programs, and documentary filmmaking was considered one of these tools. Depending on their scale, audiovisual centers housed various equipment for film screening, production and lighting, and small studios, film processing labs, silk screen printing facilities, film strip production facilities, film libraries, mobile truck units, and workshop spaces for training teachers. Generally, a country would have one major audiovisual center and several small stations in various provinces among rural populations. Audiovisual centers became the sites to train a small group

of teachers with audiovisual aids, who were sent, in turn, throughout the nation to train a larger group of teachers. Each country was assigned an American technical consultant to ensure the development of audiovisual programs.

As part of the training program, audiovisual centers also developed special programs with USOM offices and American universities to accept candidates for year-long training programs in the United States funded by the U.S. government. These positions were at the managerial level, and candidates were expected to take over the audiovisual centers after completion of the training program. In 1956 several universities in the United States entered into contracts with USOM to admit candidates from the Middle East for audiovisual training, including American University, Indiana University, Pennsylvania State University, Syracuse University, and the University of Southern California (Carr, "Overseas" 2). Each university accepted approximately twenty candidates from Asia and Latin America for a one-year program, at a cost of $50,000. The Arab candidates who were trained at Syracuse University included Joseph M. Maimeh (Lebanon), Ali Seoudi (Egypt), Faraj M. Tarbah (Libya), Hrayr B. Toukhanian (Lebanon), Imad Shwary (Lebanon), Suleiman D. Zalatima (Jordan), Isa Hanna (Iraq), Edward Mehanni Youssef El Serafi (Egypt), Adnan Admad Rasim (Iraq), and Mohammad Ben Mohammad Sciuiscin (Libya) (Trubov 1–8).

The American audiovisual experts working through the USIS, USOM, and TCA institutions throughout the Middle East soon realized the need for a regional audiovisual center as a cost-effective measure to serve national centers and help with training, film production, library services, and the translation of film commentaries into Arabic and local Turkish and Kurdish dialects. The Ford Foundation, which was actively involved in the technical assistance program in the Middle East, spearheaded a survey project to assess the possibility of establishing an RAVC in 1954.[7] In the course of its creation, this survey project became the most extensive research and networking operation for bringing together film and audiovisual media experts in the Middle East, through boardroom meetings, conference programs, and nation-specific interview and survey missions. The Ford Foundation appointed the Syracuse Audiovisual Service, affiliated with Syracuse University under the leadership of Don Williams, to carry the survey mission. The Syracuse documentary media experts had been stationed in Iran since 1951, developing how-to rural training films and audiovisual workshops. By 1954 they had initiated a documentary

training workshop with over sixty nationally selected Iranian candidates. These practices made the Service an ideal entity by which carry out the RAVC survey.

The regional survey mission only covered the Arab countries and Iran. The Ford Foundation allocated a total sum of $43,000 for the project (Williams). An initial meeting of committee members was held in January 1954 in New York City under the rubric "Audio-Visual Aids and Their Use in the Near East" ("Minutes of Meeting"). The participants discussed the planning and policy of audiovisual aid in the region. Ironically, none of them were from the region! Beside the Ford Foundation officials and Don Williams, the team included employees of the FOA and the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) as well as an American audiovisual technician from the American University in Beirut (AUB) and a UNESCO representative.[8] The committee considered the possibility of developing television as an audiovisual program of education in the region as well. A month later, in a memorandum dated February 1954, Dr. Habib Kurani, an educational expert and former Middle Eastern audiovisual trainee, was chosen as the local liaison to advance the project (Culbertson, February 11, 1954).

Writing to Kenneth Iverson in the same memorandum, Robert E. Culbertson (Ford Foundation Deputy Near East Representative) expressed his interest in involving UNESCO in the planning of the RAVC. In other words, Culbertson suggested expanding the representation of the agencies involved with the RAVC beyond Point Four and AUB to UNESCO as well. In support of his idea, Culbertson writes about his earlier contact with Alexander Shaw (a British documentarian working for UNESCO's audiovisual unit in Beirut), who worked among Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA):

> His work has been primarily in the production of motion pictures. These films have all been made in the Arab world, most of them within refugee camps, with Palestinian refugee actors and actresses and all relating to pretty topical Arab village life and agriculture. He has developed indoctrinational films designed to create interest in literacy, in health measures, in safety, and in educational development…the films have been received with enthusiasm wherever they have been shown and within the refugee camps have had a great influence. The films appear to be of excellent quality, technically, but their greatest virtue is their realism.…[UNESCO]

> had received requests from all of the Arab countries plus six other countries for a loan of copies of one or more of the films thus far produced. (Culbertson 1)

As this passage suggests, Culbertson was investing in the circulation and management of images of Palestinian refugee camps as part of the Cold War containment campaign and was ready to involve UNESCO in the formation of the new RAVC.

The survey team started its work in Beirut and conducted three months of study, surveys, and interviews throughout the summer of 1954. Interviews were informal. Questions involved the possibility and usefulness of audiovisual methods and the question of whether they should be developed privately or by governments. Questionnaires were also sent to seventy-five teachers, social workers, and officials of health, agriculture, and social welfare departments. The results indicated overwhelming support for the development of audiovisual technology in the region. The survey team also visited each country in June 1954 to assess local conditions. Williams traveled to Libya, Egypt, Iraq, and Iran. Robertson and Kurani traveled together to Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Separately, they each traveled to Syria. Guido traveled to Iran and Egypt. Bahrain and Kuwait had just been visited by another one of the members. Additionally, two educational leaders from Saudi Arabia were interviewed for the survey at AUB.

An informal conference to explore the possibility of establishing the RAVC was then held at AUB in October 1954 with representatives from the Arab League, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Jordan. The group proposed the name, Educational Center for Audiovisual Aids in the Middle East, for the new center, for which the committee, formed via the meeting,[9] voiced a strong need:

> There is a definite conviction in every Middle Eastern country, that every government must undertake an expanded program of public service designed to promote public welfare and combat the basic ills of the Middle East, i.e. poverty, ignorance and disease. Such a program has become imperative, if confusion and social disintegration are to be prevented. With this conviction, each country is already launching an extensive program of development…Audio-visual methods are being tried in different degrees by different countries, with varying degrees of success. With few exceptions, these efforts are sincere but sporadic. There is need for planning and coordination within each country and on an inter-country basis. The

> possibilities and advantages of cooperation among the different countries of the Middle East in this field have not been seriously explored. ("Report of the Findings" 5)

The technocratic language of this statement evidences fears of leftist movements as one of the supporting reasons for promoting a technical assistance program. The committee also acknowledges that no study had yet been made of the current state of audiovisual technology, programs, training, and possibilities (5). It suggests that the center should be financially independent from national centers while in close contact with them for audiovisual services. It recognizes that the RAVC should be a nonprofit organization affiliated with a private institution of higher education and assist educational, social, and economic programs. Furthermore, the RAVC is envisioned as having the capacity to grant academic certificates and diplomas (6–7).

Reports from interviews with officials throughout the Arab region emphasized the potential of the RAVC to bypass cumbersome national bureaucracies and operate free from national ideologies:

> The unanimous opinion was to insure an atmosphere of freedom of thought and operation without governmental interference. Abdul Aziz A. Koussi (Dean of the Institute of Education) thought very definitely on that point. He voiced the group's opinion on the use of Arabs and American working in the center. All were in agreement that each should be carefully chosen and that the Americans should be the right kind—imaginative, sympathetic, and interested in education. Implementation and skill alone are not important. Largesse and dedication to a purpose, ability to surmount obstacles, a vision of what the Near East might become as a result of dedicated work for the sake of an ideal bigger than self. (32)

To put these conversations into a broader perspective, however, the ethical concerns about a genuine intention to perform service do not extend to the inclusion of all political voices, such as those of left-leaning intellectuals. During these conversations the RAVC is consistently proposed as an antidote to the rising force of student strikes, leftist movements, and, ironically, the damaging influence of Hollywood![10]

The AUB conference debated these findings and made recommendations for drafting the final proposal. The new RAVC would include twenty-four members representing every Arab country except Yemen.

The AUB group also unanimously approved recommending the establishment of an RAVC to the Arab League. The consensus was that the RAVC should be run privately and be free to experiment and evaluate objectively. Thus the conference decided not to recommend that the Arab League itself control and direct the RAVC. A major sticking-point was the inclusion or exclusion of Iran. Some committee members also expressed concern that under the Arab League, the RAVC might not be able to hire foreign media experts ("A Report to the Ford Foundation" 46). In support of this view, the participants mentioned the difficulties which the Arab League had faced in establishing an Arab Information Center in the United States. The participants were also concerned about the presence of Western experts in the RAVC for fear of being accused of propagandizing (51). The overall function of the RAVC was conceived as research, training, production, and distribution (61) in the interests of efficiency and the "economy of production":

> The Middle East is, in many respects, a homogenous region with a common culture, traditions, interests and problems. Because of this fact, a regional center will be able to produce material for a region instead of for a country. Such large-scale production would certainly cut down production costs. It might even raise the quality of the product. Moreover, production of certain types of material in a regional center would tend to release time and money in the national centers which the centers can then spend on problems peculiar to their respective countries. As compared with centers in the United States, a regional center should be able to produce suitable material at less cost. The center should also be able to adapt materials produced outside the area for regional use. (72)

In a follow-up to this conceptual framework, the conference was mindful to navigate a path between the extremes of culturalism and universalism (73). The participants used the model of how-to rural training films experimented with by the Syracuse team in Iran as an aesthetic blueprint for a type of educational film that could be translated into other Middle Eastern languages and be received positively by rural populations.

Options for the center's location were Tehran, Cairo, and Beirut (73). The conference recommended Beirut, with AUB as its affiliated institution, and asked the Department of Education that AUB be given greater autonomy with which to collaborate and contribute to the RAVC initiative. Alternatively, a suggestion was made that RAVC functions be decentralized and performed in various locations best suited for them. Both

Iran and Cairo claimed willingness to support a decentralized format of the RAVC (89). A diagram was prepared that demonstrated the bureaucratic position of the proposed RAVC within the structure of the AUB leadership (95). The committee that prepared the final report included Don Williams, Hazel Robertson, Habib Kurani, and Michael Guido.

The survey report, however, eventually led to a conflict of opinion between Don Williams and Ford Foundation officials. Representing the Ford Foundation, both Iverson and Culbertson disagreed with Williams' proposal, primarily because it placed the financial burden of establishing and maintaining the RAVC on the Ford Foundation and brought ARAMCO onto the decision-making committee. In an internal Ford Foundation memorandum of April 1955, Culbertson favored Cairo as the location, with The American University in Cairo (AUC) as the affiliated institution. Culbertson reasoned that Egypt already had a substantial stock of audiovisual equipment and, in contrast to the situation in Lebanon, the Egyptian government had already allocated a budget for the program in addition to the $200,000 contributed by the FOA. Furthermore, in his conversation with Dr. Mahmoud L. Nahas (an official at the Ministry of Education in Egypt), it had been decided that the center would be regional and would welcome students from throughout the region into the training program. There were already up to six thousand students from various Arab countries studying in Egypt. Nahas requested more financial support from outside and collaboration with UNESCO. Culbertson continued:

> In spite of everything that has been said to the contrary, Egypt still seems to me to be the natural center for this program. Egypt has the production facilities. Although it may not have enough, Egypt has more trained technicians in the audio-visual field than all of the other Arab countries put together. In quantity, at least, Egypt is more of a center of education for the Arab countries than any other country. Egypt, incidentally, has a policy, I was told, of admitting to its educational institutions students from other Arab countries on a tuition-free basis. This would apply to the Audio-Visual Aids Center. ("Egyptian Interest" 2)

In a Ford Foundation letter from March 1956, Iverson rejected Williams' proposal for the RAVC because it relied upon the Ford Foundation for finance. "The foundation was after the kind of report that would in no way commit it or anyone else to a support program; what it got was

a project proposal which implied heavy permanent financing of a sort that only the Ford Foundation could provide" ("The Ford Foundation" 1). Additionally, Iverson favored the existing national entities over the promotion of a regional audiovisual center: "Experience in the area increasingly brings into question the wisdom of promoting regional projects out of the whole cloth. Solid national developments have been found much more practical; regional requirements are rarely extensive, and can be met as they arise on the basis of actual need rather than elaborate presuppositions" (2).

In the aftermath of conducting the Ford Foundation's survey, the Syracuse team organized three conferences in 1955 in Beirut, Tehran, and Baghdad.[11] In addition to showcasing nationwide audiovisual programs, the Tehran conference included representatives from Arab states. These events brought the Syracuse team and other audiovisual experts involved in training and how-to filmmaking into contact with each other and facilitated regional collaboration. American cultural foot soldiers who entered Iran as part of the Syracuse team of documentary experts continued their mission in Arab and South Asian countries after the completion of their contracts in Iran. They used the experience they had gained in Iran to experiment with building additional infrastructural and governance programs regionally, through the establishment of documentary and audiovisual institutes. Apparently, the overriding interest for establishing a regional audiovisual center grew in Iraq as well as in Egypt. The Baghdad Audiovisual Conference in 1955 explored the possibility of creating a "regional training center" at a "suitable university" in Iraq (Jordan). In the aftermath of the Ford Foundation decision and conference events, Baghdad, Cairo, and Tehran emerged as de facto representatives of RAVCs for the exchange of rural training films and the supply of laboratory services, media expertise, and conference publicity.

A crucial aspect of the RAVC campaigns within Arab territories was their strategic responses to solving the perceived problem of Arabic dialects. Egypt in particular was seen as the most viable place for investing in voice-over commentary for how-to village films made in Iran with Persian commentary. From the standpoint of American cultural diplomacy planners, both the accent and grammar of Egyptian Arabic were more recognizable in the region than those of any other Arab country. Clearly, the idea of fostering an Arab identity through documentary diplomacy was backed by market rationality of facilitating the availability of audiovisual training and top-down documentary culture in the region.

In a follow-up to the Ford Foundation's decision, two national and regional audiovisual centers were established in Egypt. While the national audiovisual center offered free services and relied upon the Egyptian government for its sustenance, the RAVC functioned independently through charging audiovisual centers in other Arab countries for its services. The Regional Audiovisual Service (RAVS) in Egypt played a key role in promoting an Arab identity through documentary. The center made available American documentaries and American-Iranian training films in Egyptian Arabic. This strategy, in turn, facilitated the acceptance of the Egyptian dialect as the standard for the voice of instruction and documentary in the Arab region.[12] Moreover, the Arabic commentary popularized American documentaries and contributed to their wider availability in Egypt and other Arab countries. Financially, producing commentaries using a single Arabic dialect lowered the cost of translation, transcription, and work prints, hence promoting a profitable regional enterprise. For example, a joint project between Egypt's Ministry of Education and USOM suggested investing in multiple copies of American nontheatrical documentaries, with Arabic commentary inserted using optical printing, for distribution throughout the region. The proposal considered this "seeding project" as a market investment:

> These Arabic versions of American educational films would simultaneously be available for purchase by any governmental, commercial, or private purchaser, direct from the supplier, in Egypt or any other Arabic speaking country, at prices comparable to the sales price of the English version. ("Proposal for Adaptation")

Calvin Company provided technicians, preview film loans, and recording equipment. USOM and the Governmental Office of Education, in turn, supplied local facilities, space, narrators, translators, and clerks, among other necessities. (Calvin Company handled 80% of the processing of 16 mm films in the United States at the time [ibid.]).

The establishment of a regional Arab audiovisual center also contributed to the regional circulation of Iranian village films made by the Syracuse documentary crew with both English and Arabic commentary. In 1954 the RAVS in Cairo set up a preview loan library of these films. Through this initiative over 350 reels of film became available and remained in circulation through regional missions in Lebanon, Iraq,

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel/Palestine ("Regional Audio-visual Service"). By 1956 a library of over 450 "US instructional" films had been accumulated in Egypt. This library included both the American documentaries made in the United States and those produced in Iran during the early 1950s. Evidently, the U.S. government memoranda treated the binational films made in Iran as American documentaries (ibid.).

Similarly, dubbing into Arabic became a challenging project in Iraq, and a proposal for regional operation in that country was developed as well for similar economic and diplomatic reasons. Iraqi Arabic was assessed as a "common denominator" of the Arabic dialects in the region and a balance of efficiency and difference governed a regional project that transcended the concerns of national specificity because of its foreign hegemonic status:

> Possibilities of extending this project to other Arabic-speaking countries need to be discussed. With some planning, possibly other countries could "ride" the Iraq project, a "common denominator" Arabic could be used in the narrations, and a larger number of reels could be adapted for use in four or five countries, instead of one. ("Attendance of Dr. Don Williams")

A 1954 memorandum from Baghdad to the office of the TCA in Iran lists thirteen Syracuse films made in Iran that the USIS office already had in its possession for review, study, and potential dubbing: *Fight against Malaria*; *Why Infants Die*; *How to Prevent Dysentery*; *Clean Water*; *Food for Health*; *Care and Maintenance of a Village Home*; *Tuberculosis Is Curable*; *Construction of a Sanitary Pit-Privy*; *Water—Friend or Enemy*; *Prevent Dysentery*; *Kill the Louse*; *Vaccinate against Smallpox*; and *Clean Water* (Walt Disney) ("Preview of Persian Films"). By 1955 the office of USOM in Iraq had planned a contract with the Syracuse team "to adapt 40 reels of the Iranian films into Arabic" ("Completion Report").

The following itemized coverage offers preliminary traces of the governing investment in specific audiovisual and documentary activities in Egypt and Iraq.

Egypt

USIE reports from the 1950s paint a picture of a country busy with documentary film screening events organized by the cultural branch of the

U.S. government. "Operations in Egypt have no real problem in attracting film audiences. The difficulty lies in stretching available prints, equipment and personnel to service the requests received unsolicited" (Adamson). Furthermore, the AUC joined the USIE campaign by making the USIE film library available to students free of charge: the film catalogue and other USIE publications were given to every student who attended, with a card reading "With the compliment [sic] of the Film Section of the United States Offices of Information and Educational Exchange" (Abdalla, February 25, 1950). By February 1950 a mobile truck screening unit arrived in Cairo and was immediately utilized for a 25-day field-trip of documentary screenings (with Arabic commentary) to "the villages of the most Southern Zones of Egypt," for a total audience of 66,800 "fellaheen" (ibid.). Memoranda regarding these villagers include photographic documentation of a population that was purportedly exposed to cinema for the first time: "It was also interesting to notice the mouth-opened (with amazement) fellaheen and how their eyes and minds were attracted by the miraculous motion and sound on the screen they were told to look at while equally attracted by the operators and projectors behind, trying hard to find out the mysterious relation between the two poles of attraction" (ibid.). The photographic evidence of this event, obtained and examined with governing enthusiasm and expectation by FAC experts, offers visual documentation of Egyptian villagers and agents of documentary diplomacy (Fig. 1.1).

By November 1950 rural films had become quite popular among villagers. One example of the documentation of this popularity by an Egyptian official is described in an evaluation report: "An informal poll of farmers in Kalioubiya Province was taken recently by a well-educated, reliable Egyptian. He wore local rather than Western dress, and found USIE films were widely known, were identified as American, were liked and that more were desired. Specifically mentioned by the farmers was pleasure in seeing American farmers—how they live and work" ("USIE Semi-Annual Evaluation Report, November 30, 1950" 17).

Back in March 1950, the USIE report mentions a continuing interest in documentary titles, which prompted the American propaganda office to suggest that Egyptians buy their own projectors and transform the film screening campaigns into a film library operation with strategic mobile screening programs (Abdalla, March 25, 1950). By the end of 1950, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Fellah Department was regularly borrowing up to 50% of the agricultural training films. Ministries of Education (Cinema



Fig. 1.1 Egyptian audiences (International Motion Pictures Division Briefing Materials. P218: Entries Related to Committees, 1948–1958, RG 0306, USNA, College Park. May 9, 2015)

Control), Health, Defense, and the Royal Egyptian Air Force also borrowed film titles according to their special interests ("USIE Semi-Annual Evaluation Report, November 30, 1950" 17). By May 1950 the curating of documentary content had advanced toward a mix of more focused instructional or process training films with "travelogues, sports, and other light material (News Magazines)" ("Supplement to Cairo U.S.I.A. Evaluation").[13]

The establishment of an American audiovisual center in Egypt is reported in a USIS memorandum as early as 1953 by Mildred Teasley, an audiovisual specialist ("Audiovisual Activities" 1–2). Shortly thereafter, Frank Mathewson and Don Jordan, two audiovisual specialists with Syracuse Audiovisual Center, traveled to Egypt. The audiovisual program in Cairo worked under the Ministry of Education to promote educational programs, and the audiovisual leadership course started there in 1954. The sample curriculum for the second session of the course in 1955 included boards, charts, simple molds, school trips, motion pictures, operating projection equipment, production of transparent pictures, acoustics,

silk screen printing, taxidermy, dramatization, simple printing, photography, lecture, and discussions. In 1955 the audiovisual training experiment used in the villages of Varamin Crown Lands in Iran became a model for building new villages in Cairo. (The Ford Foundation had funded village development programs in Iran.) Building on that initiative, the U.S. government funded the audiovisual program through a direct grant of $150,000 and an additional $100,000 through the office of FOA in Egypt (Stevens). The program began in a location near Alexandria chosen for its proximity to Egyptian-American rural improvement services. The center offered educational film and training projects and film library services.

In 1959 a USOM memorandum titled "A Communication Fact Book," by John H. Esterline (public affairs officer), provides an overview of the state of the Egyptian film industry, particularly documentary production. According to this report, a sharp rise in the production of documentaries in Arabic from about a dozen to eighty films annually occurred in Egypt between the 1920s and 1930s to the 1950s. Ironically, while advocating a national allegory, these documentaries were often produced under conditions of financial crisis that inevitably involved foreign investment. The report also indicates a lack of skill in writing for film: "No literary movement exists in Egypt which qualifies as the nucleus for script writers needed to fit the industry's growing needs. As a result, foreign scripts are used as a base with re-writers adapting them to local demands" (Esterline 22).

In the late 1950s, Egypt's output of documentary format included a combination of feature films, documentaries, and newsreel. The newsreels were produced by Misr Studios with government funding and oversight. Documentaries were produced by the ministries of information, national guidance, and defense. Depending on the project, these entities made films for domestic and international audiences: "Films sent to Information Offices of the UAR (United Arab Republic) Embassies are generally dubbed in English, Spanish, French, German, and Italian" (Esterline 21). Military institutions generally handled newsreel production for government officials. Strong government backing through institutional promotion and subsidies supported the increasing flow of documentary production and its representation to international festivals during this era.

Iraq

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, U.S. government agencies had a minimal presence in Iraq. American cultural diplomacy was populated with private religious entities such as Baghdad College (a secondary school run by American Jesuit priests), the United Reform Mission, and the Seventh-Day Adventists ("First Semi-Annual Evaluation" 4). There was no Iraqi program of educational and informational exchange as of yet. The impact of local and regional USIS offices was also negligible. In contrast, the British Council had a sizable impact on cultural and educational institutions, even though the British Empire was quite unpopular among the majority of Iraqis (ibid.). Gradually, however, the American documentary and audiovisual mission in Iraq reached its climax during the 1950s, before the coup of 1958. The operation made newsreels, established audiovisual centers, and produced Arabic commentary for the village training films made in Iran.[14]

A memorandum of the Baghdad-based USIS Survey and Statistical Report in 1949, however, documents a small but gradual expansion of the USIS program in the face of the Palestinian crisis: "With the psychological change in Iraq as the resentment arising from the Palestine affair receded into the background, its work burgeoned enormously in volume and in quality" (6). As the agenda for 1950, the report highlights the importance of reaching women in Iraq and the "strengthening and expanding of Kurdish program[s]" through library projects and mobile screenings. The memorandum also reminds the reader of the vital importance of expanding the reach of USIS materials—including film—outside of Baghdad and Basra by making films available to "public and specialized audiences" and providing a Kurdish soundtrack for three "health cartoons" (Disney animation produced for the American government) (8). Photographic evidence of this era shows a group of village audiences with the projectionist and Iraqi soldiers in the background (Fig. 1.2). USIS set up nontheatrical screening programs of specialized training titles for doctors, dentists, and basketball players. These included *Endoscopic Photograph*, *Electrical Recording of Eye Movement*, *Refrigeration Anesthesia*, *Exodontia and Oral Surgery*, and *Play Championship-Basketball*.[15]

Another USIS monthly report dated March 1950 lists the titles of feature films screened in Iraq, and includes the audience capacity and details on theater ownership in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Arbil, Sulaimaniya, Hillah, Nairiyah, Baqubah, Khanoin, Diwaniah, Samawah, Amara, Kut,



Fig. 1.2 Iraqi Fellahin (International Motion Pictures Division Briefing Materials. P218: Entries Related to Committees, 1948–1958, RG 0306, USNA, College Park. May 9, 2015)

Habbaniyah, and Shatra ("Motion Picture" 1–9). Additionally, the report lists theater equipment in Iraq and the USIS documentary titles distributed in theaters. While a majority of these films were distributed by American companies, there are also a few European titles. The USIS report for April 1950 refers to a list of American documentary films circulating throughout Aden, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, and Syria (1–3).

The establishment of an audiovisual center in Baghdad was approved by the Ministry of Education and USOM in March 1955. A year earlier, Henry Wiens (TCA, Baghdad) explained in a memorandum the possibilities of developing an audiovisual program in Iraq to William James Caldwell (Chief Education Division, USOM Washington) (FOA, Washington, DC):

> Iraq is the first of the Arab countries which has really made a break in favor of the West and our program is badly in need of interpretation here. This is particularly true since Iraq is really financing its own development program out of oil royalties so that we are supplying only technicians rather

> than also economic assistance as is true in most other countries of this area…With their own resources the Iraqis are conducting a program of over $50 million annually and we have here the fourth largest Mission in the world from the point of view of American employees. (Wiens 1)

Caldwell subsequently traveled to Iraq and took hold of developing an audiovisual program.

Wiens also discusses—opportunistically, using sexist language—promoting the idea raised by a female Iraqi journalist of investing in an audiovisual program in the Iraqi press: "The USIS is considering [reporting on the development of the program] on contract with an Iraqi girl who has studied journalism in the United States" (ibid. 2).

In 1954 three mobile units were shipped to USOM Iraq. Regarding the acquisition of proper equipment for the audiovisual center, a memorandum suggests a list that was accumulated earlier, in the course of "establishing a new audiovisual division in a Latin American country" ("Requisition"). Arland Meade was assigned the information officership of the audiovisual center in 1955. The center provided schools with the "modern media of communicating knowledge" ("Briefing Paper"). This included "motion picture, television, photographs, film strips, tape recordings, radio, poster, charts, models, exhibits, demonstrations, field trips, etc." (ibid.). As the "first of its kind in Iraq," the center was tasked with dubbing, mobile distribution, training, and potentially film production (ibid.). Film screenings held in Baghdad took place in classes at the American Community School, among other schools. Workshop training was provided to teachers, headmasters, and inspectors on the "philosophy of audiovisual education" (ibid.).

Syracuse University also sent audiovisual and documentary experts to Iraq and facilitated the regional flow of village films made in Iran. Up to $50,000 was allocated for "film modification and production," which included dubbing films from Persian to Arabic ("Information - AV/Iraq"). By 1955 the Iraqi government had invested nearly $200,000 in the program ("NEA Audiovisual" 2). John Humphrey and Caldwell went to Iraq and made recommendations about making films. They initiated the translation of five documentary films into Arabic. Humphrey, who was serving in Iran at the time, left the operation to others and started a new leadership position and teaching project with the Iraqi government ("Completion Report"). The Syracuse experts producing newsreel films in Iran, with the permission of the Iranian government, helped

make films produced in Iran available to Iraqis ("Briefing Paper" 2). Humphrey returned to Iran from Iraq along with an Arabic narrator (Aziz Shalal Aziz) to translate up to thirty-three reels of how-to village films from Persian into Arabic.

Subsequently, Humphrey was assigned as the acting director of the Audiovisual Center in Iraq. The Audiovisual Center included six departments: Art, Publications, Still Photography, Motion Picture, Radio and Television, and Utilization and Distribution ("Completion Report"). The Motion Picture Department was headed by Karim Majid, who was the acting director of the Audiovisual Center before Humphrey's arrival (4). There were no laboratory facilities in Baghdad that were considered adequate, according to Humphrey's standard. He suggested cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Iran for film processing. He emulated the managerial method of the documentary mission in Iran by setting up a small group of American media experts to run the filmmaking operation and subsequently to train a select group of Iraqis to take over the job. Humphrey soon found an urgent need for the use of training films in various ministries. Meanwhile, local audiovisual centers operated through not only the Ministry of Education but within the ministries of agriculture and health as an organ of "media support" (7–8). For example, the FOA office also arranged the establishment of an audiovisual center within the Ministry of Agriculture in Abu Ghraib by the American media specialist Donald Jordan, according to a FOA memorandum dated 1955 (Carr, Letter).

The Audiovisual Center in the Ministry of Education in Iraq held a large collection of American documentaries on loan. An ICA memorandum dated 1957 asks to "organize special interest documentary groups in [Iraq's] educational system" through the promotion of American technical documentary films associated with specific industrial interests ("Trade Promotion"). Obviously, the objective was to promote consumer desire among Iraqis so the country would become a better market for American products. The memorandum suggests promoting these films in public schools where students were already frequent attendees of "regular film programs" drawn from the Audiovisual Center's library of American documentary titles ("Film in Loan"). The memorandum lists 216 films that would be available for extended loan as a bonus. It also discusses the problem of the lack of Arabic commentary in these films: "[I]f prior arrangements are made, some resounding of track into Arabic could be furnished. This is the basic problem audio-visual services face in the use

of film in Iraq" (ibid.). The distributors of the documentaries showcase a wide range of public and private corporations, agencies, and institutions of higher education available for competition and market share in Iraq in 1957.[16] The scale of the involvement of various private U.S. corporations in these documentary diplomacy enterprises demonstrates the commitment of the U.S. government to a managerial and facilitating role for fostering American business overseas through the deployment of special-subject documentary as a means of market advertising.

At the onset of the military coup in July 1958, the U.S. programs ceased operation ("Situation Report"; "Final Report"). The USIS was subsequently portrayed by the Iraqi press and the high military court as an enemy for having produced programs that were not in the "public interest." The prosecutor labeled the USIS center an agent of a "vampire nation," as "poisoning [the] Iraq[i] Mind," and as facilitating "slaves of the imperialists" (Ross, September 16 and 20, 1958). Within the revolutionary situation, USOM's audiovisual projects were also connected to USIS propaganda operations and these activities did not go unnoticed by the Iraqi press. This, however, did not lead to the complete dismissal of the U.S. government's cultural diplomacy and technical assistance programs from the country. The USIS resumed its operations on a smaller scale after a while, and the Point Four Program continued with little interruption.

In the aftermath of the revolution, while the loan of technical films promoting American corporations decreased, USIS strategically promoted how-to documentary films about housing development produced in Chile, Indonesia, and Puerto Rico in Iraq. A 1958 memorandum announces the documentary project of *Housing Development in Chile* made on the spot during the construction ("Film 'Housing Adventure'"). The memorandum explains the documentary's how-to narrative descriptively as well: "The scene and narration give a step-by-step picture of the cooperative aided self-help process. Practical demonstration proceeds through the entire operation from the laying of the foundations to the last detail of fitting in windows and hardware" (ibid.). Similarly, *Showing the Way* narrates the planning and construction of housing programs in Puerto Rico ("Self-Help").

The documentary *Rumah-Gotong-Rojong* was made in Indonesia by the Ministry of Information's National Film Studio in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Public Works (ibid.). In turn, raw stock and technical assistance for preparation of script and editing

were provided by USOM Indonesia. The documentary showcases the work of the Indonesian government at Kebajoran Baru in training the new village leaders to build low-cost homes. Again, the film demonstrates various techniques, using close-up frames and instructional aesthetics similar to the group of American documentaries screened in Iraq. Promoting such titles offered other cultures' versions of American instructional aesthetics in the hopes of softening the capitalist tone of the majority of American corporate titles within the post-1958 governing phase of the newly established Iraqi Republic under Prime Minister Qasim, a short-lived era that was interrupted by the Ramadan Revolution of 1963 and the coming to power of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq.

Notes

1. By 1950—coterminous with the rise of McCarthyism—corporate executives of the American film industry, including Hollywood, formed the Film Advisory Committee (FAC) with propaganda planners in the International Motion Picture Division at the Department of State in response to President Truman's Campaigns of Truth. These film experts advised the U.S. government about devising a breed of cultural documentary for foreigners as a new propaganda package. Members of FAC were: Gordon Biggar (President, Industrial Audio-Visual Association), Frank Capra (Motion Picture Industry Council), Ned E. Depinet (President, Council of Motion Picture Organization), Y. Frank Freeman (Vice President, Paramount, Representative of Motion Picture Producers), Gunther R. Lessing (Chairman, Board of Directors, Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers), John G. McCarthy (Vice President, Motion Picture Association of America), Joseph J. MacPherson (Executive Secretary of Department of Audio-Visual Instruction), Peter J. Mooney (President, Nontheatrical Film Producers Association, Inc.), Edmund Reek (Vice President, Movietone News, Inc., Ralph W. Steetle (Executive Director, Joint Commission on Education and Television), Donald K. White (Executive Vice President, National Audio-Visual Association), and Walter A. Wittich (Director, Bureau of Visual Instruction, University of Wisconsin). Mark A. May acted as the chairman of the United States Advisory Commission on Information under which the FAC was formed. Seven officials from the Department of State also attended the meeting, including Herbert T. Edwards, the head of International Motion Picture Division ("Transcript of Proceedings").
2. Debates about the Smith-Mundt Act started in 1945 and resulted in a bipartisan passing of the Act in 1948. This bill had a tremendous impact

on shaping the imperial influence of American government by means of media diplomacy. The passing of Smith-Mundt indeed resulted from a compromise among lawmakers to exempt the American public from propaganda while authorizing it for non-Americans. They agreed to a large increase in the planning, making, distributing, and exhibiting of documentary-format propaganda films and other non-film media for countries sharing borders with the Soviet Union, hence identified as geopolitically sensitive nation-states. But, for the most part, such propaganda was presented to lawmakers as a shift from propaganda to information. Such a shift in terminology played a major role in persuading the lawmakers and acquiring enough votes to pass Smith-Mundt (Parry-Giles).

3. Nadia Yaqub addresses this era's humanitarian gaze in the first chapter of her 2018 book, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution*.
4. The USIA operated as the main arm of the U.S. government's Cold War propaganda for communicating with non-Americans worldwide, through or over their governments, for nearly half a century (1953–1999). The agency's local offices, operated by the USIS, handled both film production and distribution throughout the world. The USIA's offices within the United States attracted graduate students and racial and gender minorities with funding for documentary films. The agency took over the films and packaged them as it saw fit for various regions. These films were not available to Americans legally due to the Smith-Mundt Act. The decision to safeguard Americans from American-produced media targeting non-Americans may seem oxymoronic today, even though it ruled a major cultural diplomatic policy for nearly half a century. Recently, the institution has reemerged under the rubric of "American Spaces."
5. Initially, the Point Four Program had to be vigorously defended among American lawmakers as a profit-making enterprise involving an investment of American tax money. The Rockefeller Foundation played a vital role in justifying the Point Four Program as an expansion of an earlier regional economic policy with Latin America. This policy called for disposing of American "surplus commodities" to countries subject to economic aid, removing tariffs toward a one-way flow of trade, and bringing raw materials to the US under a rubric of "maintaining balance of trade relationships." ("Proposals…") The rubric of "helping people help themselves" signified an organizing and abstracting economic principle that the cultural diplomacy planners hoped would subvert both the propaganda ideology and the politics (Waynick).
6. However, an Islamic ideology certainly does not constitute the political consciousness of the Arab region and the Middle East at large during this era. In his trips to the region to assess the governing investment in technical assistance, media communications, and humanities in 1948 and 1950, John Marshall, the Rockefeller advisor, reports an overwhelming

obsession with modernization, Westernization and Americanization and very little trace of a pan-Islamic religious–political ideology. In his remarks, the Rockefeller advisor offers an understanding of cultural diplomacy as a geographically situated perspective of one's outlook to the world, "of how the people of one culture can come to understanding of peoples of other culture" (Marshall 1). The "other culture" for Marshall is a "coherent human region and conscious of its coherence":

> In the Near East, one is strikingly conscious of a different horizon, with Europe to the west, the Soviet Union to the north, Pakistan and Indian Ocean to east and southeast, and equatorial Africa to the south and southwest. Almost physically in the Near East one is in a different physical world and even the alien gains some consciousness of the fact that is uppermost in the minds of those who are native to the region. From this position the world and its history has a distinctly different look. One feels for example the Crusades from another angle. One become aware of what he had known in theory…One sees 19 century Western imperialism in a different light (1).

This passage demonstrates a geopolitical discovery by an elitist Western position from the perspective of the Middle East region that sensorially envelops Marshall and prompts him to construct an East–West binary, one that is in turn productive of his orientalist vision. Marshall expresses surprise, realizing that the primary collective concern of the people in the region is not Islam, as he had read in orientalist accounts, but is instead Westernization and modernization. Critically, these two concepts are different for Marshall and he is doubly surprised to discover that they collapse into each other in the region. A USIE Baghdad memorandum from the mid-1950 addresses the topic of Islam directly: "As a special if not slightly vague target, Islam is of primary importance in its strong stand against Communism, a stand which should be reinforced by all means at the disposal of the USIE program" ("First Semi-Annual Evaluation" 9).

7. Earlier in 1951–1952, a group of Ford Foundation advisors had surveyed the Arab world. Through their alienated and reductive observations, they supported Marshall's earlier assessment regarding the instability and malleability of national imaginaries: "Every Arab government is insecure. None is supported by a genuine patriotism. What patriotism there is, tends to be Arab rather than national, and this underlying Arab unity is torn by tribal feuds of long standing" (Iverson-Moyet et al. 3).
8. The members of the committee were H. B. Allen (Director of Education, Near East Foundation); E. G. Arnold (Executive Associate, The Ford Foundation); John Badeau (The American University in Cairo); Thomas

Baird (United Nations, Film Section); Foy Cross (Professor of Education and Director of New York University Placement Service); Molly Flynn (Liaison Officer for United Nations Relief and Works Agency [UNRWA] to United Nations Headquarters); Ernest Kleinberg (documentary motion picture producer); Brian Meredith (United Nations Technical Assistance Administration); Roy Morgan (ARAMCO); Hazel Robertson (Educational Consultant, ARAMCO); Jean Schaeffer (UNESCO); Don Williams (Syracuse University); Gerald Winfield (FOA); Kenneth R. Iverson (Chairman of the committee and the Ford Foundation Deputy Director, Division of Overseas Activities); and Doris Bebb (Ford Foundation, secretary of the committee).

9. Committee members included Emam Abdel Meguild (Deputy Director, Social Affairs Department, Arab League, Cairo, Egypt); Hamed Ammar (Institute of Education, Heliopolis University, Munira, Cairo); Ahmed Mahmoud Tantawi (Operating Director of Cairo A.V. Center); Gholam Hossein Djabbari (Director, Audio-Visual Service, Department of Fine Arts, Tehran); Mehdi Djalali (Professor of Education and Director of Audio-Visual Department, University of Tehran); Mohammad Ali Issari (USIS, Tehran and Assistant Film Officer); Nesrine Adib (UNESCO Center, Tripoli); Karim Majid (Ministry of Education, A.V. Center, Baghdad); William E. Meredith (A.V. Officer, USOM American Embassy, Amman); Khalil Salim (Inspector of Education, Ministry of Education, Amman); Nizam Sharabi (Director of Personnel Department, Arab Bank, Amman and former Under-Secretary of Ministry of Social Welfare, Jordan).
10. "One large problem is the student strike, due to excessive political zeal of the students. Teachers are losing their grip on the students. Something must be done to counteract the dance hall and cinema" ("Report of the Findings" 33).
11. The American audiovisual experts attending the Beirut conference included Harold Richardson (USOM/Afghanistan), Don Jordan (RAVS/Cairo), Mildred Teasley (USOM/Ethiopia), Charles Johnson and Efstathiadis (USOM/Greece), John Wilson, John Sewall, and Malcom Orchard (TCM/India), William Gelabert (USOM/Iran), William Lowdermilk (USOM/Israel), William Meredith (USOM/Jordan), Michael Guido (USOM/Lebanon), Griff Davis (USOM/Liberia), Norman Hummon and Larry Gahn (USOM/Libya), Gerald Sarchet (USOM/Pakistan), and Emerson Waldman (USOM/Turkey). (Carr, "Regional")
12. This period coincides with the golden age of Egyptian melodrama, whereupon the Egyptian dialect was already becoming popular throughout the Arab region. But this research identifies the rise of the Egyptian accent as a documentary voice and a voice of instruction as well. See Gaffney 53–75; and Darwish.

13. The list of successful documentary titles includes *Battle of Britain*, *Better Tomorrow*; *Blue Ribbon*; *Building of Boys*; *City Harvest*; *Cowboy*; *Everyman's Empire*; *Factory Safety*; *Gift of Green*; *Hookworm*; *High over the Border*; *Human Body*; *Insects as Carriers of Disease*; *Keep 'Em Out*; *Life of a Thoroughbred*; *Life Saving*; *Look and Listen*; *Meet North Carolina*; *New England Calling*; *New England Fishermen*; *News Magazine #1*; *News Magazine #6*; *Nurses in Training*; *Oral Hygiene*; *Panorama*; *Popular Science I & III*; *Poultry Raising*; *Principles of Electricity*; *Sand and Flame*; *This Is New York*; *Transmission of Disease*; *Tuberculosis*; *US Community and Its Citizens*; *Water—Friend or Enemy*; *Western Stockbuyer*; *What Is Disease*; and *Winged Scourge*. These films covered personal and environmental hygiene, popular science, music, youth welfare, agricultural techniques, travelogue, technical instructions, and films for classroom use and artisan training ("Supplement to Cairo U.S.I.A. Evaluation").
14. USOM and USIS were also directly involved in establishing a television station in Baghdad during the mid-1950s.
15. Other films shown to government officials and professionals included *All around Arkansas*; *Defense against Invasion*; *Nurses in Training*; *Serving All Mankind*; *Irrigation Farming*; *Work on the Rivers*; *Irrigation—A Brief Outline*; *Soil and Water Conservation*; *T.V.A.*; *Dedication of the New York International Airport* (air force); *How Disease Travels*; *Water, Friend or Enemy*; *Everyman's Empire*; *U.S. Community and Its Citizens*; *Tuberculosis*; *Cleanliness Brings Health*; *Insects as Carriers of Disease*; *Cattle and the Corn Belt*; *Window Cleaner*; *Poultry, a Billion Dollar Industry*; and *Winged Scourge*. The most popular titles on the list were *Defense against Invasion*; *Water: Friend or Enemy*; *Chicken Little*; *Spring Ski Chase*; *Panorama*; *Irrigation Farming*; *This Is New York*; *Life of a Thoroughbred*; *Relays*; *Shot-Put*; *Distances*; *Discus*; *Play Championship-Basketball*; and medical films.
16. The producing entities are: U.S. Navy (United World Films); General Motors (Audio Productions Inc.); Esso Petroleum Co. Ltd.; National Association of Home Builders; Rubico Brush Company; Douglas Fir Plywood Assoc.; John Byrd Production; E. I. DuPont; Westinghouse Electric Corp.; Heinz Company; Virginia State Board of Education; U.S. Department of Agriculture; National Association of Frozen Food Packers; Association Films, Inc.; Ohio Leather Company; Brown Shoe Company; Dartnell Corporation; Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, USIA Distribution; Rights (Made in Europe for MSA/SRE); Bridgeport Brass Company; Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corporation; Bethlehem Steel Company; Mills McCanna Company; Ikaros Films (MSA); Marshall Field & Co.; US Department of Defense; McGraw-Hill Book Co.; Wayne University; General Mills Company; Popular Science Publishing Co.; National Film Board

of Canada; Underwriters' Lab Inc.; Association Films, Inc.; National Safety Council; Affiliated Aetna Life Company; National Safety Council; The Jam Handy Organization; Horton Company; Proto Tool Company; Singer Sewing Machine Co.; Bemis Brothers' Bag Co.; National Cotton Council; Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. Inc.; Ohio State University; Coronet Films International Film Bureau; Bakier Furniture Company; Proto Tool Company; John Laing & Son, Ltd.; Fellows Gear Shaper, Co.; Methods Engineering Council; Taylor Instrument Co.; Fish and Wildlife Service (United World Films, Inc.); Sunkist Growers; USDA (United World Films, Inc.); Simmel-Meservey, Inc.; Swift and Company; Arno Studio (Copenhagen); Fruit Dispatch Co.; Florida Citrus Commission; Films of the Nations, Inc.; Whiting Corporation; Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Co.; National Foreman's Institute, Inc.; Amelia Earhart Luggage Co.; Yale and Towne Mfg. Co.; Thomas A. Edison, Inc.; Automatic Transportation Co.; Carbolory Co., Inc.; British Information Service (British-Crown Film Unit); John Laing & Son, Ltd.; Texas Gulf Sulphur Co.; Dow Chemical Company; Federal Security Agency; Henry Strauss & Col, Inc.; The Jam Handy Organization; MSA/ICA (Capital Films Lab.); Mine Safety Appliance Co.; Association of Factory Mutual Fire Instruments Co.; Walter Kidde Company, Inc.; L'Institut National de Securité de Paris; Carborundum Company; Anvil Films, Inc.; Crown Film Unit (Central Office of Information, (USIA Distribution Rights); Young America Films Inc.; Proctor and Schwartz, Stillfilm, Inc.; National Association of Waste Material Dealers; Burlington Industries, Inc.; Mall Tool Company; The Dow Chemical Co.; Caterpillar Tractor Co.; American Meat Institute; Paul Hoefler Productions; Lamson Corporation; Greenpark Productions, Inc.; American Monorail Co.; Conveyor Equipment Mfg. Association; Pennsylvania State College; University of Southern California; Paper Box Association of America; Swift and Company; Harmon Foundations, Inc.; Pat Dowing Pictures; Hammermill Paper Company; Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation Motion Picture Productions, Inc.; Farm Film Foundation (Distributed by Pennsylvania Railroad Co.).

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CHAPTER 2

Making the Final Cut: Filmmaking and Complicating National Identity in Qatar and the GCC States

Suzi Mirgani

2.1 Introduction

As relatively young nations, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have been incrementally shaping the nature of their national identities according to strategically selected histories and heritages (Partrick). One of the key tactics of fashioning a sovereign national identity has been to promote the narrative of a unique cultural character that predates the official formation of these nation-states during the 1970s (1). Tinged with a hybrid mix of mythic Bedouin and seafaring origins (Nagy 142), these stories serve to triumph over the era of foreign interference and British protectionism (Partrick op. cit.), and ameliorate decades of geopolitical exploitation, bringing new narrative power to these nations.

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National identity formations are, as Benedict Anderson (*Imagined*) and Homi Bhabha ("Introduction") have discussed extensively, foundational social constructions, and since "nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time" (Babha 1), in order to "rediscover" these histories and heritages, each GCC state has developed its own strategic government-funded organizations, and especially cultural institutions, dedicated to researching, preserving, resurrecting, and exhibiting traditional practices and knowledges. (See Government of Qatar, "Culture"; Bahrain; United; Ministry; UNESCO; Saudi).

In the rentier economic structures of the GCC states, the "government is the primary distributor of wealth amongst its citizens as well as the main instigator of employment and development" (King 2). Utilizing the wealth accrued from their hydrocarbon industries, GCC governments have been able to establish a host of educational and cultural infrastructures tasked with working toward the fulfillment of specifically mandated developmental milestones (see Government of Qatar, "Qatar" 16), and, ultimately, constructing national identity.[1] Many of the Gulf states are now using their wealth not only to compete in global markets but to also climb into the "hierarchal realm of cultural economies, where practices, signs, and perceptions of propriety help to shape configurations of power" (Smith 8). A key feature of the Gulf states' political economy is the "*internationalization* of Gulf capitalism" (Hanieh 2), along with increasing investment in Gulf "cultural diplomacy" (Eggeling). In countries geared economically "towards the service sector rather than value-added production" (Hanieh 12)—and that import an extraordinary array of commodities, encouraging sustained conspicuous consumption practices—the burgeoning film industry has emerged as a creative field that both produces and exports local productions.

Creative industries are often described as vehicles "for outreach and soft power" (Scoffier), and especially in the current climate of mistrust and infighting among some of the Gulf states, such industries are aiming to differentiate these countries from one another at the same time that they are reaching out to bolster their standing in global markets and to impress global audiences. Since the start of the 2017 Gulf crisis, and the onset of a media war between the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt on the one side, and Qatar on the other, "the region's media outlets have become core weapons" used to combat one another's negative narratives (Al Omran; also Rachman). These accounts are shared through a variety of different media texts, from news reports to

comedy skits, highlighting a "deepening sociopolitical and cultural struggle over cinema, media, and culture" (Naficy xxiv; see also ibid.) Such defensive and offensive narratives are designed "not just for domestic consumption but also to woo support from their shared western allies," and with it access to international networks, partnerships, and markets (Al Omran).

With an eye toward instituting future post-hydrocarbon economies, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha in particular, have become neoliberal cities par excellence, each strategically divided into a series of specialized financial, technical, technological, and cultural zones "designed to encourage foreign investment with easier start-up processes, labour and immigration procedures" (Cherian). The UAE leads this effort with no less than forty-five free trade zones, including the "knowledge producing" Internet City and Media City in Dubai and Creative City in Fujairah. Doha is home to Education City with its many imported United States (U.S.) university campuses,[2] as well as Katara Cultural Village with its various art and culture initiatives, including the Doha Film Institute. With the GCC states' increasing integration into the global economy, and "the provision of programmes by foreign universities that match the demands of private sector business and industry" (Wilkins 76), it comes as no surprise that both U.S. military outposts and U.S. cultural industries—those ambassadors of global neoliberalism and free market capitalism—are prominent institutions in the Gulf, and retain strong ties with local governments, regional free trade zones, and U.S. higher education institutes. In fact, "the Gulf States have been the largest recipients of transnational higher education globally, whilst Australia, the UK and USA have been the largest providers" (74). Over the past few decades of national development, the Gulf states have been open to Western, mainly U.S. cultural, dominance—at times, neoimperialism—and have largely internalized its dominant market-centered discourse along with its creation of neoliberal subjectivities, whereupon Mohammed Al Maktoum, for example, has dubbed himself "the 'CEO of Dubai,' something reflected in the way many Emiratis make an analogy between the city and a corporation" (Kanna 106).

2.2 Creating Creative Industries in the GCC States

Since the late 1990s, the GCC states' promotion of an official national identity in an increasingly complex and globalizing world has been managed through what Arjun Appadurai terms "mediascapes" (Appadurai 296).[3] Mediascapes "refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, film production studios, etc.), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world; and to the images of the world created by these media" (ibid.). GCC state mediascapes include a sudden mushrooming of local media production companies, many of which are located in free trade zones. Divorcing Gulf cities from their temporal and spatial environments, "each free zone has its own authority and its own rules" (Cherien); it does not necessarily have to conform to "laws in areas such as employment and visa requirements, labor market-nationalization policies, or media infrastructure," and it is also subject to less stringent censorship laws than those governing the rest of the country (Kanna 108). The most extreme example of such a space is NEOM (Nowesa, or Northwest Saudi Arabia), Saudi Arabia's futuristic technology-led free zone governed by its own laws and bearing little resemblance to the rest of the Shari'a-ruled country (Kirk). The $500 billion project was introduced to the world through a series of slick promotional films in which "frolicking families of all races and creeds" inhabit the utopian metropolis (ibid.). Despite their many efforts at reducing reliance on foreign migrant labor, the Gulf states must still promote an image of being a welcoming cosmopolitan space, except this time the image of the future is filled with wealthy, foreign, and skilled lifestyle migrants, rather than low-paid laborers—a neoliberal investment in diversity, according to the promotional films.

Such enclaves do not come without controversies over the system of social relations they encourage within an extreme neoliberal framework. Even though the word "humanity" is highlighted prominently in many of NEOM's promotional films and advertisements (NEOM), in reality the plan is to replace migrant laborers occupying menial jobs—and who currently make up the majority of the foreign workforce—with "robots to free humans from repetitive labor" (ibid.). Perhaps more contentious is the peculiar announcement that the Saudi government has conferred much-coveted Saudi citizenship on a robot, Sophia ("Saudi Women"),

rather than extending the same privilege to the many long-term foreign residents who have labored toward this unachievable ideal, to little effect. Sophia has earned the ire of many Saudi women, especially since those "married to foreigners in the gender-segregated nation cannot pass on citizenship to their children" (ibid.). Meanwhile, Sophia "does not need a male guardian or have to cover her head in public" (ibid.), riling Saudi women against an object that has "more rights than they have" (ibid.). Despite these many social frictions, conservative practices and neoliberal markets must accommodate one other, making the question of national identity an ever more complex and contested terrain—and one that is negotiated later in this chapter, with an examination of Mohammed Al Ibrahim's short film, *Bidoon*.

The many media production companies being established in the Gulf have allowed for the GCC states to invest in their own nation-branding efforts and create advertisements specifically designed for the nation and about the nation.[4] These branding efforts have aided in the "construction and dissemination of a certain *image* of the 'nation'" (Guibernau 258), presenting one facet of a larger strategic national agenda of defining and promoting national identity—one that is paid for, scripted, filmed, edited, and exhibited. While these commercial endeavors are particularly powerful tools for representing a highly scripted national identity, the GCC states have made recent forays into creative filmmaking with the establishment of a branch of the New York Film Academy in Abu Dhabi, a branch of Northwestern University in Qatar, and a branch of New York University in Abu Dhabi. The non-commercial film, however, is one cultural discipline that is somewhat more difficult to harness, as these creative productions respond less favorably to preordained curtailments. Indeed, while many such imported institutions can be considered commoditized extensions of U.S. cultural imperialism tasked with "producing knowledge and producing subjects" for neoliberal markets, it is important to recognize—wherever the production of knowledge is concerned—"the unexpected effects that these schools are having on citizen and foreign resident populations in the Gulf," especially ones that "muddle easy dismissals or celebrations of the practice of globalizing higher education" (Vora 20). Having gained technical filmmaking expertise, whether through these U.S. branch campuses, through state-sponsored media institutes, or even through the informal communities that these organizations have motivated, some filmmakers are taking this knowledge outside these institutions by making films independent of them. While a variety of imposed

regulations and restrictions limit their critical potential, many of these films still attempt to tell stories that veer from the norm by highlighting underrepresented social issues through the very heterotopias they call into being (Foucault 24), and the alternative representations of society they subsequently induce (Appadurai 299).

The Doha Film Institute and Northwestern University in Qatar have funded or overseen the production of a variety of fiction and nonfiction narratives about the nation, national identity, and everyday lived experience. These creative visualizations serve to reveal overt and covert codes and clues about the multiplicity and inconsistency of any one purported national identity.[5] In addition to the neoliberal pressures to forge such a fluid identity,[6] many emerging filmmakers in the Gulf states often find themselves in the precarious position of constantly negotiating "the collision between the requirements of the production of cinematic work that is serious and free of censorship and the demands of living in societies still subject to strict traditions governing life styles, behavior and personal relations" (Jarjoura 213). Although the limits of freedom of expression are subject to methodical observation, or in many cases self-censorship ("Qatar"), creative films are wont to produce an expressive alterity that cannot always be defined, detected, contained, or withheld. Even though these cultural productions are largely constrained by the overarching systems under which they operate, this is a cinema that, in its frequent attempts to imagine other worlds, does not always stick to the script.

The Gulf's emerging film industries benefit from "plentiful local financing, a well-endowed festival structure, limited international distribution, [and] often local training" (Armes 2). These are monetary and material privileges that set GCC film industries apart from those in the rest of the Arab world, and which have solicited a small, but steadily growing literature (see Hambuch; Kennedy-Day; Leotta; Reisz). Indeed, in nations "with almost no film history and a population with little knowledge of film history, production and expressing themselves through film, being a film mecca is a formidable goal around which a film education revolution is beginning, and opportunities available for young talent expand every day—in ways that film students in other countries could not even dream of" (Yunis and Picherit-Duthler 120). The Doha Film Institute and Northwestern University in Qatar have encouraged and invested in local film production,[7] "and have offered substantial financial support ranging from film development to production and post-production" (Gugler 4). These two institutions alone have overseen the making of hundreds

of films made in Qatar over the course of a few short years (Doha Film Institute, "Made"), with the most substantial state funding opportunities directed at citizens. Since in most GCC states, "the ability to migrate with family members is based on minimum monthly salary requirements for the male head of household" (Vora 24), the young, foreign residents who avail themselves of filmmaking opportunities are of privileged socioeconomic status, and already possess the social and cultural capital necessary to take part in such artistic endeavors.

Having gained the necessary expertise, and encouraged by the achievements of the GCC's official film industries, independent filmmaking has come into being, inspiring amateur participation in the art. While there is no strict definition of what constitutes an "independent" film, and especially one in the context of the Gulf, Emanuel Levy notes that in its most idealized form, "the term 'independent' conjures up visions of ambitious directors working with little money and no commercial compromises. Ideally, an indie is a fresh, low-budget movie with a gritty style and offbeat subject matter that express the filmmaker's personal vision" (Levy 2). The number of such films made in the Gulf, independent of both the film industry and local commercial media production companies, has risen for several key reasons: the widespread popularity of film as a cultural form; the decrease in the price of cinematic technology and simultaneous increase in technological know-how; and the ease of distribution and accessibility of the creative text through a multitude of media, especially digital online media. All of these elements have led to an unprecedented number of broadly independent filmic texts discharging a deluge of different voices, perspectives, and stories.

Through several local film productions, many filmmakers, especially independent ones, have gradually been taking on responsibilities normally associated with civil society, and lend "insight into how they wish to present, to as wide an audience as possible, the issues which they see as crucial to their societies" (Armes 10). Some GCC filmmakers are emerging as advocates for a variety of social issues, from Bader AlHomoud's comedic critique of the housing crisis in Saudi Arabia in *Monopoly* (2011), to highlighting the much-criticized *kafala* sponsorship system,[8] and its production of skewed power relationships between Gulf families and their domestic servants in Abdulrahman Al Madani's *Beshkara* (2015) and Meshal Aljaser's *Is Sumiyati Going to Hell?* (2016), to a farcical take on Saudi female guardianship in Mujtaba Saeed's *Al Bosala* (2015).[9] Many of these emerging filmmakers do not work in film full-time, and the

films are rarely made with financial success in mind, since "potential access to these films through conventional commercial Arab distribution circuits will often be very limited. Few if any of them draw on the assumptions of traditional (Egyptian) film genres or directly seek out the same audience" (Armes 4). The poor distributive networks of Arab cinema in general has meant that films are rarely screened outside of film festivals, and that their audiences are limited and predominantly made up of those middle-class elites who are able to attend festival screenings.

Even though filmmaking in the GCC has been supported recently by a small network of regional GCC screening opportunities, these regional film festivals have been increasingly in flux, opening up and shutting down within a few short years.[10] When successful, GCC-based filmmakers enter their productions into the international festival screening circuit, even though these are not always "officially" sanctioned by their home countries, or countries of production. While these films might not necessarily be given the state's stamp of approval to represent the nation in the more official and prestigious festivals and awards ceremonies, they are, nonetheless, often visual representations of their nations of production—regardless of the nationality of the filmmaker—and enter into circulation in a myriad of smaller international festivals, or are simply placed online for a more accessible and public display (Murphy 18).

The increased distributive flexibility afforded by digital technologies means that—for those who can afford to have access to them—all manner of independent projects, whether amateur or professional, can be produced and circulated, with or without the knowledge or approval of the official film industry or, for that matter, the state. GCC-made films are often uploaded online in order to gain an audience—*Monopoly*, for example, has gained over two million views since it was uploaded to YouTube in 2011.[11] With high internet penetration rates becoming a key feature of GCC countries, "online social networking has helped to foster virtual film communities and cultivate film-related activities in real life as well," (Ciecko 7), but larger structural issues of economic power imbalances remain, and "although Arabs are certainly producing a flurry of interpretations of their situation, the revenues largely accrue in the pockets of foreign companies like YouTube" (Dickinson, "In Focus" 133).

If "the centralized and top-down nature of political power in the Gulf states has resulted in a highly filtered rendition of" local cinema, then, these independent productions may be considered those rougher materials that cannot always be sieved through (Gardner 356). Often carving

spaces for contestation, many independent filmmakers "embark on what are usually protracted searches for funding; they proceed on miniscule budgets; they try to avoid censorship, and when that fails, they engage in difficult negotiations with censors; they take on multiple production roles, recruiting actors, sometimes training amateur actors, assembling crews; and they struggle to get their films distributed" (Gugler 2–3). These many voices emanating from a myriad of subject positions, jostle within the same cinematic space to tell their stories of what it means to live in the Gulf, creating "an Arab cinematic scene of various and contradictory chapters" (Jarjoura 212).

2.3 National Identity in Qatar, and Representations of the Other

One facet of the state's establishment of local cultural industries is meant to align with Qatar's "policies of nationalising the workforce to reduce dependency on foreigners" (Exell 136), as outlined in its National Vision 2030 (Government of Qatar, "Qatar" 16). Qatar's National Vision 2030 sets goals toward achieving a significant reduction in the reliance on foreign workers and expertise, and proposes that, in the years leading up to 2030, there should be an almost complete transfer of skills so that the nation can rely on its own citizens to manage most, if not all, sectors. In this regard, Qatar's National Vision explicitly strives toward defining a particular national identity according to increased "Qatarization" of the nation's workforce—that is, "the national strategy of developing a competent Qatari workforce through education and training" (Government of Qatar, "Qatarization"), ensuring that Qatari nationals are adequately qualified to occupy incrementally those positions being held by foreign skilled employees, and leaving low-skilled positions as the domain of an imported foreign workforce—or robots, as in the case of Saudi's NEOM city discussed earlier. Investment in, and promotion of, local film production is supposed to enable Qataris to not only take charge in the field of filmmaking, but to also craft representations of a certain national identity produced through these mediascapes—a task that is increasingly difficult in an increasingly transnational film industry.

A central paradox of creating a national identity through cultural industries is that the GCC states—and Qatar, in particular,[12] boasting the largest migrant population—are reliant on foreign labor for many of the conceptual underpinnings of national identity formation, as well as the

practical application and manifestation of this national character. Tellingly, even the construction of the GCC states' National Visions, including Qatar's National Vision 2030, drew "heavily on international best practice and advice from management consultancies, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, while typically having little direct input from local civil society or parliaments" (Kinninmont et al. 22). The vision for Qatar's national identity, therefore, is inextricably linked to that of the foreign other who aids in its formation. The Gulf region has always been a place rich in intercultural encounters, and "the tradition of assimilative internationalism, essential to most trading nations, runs deep in the life of Qatar and is alive and well today" (Fawzi and Makower 8). Indeed, "the physical fabric of life in Doha" has for a long time been constructed through the large, multiethnic migrant communities and a plethora of imported products and knowledges, from "the dhows made of teak and mango from India, to canvas sails from Bahrain and Kuwait," to the contemporary cinematic form (6).

The Gulf has an extraordinary demographic makeup—roughly 88 percent of Qatar's population is made up of foreigners (Koch 37)—in which "the low-paid migrant workforce constitutes the majority of the labor force in all GCC states and the polarization of wealth between citizen and noncitizen residents is extremely high" (Hanieh 3). The majority of people in Qatar are thus not afforded the opportunities to be involved in the nation's many creative industries. Those who do take part are those well-paid foreign residents who are encouraged to work with Qatari nationals in close proximity when producing "co-creative" films (Bunning et al.), leading to a regular exchange of cultural knowledge, and a sharing and transfer of expertise. The fact remains, however, that cinematic productions typically involve crews of people from various cultural backgrounds, and these productions are usually not limited to any one country. Indeed, "the most obvious way in which Middle Eastern cinema now operates in a transnational world is through the ubiquitous use of co-productions" (Ginsberg and Lippard xlix), thus complicating state attempts at depicting a definite national identity through Gulf film.

2.4 Delicate Depictions of Diversity

Such intercultural dialogue does not necessarily occur in other cultural fields, and especially in the state-sponsored national museums. As Sultan Al Qassemi notes, "none of the Gulf states' national museums tackle

the role or even the existence of minorities and other ethnic and religious groups" (Al Qassemi). While these communities might not be represented in the more official curations of national identity, some are being delicately depicted in local film productions despite their primary focus on citizens. Indeed, notwithstanding its similar sanctioning by the state, the Doha Film Institute has contributed—either directly in terms of financial support or indirectly through training and mentoring of filmmakers—to a wider social dialogue on some of these issues by supporting or screening a number of films that touch upon socially sensitive subjects, so long as these do not radically upset the prevailing cultural norms. A growing interest in local film production means that more artists, both citizen and foreign resident, who are encouraged to take part in the cultural industry, are beginning to shape their own versions of Qatar's lived experience—versions that do not always tally with the dominant state narratives. In order to examine differences between how (trans)national identity is currently being formulated in Qatar, I examine two locally produced films, *Dari Qatar* (2016) and *Bidoon* (2012): together they help to highlight the difference between official and unofficial representations of the nation and its global aspirations.

The 2012 short film *Bidoon*, "literally 'without'" (Partrick 21), by Mohammed Al Ibrahim, portrays the challenges faced by people "of different social standing," as noted in the film's synopsis.[13] In this case, the "without" refers to those without a state—politically and economically marginalized communities that reside in the Gulf and that do not have the same access to education, employment, and other such privileges granted to citizens. This meta-narrative is distilled from the general to the particular; a cinematic trope in which "the focus on an individual story is a factor common to many of the films that have begun to place Arab cinema on a new track. Such films address environmental, social and community situations, yet present them through the eyes of the individual, who is able to intensify the moment, to express the facts and address the deeply hidden realities at the core of major issues" (Jarjouri 216). Just as Iranian cinema has developed into an internationally recognized narrative force, a handful of Gulf filmmakers are moving "from treating issues generally, rhetorically, and politically to dealing with them personally and deeply by focusing on a few individuals with subjectivities, who become the film's protagonists" (Naficy 51). While *Bidoon*'s official synopsis highlights the fraught relationship between the two central characters, Aziz and Rana,[14] due to their varying social status, it also highlights the plight



Fig. 2.1 *Bidoon* (Mohammed Al Ibrahim, Qatar, 2012)

of the "Bidoon"—members of a suspended community, and one that is largely unrecognized by the larger political and citizenship systems. In addition to their political marginalization, the Bidoon are also simultaneously socially stigmatized by local communities of the Gulf states ("2016 Country Reports"; Partrick 21) (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2).

The plight of the Bidoon is mostly discussed in the more protected academic circles,[15] and rarely approached in the cultural field, and even less so in the public sphere. The film manages to combine these various spheres in its narrative retelling of the sensitive social subject of statelessness. Aziz is the central character; he is of marginalized social standing, studying at one of Qatar Foundation's imported U.S. higher education institutions, where he has "had to fight to the bone to get into this college."[16] The film's opening shots place the audience directly in Doha's Education City, depicting two of its U.S. university campuses by lingering on an "I heart VCU" (Virginia Commonwealth University) sticker, and meandering through the halls of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar. While this is a U.S.-educational environment designed to train students for effective entry into the global market, it is also one in which Aziz is presumably exposed to critical schools of thought that give him the courage to question the entrenched ideologies surrounding his precarious social position. Thus, in this case, through a model of critical thinking, "this new knowledge economy, while producing transnational and neoliberal subjects, also brought a form of localized politicization" (Vora 26), in which Aziz becomes aware of the politics of his citizenship status through his failed relationship with Rana.



Fig. 2.2 Poster for *Bidoon*

From the start, the film establishes the multicultural and globalized Gulf setting, with the opening scene taking place in a classroom in which the professor is lecturing on a scientific subject, switching casually between Arabic and English. The film illustrates how "English dovetails comfortably with the privatization of education and thus becomes the symbol of new imbrications between […] elites and the global, mainly UK and U.S., economy…[T]he centrality of technical expertise in education and governance, as well as a push for English in scientific and technological advancement are familiar traits of neoliberalism across the global south and beyond" (Boutieri 113).

The impossibility of Aziz having a relationship with the comparatively wealthy Rana is enacted in her surreptitious passing of a secretive birthday card relayed through a series of students, before it finally makes it into the hands of a surprised Aziz. While this opening sequence is a highly stylized exercise in editing, pace, and musical accompaniment, what makes this film unique is the sociopolitical underlines of the content that sets it apart from other local cinematic endeavors. Further empathizing the globalized setting within which the film takes place, the card is written in a hybrid mixture of English script, Arabic words, and a series of emojis. Aziz retreats to read the card in the privacy of his car—an old-fashioned vehicle that subtly depicts his relative poverty: he has to open the door with a key, rather than with the remote control commonly found in more advanced models.

We follow Aziz's questioning of his lot, and his opposition to the socially and politically constructed fact that his relationship with Rana is doomed because of it—the fatalistic mood of the film depicted in the somber ambiance manifest in the low lighting throughout. The clash of the new generation's ideals against the former's is depicted in a conversation between Aziz and his father, where he is advised by the elder to accept his predicament as the status quo, and to not struggle against the grain, saying: "Why would you cross that line?…We live in this country comfortably, and thank Allah we lack nothing."[17] Aziz reluctantly agrees, but spends one last evening with Rana before they part ways—an evening she has orchestrated by renting out the entire indoor pool area of a five-star hotel or similar establishment, complete with buffet catering.

Aziz's subservience can be read in two oppositional ways, depending on the subject position of the viewer. The first is a negative reading in that Aziz's lack of assertion is derived from a lifetime of submission learned through his upbringing in a disenfranchised community—he lacks the

strength to stand up to his father and to challenge social inequality. The second, oppositional reading, is that Aziz has capitulated to his elder in an act of respect in order to maintain the status quo—and thus the peace. For conservative Gulf societies, Aziz's final decision can be read positively: as filial piety and upholding familial reputation. In the final monologue, shot in the style of breaking the fourth wall, Aziz addresses himself—and the audience—through a bathroom mirror. Through this cinematic trope, Al Ibrahim urges the audience to put themselves in Aziz's place, and to quite literally reflect on the predicament of the Bidoon as he holds up a mirror to society. Aziz battles with his reflection, but ultimately gives in, and withdraws from the relationship saying: "I'm going to live by the words of my father…I don't have a choice" (op. cit.). While the film highlights the plight of an individual Bidoon, and how Aziz is unable to continue a romantic relationship because of his marginalized social standing, it does not advocate outright one way or the other. In conservative Arab societies, regardless of whether one is a Bidoon or a privileged citizen, choosing a future spouse is rarely an individual choice, and more often than not an arrangement that has to be approved by families at the expense of the individual.

Rana's situation too can be read in two opposite ways: as either a good or bad outcome of education and modernity, depending on whether the viewer is an advocate for change, or a conservative member of Arab society. Rana's self-assured advances can be read as the unrealistic and irresponsible imaginings of socioeconomic privilege or, in contrast, as an educated, wealthy, and independently minded Arab woman attempting to break with patriarchal tradition and to discard social hierarchies. By becoming an individual who is able to make her own choices—or somewhere between the two—Rana is buoyed by her stable citizenship, and accrued wealth, which affords her the ability to question traditional Arab gender stereotypes. Rana initiates all the advances: she sends Aziz the inciting birthday card, organizes and pays for their rendezvous, and, toward the end of the film, attempts physical contact. While Aziz refuses to be physically intimate with Rana, Al Ibrahim directs the forbidden romance of the evening through sensual close-ups of their eyes and lips.

Although Aziz finally succumbs to the pressures of his family, and even though the conclusion ambiguously advocates for the Bidoon as equal in Gulf society, the narrative takes small first steps toward highlighting the predicament of this marginalized community by representing it on film. The complexities surrounding the many restrictions in conservative—yet

rapidly modernizing—Gulf societies mean that filmmakers cannot always come out with bold statements but must judiciously negotiate the myriad visible and invisible red lines. Since the GCC states enforce "anti-defamation laws written into ratified penal codes, with clauses detailing the punitive measures" against public offenses, largely undefined, "enactments of censorship in the GCC region are not transparent decisions or processes, [and] artists of the GCC countries inhabit, adapt, and work in extraordinary conditions" (Demerdash 30). In this respect, "filmmakers in particular face perpetual challenges, partly because their works have wide public and international reach, rendering the repercussions of defamation all the more risky" (31). Such representations of marginalized communities can provide a first step toward "the transformation of public life through the generation of a new social imaginary, a new mode of organizing social relations that is different from the status quo. These new social imaginaries are not created by individual films, but through the concatenation of multiple films, and other cultural products, over time" (Gana 168). GCC artistic productions are beginning to gingerly approach sensitive social subjects and must address the associated stigma upon release of their work. In an interview, Al Ibrahim states: "after the film was shot everyone started being scared about releasing it, about it being too touchy a subject" (Fakhro 2016).

Bidoon premiered in 2012 at the now-defunct Doha Tribeca Film Festival (Kemp) and was subsequently screened at various film festivals (Fakhro), as well as online with over 13,000 views ("*Bidoon*"), exposing local and international audiences to an onscreen lived experience of statelessness and offering a space to discuss its many controversies. The screening of such rarely approached social controversies, and the debates they induce, allows local and international audiences to engage with regional Gulf politics in artistic form. These issues are rearticulated on film, making them more palatable for public consumption, given the element of melodrama geared toward audience identification with the star-crossed lovers. Their doomed romance, although contextualized in a particular Gulf setting, follows the age-old narrative trend of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* tragedy, giving it wider audience appeal by framing Gulf power relations in a familiar, easily recognizable form (see Shakespeare 245–278). The ways in which this particularly sensitive issue of statelessness and not belonging—common to many Gulf countries—are narrated through film, pushes the limits of identity politics, creating a certain degree of tolerance for a community that is rarely represented in the public sphere, and even

less so in a positive depiction of a central protagonist who questions the limits of a constructed national identity.

2.5 Rainbow Cosmopolitanism

To illustrate the differences between how (trans)national identity is characterized on film by social actors versus the state, it is instructive to compare a film like *Bidoon* with a state-sponsored one. While *Bidoon* is a subtle depiction of social marginalization as seen through the eyes of an individual, directed by a young Qatari citizen, *Dari Qatar: A Film by All of Us* is a brash, carefully curated depiction of diversity. Supported by the Doha Film Institute and the Qatar Tourism Authority, *Dari Qatar* is a Qatar-wide, crowd-sourced documentary directed by Ahmad Al-Sharif, in which residents of Qatar, citizen and foreign, were invited to submit footage online (Doha Film Institute, "'*Dari*'"). During 2016, DFI received 262 hours of professional and amateur footage in "an overwhelming 10,000 plus submissions from over 200 enthusiasts, representing 22 nationalities" (Doha Film Institute, "#DariQatar"), and then undertook the task of "weaving them together to create a tapestry of daily life in Qatar" (Doha Film Institute, "Made"), in which the film "celebrates the diversity of Qatar and its people" (Doha Film Institute, "#DariQatar").

GCC governments are thought to be "increasingly concerned with how to narrate a particular kind of subjectivity for the foreign resident populations. This has included both civic nationalist imaginaries to promote an expat attachment to their 'home away from home' and a sense of deep gratitude for the many opportunities for personal advancement that the local leadership is said to grant them" (Koch 52). To this effect, there has been an increase in local productions and film screenings—especially around the time of these countries' national day celebrations—that send out a message of "unity through diversity" (47).

Since *Dari Qatar* is supported by the Tourism Authority, the call for contributions to the film stresses the *positive* nature of the documentary, noting that "the fantastic panorama of the nation will principally cover six segments: Family, Change, Joyful Honesty, Harmony, Nature and Beauty" (Doha Film Institute, "Tell"). Following the defined parameters of this script, however, as a promotional film touted by the Tourism Authority, not all voices, or opinions, of those who live and labor in Qatar are included, and the clips were presumably carefully selected and shaped into a narrative that was approved by the Tourism Authority, resulting

in what Dickinson calls a "rainbow cosmopolitanism" (Dickinson, *Arab* 155). Even though *Dari Qatar* depicts a variety of different life and labor practices in the country, from the well-known face of an Al Jazeera television personality to low-income migrant window washers—presumably provided with cameras for the purposes of collecting footage—the target audience for the film is largely drawn from the middle classes and elite who could afford the time and money to attend the screenings. The project exhibits a move toward offering different cultural perspectives, even though these fall within the limited circles of those who have the privilege of engaging in such activities, and who have access to media technologies.

Even though different migrant identities might be increasingly represented in GCC film productions, many of their struggles—low incomes, marginalization, and mistreatment—are hardly broached. Dickinson argues that even if socioeconomic inequality is depicted in GCC cinematic productions, many of those who constitute the audience are privileged spectators who do little to transform or even address the highlighted issues. While writing specifically about Dubai, Dickinson's argument can be extended to other areas of the GCC in which many "high-income migrants commonly remain ignorant, oblivious, apathetic or too dazzled by the comfort of their own economic set-up and the luxurious amenities of this global city to think deeper on the matter" (ibid. 157).

Although some film productions purport to expand the definition of national identity as being thoroughly inclusive, this is often a particularly narrow definition of "inclusivity" based on socioeconomic privilege, praise for cosmopolitanism, and access to, and engagement in, such state-led cultural endeavors. Once the neoliberal state institutes "multiculturalism as a formal acknowledgement of diversity," this can serve to gloss "over important differences between and within the various 'cultures'" (Boutieri 107), and, more importantly, between the various classes, thereby eliding rather than addressing issues of socioeconomic inequality. Within a variety of cultural industries, movements toward greater inclusivity of cultural diversity in the national narrative have made greater strides over the years than those toward more class inclusivity. Cultural institutions are shaped by their political environments, and this inclusive multiethnicity does not necessarily filter through all sectors of society—especially the large low-income migrant population, which is rarely included in the making or screening of these cultural texts.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show how the budding GCC film industries answer to, complicate, or negate the overarching national vision. The necessary intercultural exchange that typically occurs in the film industry might seem to undermine the main tenets of the GCC states' National Visions, which aim to ensure that industries are no longer dependent on foreign labor. Contemporary filmmaking is becoming an ever more international and intercultural effort, and there is "an acknowledgement of the changing nature of film production and distribution as part of wider patterns of globalization" (Shaw 47). Perhaps more so than other art forms, film is one area of creative endeavor that has teamwork at its heart, and the realization of film productions often necessitates the collaboration of large groups of people, casts, and crews from all over the world, from different cultural backgrounds, and with varying disciplinary and technical abilities (ibid.). Connected by foundational global distribution and exhibition networks, the international thrust of film industries in general, and the international makeup of any one film production in particular, means that, unlike other cultural industries in the GCC that are attempting to nationalize their workforce, the local film industry will necessarily maintain complex global interactions and a "difficult, transnational mixture of industry and auteur production" (Ginsberg and Lippard xi). The fledgling filmmakers who gain expertise through the various training and education programs reflect the diverse multicultural makeup of the GCC states, while also projecting a desired, if precarious, cosmopolitan image—despite their socioeconomic privileges, many simultaneously occupy uncertain GCC residence.

Governments and societies all over the world select which parts of their histories to highlight, and which elements of their heritages to harness, and this is especially true of the GCC states. The question is whether this otherness is necessarily excised in the nation-building effort, especially in the case of the low-income foreign workforce, or whether it can be accommodated without detracting from the formation of a recognizable national character. Much can be learned from the GCC states' budding film industries regarding the crucial intercultural dialogue that it facilitates between people from different ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. It is possible that this mutual interdependence can then be expanded into other sectors of these states, and perhaps reflected

within the national imaginary, so that all the communities of the GCC make the final cut.

Notes

1. Gideon Rachman notes that, "although they are tiny places—Qatar and the UAE have populations of 2.2m and 9.1m respectively—the Gulf states play an outsize role in the global economy," in "The Qatar Crisis has Global Implications." See also Government of Qatar, "Qatar" 16.
2. Doha's Education City campuses include branch campuses of U.S. universities such as VCUarts Qatar, Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, Texas A&M University at Qatar, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Georgetown University in Qatar, and Northwestern University in Qatar. It also includes graduate schools, such as the French HEC Paris in Qatar, and British UCL Qatar.
3. Appadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flow include: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes (296).
4. The Film House, Resolution Media, Innovation Films, The Edge Picture Company, Doha Touchscreen Media, QVision, and Ginger Camel, are just some of the production companies that sprang up in Doha within a short period of time over the past decade.
5. The Doha Film Institute dedicates a "Made in Qatar" section to showcase locally made films during its now defunct Doha Tribeca Film Festival as well as in its ongoing Ajyal Film Festival. See Doha Film Institute, "#DTFF12."
6. Highlighting the inevitable friction at the heart of transnational projects, David Harvey argues that the universalizing impulses of neoliberalism "will run into serious problems as they encounter the specific circumstances of their application" (8).
7. Northwestern University in Qatar's Studio 20Q provides "grants for student films, a variety of filmmaking workshops and a network of professional filmmakers in Qatar and around the world" ("Student Clubs"; see also "Bachelor"); and the Doha Film Institute provides financial support for MENA and international filmmakers through annual grants cycles as well as a Qatar Film Fund for Qatari filmmakers ("Training").
8. There are a growing number of academic studies that critique the *kafala* sponsorship system. See Ross; Gardner; Kamrava and Babar; among many others.
9. Bader AlHomoud, *Monopoly*, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMvCURQEhpM; Abdulrahman Al Madani, *Beshkara*, 2015, Dubai International Film Festival 2015, dubaifilmfest.com/en/films/41759/beshkara.html; Meshal Aljaser, *Is Sumiyati Going to Hell?* 2016, www.

imdb.com/title/tt6811134/; Mujtaba Saeed, *Al Bosala*, 2015, www.imdb.com/title/tt4877404.

10. The Doha Tribeca Film Festival operated between 2009 and 2012, the Abu Dhabi Film Festival between 2007 and 2014; and the Gulf Film Festival between 2007 and 2014.
11. AlHomoud, *Monopoly*, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMvCURQEhpM.
12. Koch reports that, "in Qatar, citizens account for about 12 percent of the country's 2 million inhabitants, while 13 percent of the UAE's 8.2 million residents are citizens" (47).
13. Mohammed Al Ibrahim, *Bidoon*, Doha Film Institute, 2012, www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival/films/bidoon.
14. The two main characters in *Bidoon* are played by Aziz Al Dorani and Rana Jubara.
15. There is a growing literature on the Bidoon, some examples include: Shah; Al-Nakib; Kareem; Partrick.
16. English language subtitles in the film, *Bidoon*.
17. English language subtitles in the film, *Bidoon*.

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CHAPTER 3

Lebanese Cinema and the French Co-production System: The Postcard Strategy

Wissam Mouawad

3.1 A Failed Industry

With only four million citizens and about two million poor Syrian and Palestinian refugees, Lebanon does not have a good demographic base upon which to build a strong market for film production. Lebanese filmmakers and producers have always struggled unsuccessfully against foreign films to capture a share of this small market. Dominated by Egyptian cinema in the first half of the 20th century and overwhelmed by American genre movies and blockbusters, Lebanese cinema has rarely been able to attract a significant proportion of the low number of moviegoers. (An average of three million movie tickets is sold every year in Lebanon [Haddad].) This is why there has never existed in Lebanon a true film industry. One should mention that Lebanon did not produce any films until 1929 (that is, 34 years after the invention of cinema), when Italian cinematographer Giordano Pidutti directed the first Lebanese movie, *The Adventures of Elias Mabrouk*, a silent comedy about a Lebanese emigrant returning from the United States. This film became a box-office success,

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which encouraged Pidutti to make a sequel, *The Adventures of Abu Abed* (1933), about a Lebanese emigrant returning from Africa. However, the French authorities at the time did not want to encourage the rise of a local film industry, because cinema was a primary tool of their colonial policy in the Levant. Elizabeth Thompson writes that the four silent films that were produced in Lebanon and Syria between 1928 and 1932 failed at the box office because of French interference. She explains that "French censorship also interfered with attempts at local film production" (201). Moreover, she writes that French authorities exerted strict control over cinemas, which became "a favorite haunt of the French secret police, who filed reports on audiences' responses to their propagandistic newsreels and foreign films [...]" (200). All of these actions hampered the development of a local film industry in Lebanon. Later, the phenomenal growth of Egyptian cinema and its domination over the Arab film market annihilated any possibility of the implementation of a film industry in Lebanon (Khatib 23–25). Despite some remarkable attempts during the 1950s (for example, Georges Nasser's *Where to?*, which was the first Lebanese film to be screened at an international film festival, namely Cannes in 1957; and Michel Haroun's *The Rose Seller*, also 1957), and despite the ephemeral rise of the film industry in the middle of the 1960s, following Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Egyptian industry, it collapsed with the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. Therefore, one can confidently say that, to date, Lebanon has not found a viable model for film production.

However, there has recently been widespread talk about the establishment of a film industry in the country. In July 2017, *Magazine—Le Mensuel* dedicated nine pages to the "expanding film industry in Lebanon," and in January 2018, *Executive Magazine* published an article entitled "The Future Is Film: Together for Lebanon's Cinema Industry." Also, *Le Commerce du Levant*, a magazine specializing in economics, dedicated a part of its October 2017 issue to the question of the rising film industry in the country. Evidenced by these publications is the fact that more and more films are being produced in Lebanon (in 2015, 31 full-length fiction and documentary films were produced, while the average between 2006 and 2011 was 11 films per year), but also that Lebanese cinema is still highly dependent upon international funding as well as upon Western film festivals, which can guarantee a film worldwide distribution and ensure a reputation for quality and seriousness.

In this context, a number of questions arise. First, what proportion of contemporary Lebanese films is financed by international institutions,

and what are these institutions? Second, are transnationally and nationally funded Lebanese films similarly valued by international film festivals? Third, to what extent do the films that are selected at major festivals around the world (the "festival darlings") influence local film production? Fourth, do transnationally funded Lebanese films really express and reflect local concerns, or do they comply with expectations predefined by European funders with respect to European audiences and festivals? Finally, to what extent do transnational production and distribution conditions lead to a codified representation based on stereotypical views of the country, views that may be described, following Mariana Liz ("From Europe with Love"), as "cinematic postcards"?

3.2 Quick Overview of Contemporary Lebanese Film Production

It is difficult to find an exhaustive list of all the Lebanese narrative feature films that have been produced since the end of the civil war in 1989. The *Cinémathèque nationale du Liban*, which was founded in 1999 as part of the Lebanese Ministry of Culture to document and safeguard the Lebanese film heritage, is a very poorly endowed institution that failed to fulfill its mission and has now nearly ceased to function. Late in 2018, the Beirut-based Metropolis association and its partners launched *Cinémathèque Beirut*, a crowdsourcing-based project aiming, in its first phase, at documenting and cataloguing Lebanese cinema. *Cinémathèque Beirut* is, however, in its early stages, and does not provide a complete list of contemporary Lebanese cinema. The most complete filmography may be found in Raphaël Millet's recently published *Cinema in Lebanon*, where he proposes a list that of films that qualify as "work[s]-in-progress […] in need of improvement" (378).

In fact, Millet's filmography is somewhat inconsistent. The films included therein seem to have been selected for very different reasons, while others have been inexplicably excluded. For example, some films have apparently been included mainly on the basis of their having been directed by Lebanese filmmakers—despite the fact that they are foreign productions that tell stories which neither take place in Lebanon nor involve Lebanese characters—while others have been included despite having been directed by non-Lebanese filmmakers, for reasons probably related to their production conditions or their content. Among the first group, the following are exemplary: Omar

Naïm's American/Canadian/German science-fiction film, *Final Cut* (2004), a dystopian reflection about surveillance and personal freedom in an increasingly technology-dominated world (the film was shot in Canada and stars Robin Williams and Mira Sorvino); Maroun Baghdadi's French-produced *The Girl in the Air* (1992), which tells the true story of a prison break organized by a French woman named Brigitte (Beatrice Dalle) in an effort to help her husband, Daniel (Thierry Fortineau), escape from a Parisian jail; and Ziad Doueiri's *Lila Says* (2004), a French/British/Italian co-production, which follows three French teenagers of non-Lebanese origin. Among the second group of films are: *The Flower of Aleppo* (2016), directed by Tunisian filmmaker Rida Behi, a Tunisian-Lebanese co-production which was originally selected to be Tunisia's entry to the 89th Academy Awards before being replaced by Leila Bouzid's *As I Open My Eyes* (2015); and Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* (2015), an animated film inspired by Lebanese-American author Gibran Khalil Gibran's titular book, produced by Mexican-American actress Salma Hayek, who is of Lebanese origin, but directed by a group of non-Lebanese artists headed by American director Roger Allers. On the other hand, some Lebanese-produced films that are directed by Lebanese filmmakers, such as *Trip* (2001), directed by Samir Habchi, and *Love Me* (2003), directed by Milad Abi Raad, are not listed in the filmography, probably because they are based upon popular television series and have been categorized as television films. These few examples illustrate the inconsistencies of Millet's filmography, which may well be explained by the lack of information regarding Lebanese cinema, as the author asserts in his introductory note, but that mostly reflect the difficulty of defining a national filmography, especially in the context of a transnational production system. As Stephen Croft argues in his "Concepts of National Cinema," the identity of a film may depend upon different categories of analysis that need to be taken into consideration: production, distribution and exhibition, audiences, discourse, textuality, national-cultural specificity, the cultural specificity of genres and nation-state cinema movements, the role of the state, and the global range of nation-state cinemas. These categories can serve to propose a problematized definition of national cinema, and therefore to define a consistent filmography. Millet, however, does not problematize his definition of "Lebanese films," and his choices remain debatable. His filmography is nonetheless the most complete account we have and provides a satisfactory idea of the film production landscape in the country.

The filmography indicates that between the end of the Lebanese civil war and the beginning of 2018, approximately 85 feature fiction films were produced in Lebanon. Among these films, it appears that not more than 20 were exclusively produced with Lebanese money, while the others are transnational co-productions. This means that more than 75% of the films were made with the participation of international funds. We might also note that the great majority of the films that were produced exclusively with Lebanese money are low-budget commercial formula films whose technical and artistic quality does not qualify them for international film festivals. Technical quality depends upon international funding, and hence upon international audiences. This dependence comes with a price. Paul Willemen writes that when the domestic market is not large enough to sustain local film production, films try to appeal to international audiences (211–212). Transnationally produced films "fashion their narrative and aesthetic dynamics in relation to more than one national or cultural community" (Ezra and Rowden 3). Accordingly, the transnational production system cannot but influence the Lebanese filmmakers' thematic, narrative, aesthetic, and representational choices. But the question is how, and to what extent?

3.3 The Influence of a System

The influence of the transnational production system on a film's content is rarely openly discussed by Lebanese filmmakers and producers, because this would undermine the well-established marketing strategy of co-produced Lebanese films, which always puts forward the personal, intimate, "auterist" aspect of such films as opposed to their generic constraints or formulaic elements. This is also true of other transnationally funded films that belong to the "World Cinema" category. However, Georges Schoucair, Lebanon's most prominent film producer and one of the main actors in the Lebanese-foreign co-production system, has recently expressed, albeit timidly, the difficulty of having to adapt to the demands of foreign funders: "The sector is not yet at a stage where it could finance itself, but the diversification of the sources is promising. A few years ago, we depended a lot on European sources of funding, we were then tempted to make films that looked like them. Now, with new partners, mainly from the Arab world, we can make films that look more like us" (Kassim 62). But what does this mean, precisely? The question is of the utmost importance, for when we look at Millet's filmography and

study more deeply the conditions of production and distribution of the co-produced films, we notice the predominance of French funding and French awards. The great majority of the important Lebanese films of the past two or three decades have been financed, produced, and often celebrated by the former colonial power in Lebanon. It is true that Lebanese cinema is also supported by Germany (World Cinema Fund, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg…), Switzerland (Vision Sud-Est), Holland (Hubert Bals Fund), Qatar (Qatari Film Fund), and the United Arab Emirates (Sanad Film Fund, Enjaaz), among other sources, but France remains the dominant funder of Lebanese films. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that the only official co-production agreement between Lebanon and a foreign country is the one signed with France in 2000 and renewed in 2017, which facilitates the collaboration between Lebanese and French production companies; and, on the other hand, to the fact that France has the most advanced and best endowed international production fund (Newman-Baudais 35, 70).

The French commission to which Lebanese filmmakers and producers currently submit their screenplays is called *Aides aux cinémas du monde* (World Cinema Support). This commission resulted from a merger, in 2012, between *Fonds Sud Cinéma* and *Aide aux films en langue étrangère*. While the eligibility criteria for funding are clear—"[t]he film must be a co-production between a production company established in France and one that is not, it must be directed by a non-French [or exceptionally French] director, and must be shot abroad" ("World Cinema Support")—the actual selection criteria remain vague: "[t]he criteria are artistic quality and the ability to present different views and new ways of looking at things" ("Producing Films in France"). It is up to the members of the commission to decide whether the screenplays present "different views and new ways of looking at things," or not.

French producer Mathieu Mullier-Griffiths, who, as of 2019, is at work on the pre-production phase of one Lebanese director's first feature film, explained to me that, insofar as the rule at the *Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée* (CNC) states that all of the commission members must agree on funding each particular film (there may be no negative votes), he thoroughly prepares his scripts with his screenwriters before submitting them to the commission, taking into consideration that the commission members will have specific expectations (Mouawad 62). Speaking from her long experience, primarily in Germany, as a producer involved in international co-productions with Arab

countries, including Lebanon, Irit Neidhart states in her article, "Untold Stories," that "decision-makers at film funds and European producers who are involved in Arab films usually belong to the majority who form their image of and knowledge about Islam and the Middle East mainly through mass media" (40). This, according to Neidhardt, makes it nearly impossible for filmmakers who want to present original and uncommon views of their respective countries to receive funding for their films. Whether the films produced by Neidhardt herself, with European funding, enable Arab filmmakers to express themselves freely, or instead entail their participation in propagating a predefined political discourse about the Arab world, is subject to discussion. Her article perfectly explains, however, the predicament in which Arab filmmakers find themselves. The case of director Elie Khalifé usefully illustrates this predicament.

In the 2000s, while working on a story that he intended to submit to European production funds, Khalifé met a French producer who liked the project and proposed to help him write the screenplay. The story concerns a love affair between a Muslim woman from south Lebanon and an Irish soldier serving in the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Khalifé flew to Paris where the French producer introduced him to a "script doctor" acquainted with the commission's expectations. In the opening scene of Kahlifé's script, two women are described leaving a nightclub in the middle of the night in Beirut and hitchhiking with two Irish men. Both the producer and the script doctor objected to this scene, because according to them, women cannot go out alone at night in Beirut, let alone hitchhike with two strangers. There needed to be a male chaperone in the scene—a brother or cousin, for example. Khalifé protested, saying that he lives in Beirut and that this kind of scene is highly plausible there in the 2000s. The producer answered that even if it were factual, the commission members might not find it credible, which would mean that the script might not be selected. The final scene of Khalifé's script is a fairytale scene inspired by the myth of Europa, in which the Lebanese woman and her Irish lover sail away in a small boat. The producer suggested that the woman instead be dragged by her mother to the top of a hill, then slaughtered with a knife by her brother. Khalifé refused, and the collaboration was terminated. Following that incident, Khalifé turned to more independent modes of production, which allowed him to make several fiction films. For example, his film *A State of Agitation* (in post-production in 2019) was shot with a very small crew over eighteen months at a rate of one shooting day every month.

This rate was imposed by the lack of funding, but Khalifé considers that this gave him the freedom to be more creative. He believes that European co-production funds are reluctant to financing scripts that break away with preconceived themes and representations.

This is also expressed by other Lebanese filmmakers, like Nadine Naous, for instance, who admits having systematically modified her script for *Home Sweet Home* (2014) in order to comply with the expectations of the respective funds for which she was applying. Naous talks about "a game of masks" that she and others have to play with the commissions in order to secure funding for their films ("Femmes cinéastes"). It thus seems that "making films that look like them," as Georges Schoucair put it, actually means making films that make "us" fit *their* conception of what "we" should look like.

3.4 Case Study: *Where Do We Go Now?* (Nadine Labaki, 2011)

Where Do We Go Now? is recognized as one of the most important films in the history of Lebanese cinema. It has succeeded in becoming a "festival darling" (14 festival nominations in France, UK, Belgium, Canada, and three prizes won, including a special mention at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival and the Best European Film award at the 2011 San Sebastian Film Festival) and experienced the biggest domestic box-office success in the history of Lebanese cinema: the film attracted 350,000 spectators in the country—a huge number compared with the average 40,000 spectators for a Lebanese film—and approached the 400,000 spectators of James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), which remains Lebanon's biggest box-office hit. The story of *Where Do We Go Now?* is set in a remote and undefined Lebanese village inhabited by Muslims and Christians. Due to unhappy circumstances, the men in the village are drawn into religious violence, but the women conspire to keep them from fighting. The popular success of *Where Do We Go Now?* may partly be explained by the fact that it offered a refreshing and colorful view of the country despite the specter of the war, along with the fact that numerous elements in the film are based upon popular stereotypes to which Lebanese spectators are attuned: an impossible love story between a Muslim and a Christian; a country on the verge, or in the midst, of a religious war; the predominance of landscapes showing the beauty of the Lebanese countryside. But there is

another layer to which Lebanese audiences may have remained inattentive, and that may explain the festival life of the film.

Where Do We Go Now? was released in 2011, at the very beginning of the so-called Arab Spring. Media coverage of this event was important in Europe, particularly in France, where the dominant mediating discourse (mis)represented, on one side, citizens fighting for secularism, democracy and equal rights, and, on the other side, Islamist movements trying to recuperate the revolt and implement Shari'a (Islamic law). Indeed, as early as September 2011, French journalists started evoking the possibility of an "Islamist Winter" after senior Israeli officer Eyal Eisenberg warned of a "radical Islamic winter" that could lead to regional war (Zitun). The idea of the existence of two opposing trends in Arab societies, represented by the two concepts "Arab Spring" (secularism, equal rights) and "Islamist Winter" (Shari'a, polygamy, *niqab*…), easily found its way into the French media because it closely echoed a tension internal to French society between secularist ideology (*laïcité*) and religion, particularly Islam, on account of complex historical, demographic, economic, and political factors. Controversies about the *hijab*, swimming pool segregation, and halal food at public school cafeterias have been shaking the country since 1989 (*l'affaire du foulard*). The discourse about the Arab Spring was hence also a discourse about France itself. Moreover, this discourse is a remnant of the French colonial ideology, where the "good Arab" embraces the values of the West, whereas the "bad Arab" remains attached to his perceived barbaric traditions (Filhol). *Where Do We Go Now?* easily found its place within this setting, because it fuels the same discourse by reviving the same categories and oppositions.

In the film, which tells the story of a group of women who conspire to prevent their husbands from starting a religious war, ostensible progressive thinking is represented by the female group fighting for peace and equality, while so-called backward ideology is embodied by the male characters, who are depicted as violent, libidinous, and easily manipulated. This binary gender structure is completed by the presence of two main figures: the beautiful black-haired heroine who leads the female group, and her young lover who is nice despite being a man. The movie's underlying discourse about Lebanon and its religious/gendered disjunctures purports a classless society in which the only significant conflict lies between an outdated, war-inducing, patriarchal order and a new, tolerant secularist tendency. This ideological representation of Arab societies is recurrent in many French co-productions

made during the Arab Spring. Radu Mihaileanu's *The Source* (France, 2011), for instance, tells the true story—redolent of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*—of a group of Middle Eastern women (exact location not specified) who go on a sex strike to force their lazy and libidinous husbands to participate in daily tasks, mainly that of fetching water from a distant source. *At My Age I Still Hide to Smoke* (Rayhana Obermeyer, Algeria, 2016), *Much Loved* (Nabil Ayouch, Morocco, 2015), and *Dégradé* (Arab Nasser/Tarzan Nasser, Palestine, 2015) each depicts a group of women suffering from/struggling against an outdated and violent patriarchal order represented by a group of men. In each of these films, a central female character embodies Western values perceived as progressive. By sharing the same syntactic structure—to use Rick Altman's terminology (1999)—as well as a common aesthetic form, these films form part of a global orientalist film genre addressed to Western audiences and festivals. Further among many such films are Siddiq Barmak's *Osama* (Afghanistan, 2003), Aida Begic's *Snow* (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008), Aktan Arym Kubat's *The Light Thief* (Kyrgyzstan, 2010), and Deniz Gamze Erguven's, *Mustang* (Turkey, 2015). The festival life of *Where Do We Go Now?* may therefore be explained by its perfect fit into a discursive scheme dominant in Europe and, more particularly, in France, from whence came its funding.[1]

3.5 Exoticism

Like *Where Do We Go Now?*, French co-produced Lebanese films are generally categorized as "Lebanese," but they also belong to the broader category of World Cinema, which has another logic and set of genres and subgenres. Lebanese filmmakers who work within the French co-production system must always comply with certain expectations that can lead, at the very least, to the projection of an exoticizing discourse about their country and, in the worst case, to neocolonialist propaganda. In his well-known article, "The Postcolonial Exotic: Salman Rushdie and the Booker of Bookers," Graham Huggan outlines the mechanisms through which postcolonial Commonwealth writers such as Rushdie and Naipaul become somehow "complicit with the cultural imperialism they denounce" (24). For Huggan, these writers "recognize that the value of their writing as an international commodity depends, to a large extent, on the exotic appeal it holds to an unfamiliar metropolitan audience" (ibid.), and they thus

participate in the creation of a fantasized otherness through the exhibition of the "wares of Western literary exoticism" (27).

Exoticism is usually constructed through a process that is elucidated by Jean-François Staszak (2008) in his "Qu'est-ce que l'exotisme?" (What Is Exoticism?). Staszak writes that an exotic object is an object that is at the same time strange and appealing (14). He explains that the process of exoticization is based upon a double movement. First, in order for an object (or even a human being) to appear exotic, it has to be seized and disconnected from its local context; it has to be "decontextualized." Then, it must be placed into another context, the viewer's context, where its strangeness or difference becomes apparent: this is "recontextualization," which is always accompanied by a projection of stereotypical views that "domesticate" the object and make it appealing (ibid.). This process of decontextualization/recontextualization makes the object look strange and appealing, and hence exotic. The first scene in Elie Khalifé's script discussed above may be used to illustrate this mechanism. Here are some hypothetical variations of the scene:

- Two women are leaving a night-club in the middle of the night. They are accompanied by their cousin. The scene takes place in Paris. The women are not part of any ethnic minority (they are white French women). The fact that their cousin is accompanying them is incidental. No exotic flavor.
- Two women are leaving the night-club in the middle of the night. They are accompanied by their cousin. The scene takes place in Beirut and the women are Lebanese. But the film shows that Lebanese women are free to do whatever they want, and the fact that they are accompanied by their cousin is also of no importance. Beirut seems to be no different than Paris. No exotic flavor.
- Two women are leaving the night-club in the middle of the night. They are accompanied by their cousin. The scene takes place in Beirut but is recontextualized into a Beirut in which women need to be accompanied. Sudden appearance of an imagined otherness. Exotic flavor.

This last version is the one proposed by Elie Khalifé's producer. Khalifé refused, but other Lebanese filmmakers, producers, and screenwriters have learned to adapt their work to this kind of expectation. Therefore, by

privileging projects that "present different views and new ways of looking at things," the CNC commission, *Aides aux cinémas du monde*, actually privileges those works which create a fantasized otherness, an exotic perspective on a particular reality—a view that is, however, necessarily marketed as "authentic," because purported authenticity gives the impression of an "encounter" with the imagined Other (see Dwyer [2020]; and Lippard [2020]).

While denouncing "the blatant hypocrisies of exoticism—complacency masked as appreciation; novelty mediated through cliché; the creation of a cultural distance that the discourse claims to be narrow," Huggan asks the following question: "[w]hat options are open to writers of, say, African or Indian background who wish to translate their complex cultural realities for an unaccustomed metropolitan audience? The task is made more difficult when those realities have been shaped for centuries according to others' dictates: tailored to the requirements of a European exoticist imaginary" (27). The same question may be asked about Lebanese filmmakers. What other option is there for them than to comply with the dictates of foreign commission members whose knowledge of the country is limited, and who have in mind European spectators and European festivals? To show too much resistance means to take the risk of being expelled from the system. Some do make this choice, like Elie Khalifé or Christophe Karabache who opted for an independent/underground mode of production. Some try to find a middle-ground, like Fouad Alaywan, whose *Asfouri* (2012)—partly funded by Alaywan's company, Exit Films, and co-funded by the Fonds Francophone de Production Audiovisuelle du Sud and by the Dubai Entertainment and Media Organization in Association with Enjaaz (Dubai Film Market)—is an attempt at filmmaking that is at once very personal and compatible with the expectations of foreign funders and international festivals; and Ghassan Salhab, who, despite being one of the most prominent Lebanese filmmakers, still makes very low-budget films (often co-produced by France) in order to preserve his artistic freedom. But others, like Nadine Labaki, make the choice of indulging in auto-exoticism by adopting what we can call the "Postcard Strategy."

3.6 The Postcard Strategy

In his study of Palestinian and Israeli postcards as presentations of a national self, Tim Jon Semmerling argues that "the postcard maker follows a process that can be described as 'entextualization'" (4). Referring to Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, in a manner redolent of Staszak's argument referenced above, Semmerling explains that "entextualization is the process of rendering a given instance of verbal discourse as a text, detachable from its local context. This 'decontextualized' text is then placed within a new context, a process referred to as 'recontextualization,' which can create whole new meanings for the text within this new setting" (5). Accordingly, the places, objects, or events depicted in postcards are disconnected from their given surroundings through visual representation, then recontextualized within a national discourse. The postcards thus become "vessels that contain and export the presentation of the national self" (ibid.), a presentation that provides viewers/tourists with an "acquaintanceship knowledge" that is, however, "highly superficial, generalized, and based upon stereotypes" (4).

It may be true, as Semmerling asserts, that postcard makers participate in the definition of a national self and the creation of a national Other—an issue of particular importance in the Israeli/Palestinian context on which Semmerling focuses—but the tourists to which these postcards are usually addressed—as well as their recipients back home—already have preconceived stereotypical representations of the visited country. As Daniel Boorstin puts it in another context, "the American tourist in Japan looks less for what is Japanese than for what is Japanesey" (106). Therefore, more than *defining* a national self, postcard makers often echo exotic representations of national identity. French scholar Bernard Darras ("Identité") has studied, for example, the fallacious authenticity of a Zimbabwean postcard that he sent to his family and that turned out to have been designed by an English artist. The entextualization process behind the creation of the postcard often leads to exoticism. In fact, insofar as it is also based upon decontextualization and recontextualization, exoticism is itself a form of entextualization.

In her study of contemporary European cinema, Mariana Liz explores the role of "cinematic postcards," images that offer stereotypical representations of European cities such as Paris and London, in geographically situating the films, thus offering spectators a "synthetic" experience of a given space, an experience similar to that of a tourist. She writes

that cinematic postcards "seem to do away with the time (and potentially the need) for reflection, instead aiming for a widely accepted view of the place represented" (5). Lebanese filmmakers who target foreign producers and audiences are in a position of needing to confine themselves to widely accepted representations of their country, and of picking from a stock of ready-made images which they must recontextualize into an exoticized context. Their films can thus be viewed as postcards. However, unlike contemporary European cinema, in which the use of cinematic postcards belongs, according to Liz, to a wider strategy for the promotion of Europe as a tourist destination, Lebanese cinema resorts to this kind of representation in order merely to exist. While some filmmakers who work under conditions of transnational co-production and distribution do try to question or challenge these stereotypical representations, the margin of freedom which these filmmakers have depends upon different factors, such as their status and reputation, amount of money invested, the film's genre, the targeted distribution circuit, and the political climate at a given time. Nevertheless, the power relations between international funders and local filmmakers, especially considering the subaltern status of the latter, make it often very arduous and sometimes even hazardous to defy the established order.

Louis Vollaire ("La carte postale") suggests a definition of the postcard as a double-sided card, on whose front side usually appears a photographic or other visual representation of the visited country, with a rear side divided into one section for a written message and another for an address. One might say, in this respect, that French co-produced Lebanese films are often conceived by their directors exactly in this manner: a veritable front side, constituted by the film itself, signifying an audiovisual representation of the country which foreign audiences are to "visit," and a veritable rear side representing the film's implicit discourse, the way in which it situates itself within a global exoticizing representation, and on which one can sometimes even read the address of the recipient: *Aides aux cinémas du monde*—CNC, 291 Boulevard Raspail, 75675 Paris Cedex 14, France.

Note

1. Nadine Labaki's other films are *Caramel* (2007), a French-Lebanese production which was nominated for numerous awards at international film festivals, and *Capernaum* (2018), which won the Jury Prize at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Best Foreign Language

Film at the 2019 Academy Awards, among other prestigious nominations. *Capernaum*, however, was not supported by the CNC. It was produced by Mooz films (a company owned by Labaki's husband), with the support of Cedrus Invest Bank, and several private sector companies and film distributors.

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BLOC II

Festival and Nation Reconsidered

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CHAPTER 4

Amateur Filmmaking in Tunisia: A Political Film Culture Eliding Contradictions in National Cinema

Patricia Caillé

From French and wider European standpoints, Tunisian cinema has been constructed around a limited range of films, starting with the very successful *Halfaouine, Child of the Terraces* [*Halfaouine, l'enfant des terrasses/Asfour Stah*] (Férid Boughedir, 1990) and *The Silences of the Palace* [*Les Silences du palais/Samt al-Qsur*] (Moufida Tlatli, 1993), and ending with the almost equally successful *Satin Rouge* (Raja Amari, 2002). All of these films have contributed significantly to defining Maghrebi cinema (Caillé, "Cinemas"). This regional categorization imbues the films with a wider cultural specificity related to the tension between tradition and modernity, and as a consequence tends to efface the specificities of Tunisian history as well as Tunisian film history. The imposition from outside of a regional cultural specificity drawn around a few very popular films has obfuscated a range of earlier films, from Abdellatif Ben Ammar's *Une*

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si simple histoire (1970), *Sejnane* (1973), and *Aziza* (1980), Nacer Ktari's *The Ambassadors* [*Les Ambassadeurs*] (1975), Selma Baccar's *Fatma 75* (1976), to Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud's *Crossing Over* [*Traversées*] (1982) as well as Nouri Bouzid's early films.[1] But Tunisian films—here we are considering only feature films—and filmmakers have been the object of significant academic attention in Tunisia (Chamkhi, *Cinéma*; *Le Cinéma*; Khélil *Le Parcours; Abécédaire*; Bendana) and beyond (Armes, Martin, Lang). Except for Hédi Khélil's edited volume, *Le Parcours et la trace* and his somewhat idiosyncratic *Abécédaire du cinéma tunisien*, which focuses on a larger range of aspects of Tunisian film culture, as well as Ismaël's *Cinéma en Tunisie*, such analyses take national cinema to refer to key Tunisian films and their filmmakers (Bendana), albeit with a real interest in the social, political, and cultural contexts of their production. In his seminal essay, "The Concept of National Cinema," Andrew Higson points out that national cinema can neither circumscribe the analysis of a range of films produced by a particular nation-state at any given time, nor can it be reduced to the exploration of the aesthetic, social, and political characteristics of such films, no matter how important these may be considered. Beyond production, commercial distribution, and exhibition, which can be very limited in countries in the African and Arab worlds, national cinema entails a wide array of activities that also address the wider circulation of national and, more often, international films on different media, as well as issues of audience and reception.

I wish to divert attention from key films and filmmakers, by exploring the development of national film culture in Tunisia via the activities of a long-standing association, the *Fédération tunisienne des cinéastes amateurs* (FTCA), formed in 1968 out of the *Association des jeunes cinéastes tunisiens* (AJCT), itself created in 1962. Together with the *Fédération tunisienne des ciné-clubs* (FTCC), the FTCA has been involved in resistance to authoritarian regimes through a range of political activism and a small corpus of amateur films in Tunisia. The FTCA has also provided essential training opportunities for reputed Tunisian filmmakers, among them Selma Baccar, a film producer who has directed three feature-length films, Khaled Barsaoui who directed many shorts and a feature film, *Par-delà les rivières* (2006), and Kaouther Ben Hania, a film director who was awarded the Tanit d'Or at the 2016 session of the *Journées cinématographiques de Carthage* (JCC) for her most recent documentary, *Zaineb Hates the Snow* [*Zaineb n'aime pas la neige*] (2016), and at the

2017 session for her fiction film, *Beauty and the Dogs* [*La Belle et la meute*] (2017).

More specifically, this chapter will focus on the *Festival International du Film Amateur de Kélibia* (FIFAK). Created in 1964, FIFAK is the oldest film festival in Tunisia and the main platform for the FTCA. The chapter will seek to fill gaps and answer remaining questions in two previous articles about FIFAK, the first of which explores ways in which participants at the 2013 edition of FIFAK defined cinema, described their presence at the festival, their film cultures, and the films which were meaningful to them (Caillé, "Fifak"), while the second highlights ways in which a gendered conception of filmmaking affects young women amateur filmmakers' perceptions of themselves and limits their agency (Caillé, "S'imaginer"). Much of this earlier research was driven by a curiosity about the younger generation of FTCA members, who are the primary target for FIFAK's activities, and a desire to question certain assumptions about the ways in which young people who are interested in film define cinema as well as understand and watch films in the digital age. However, it has become clear that focusing on the younger generation meant placing too much emphasis on a political and technological rupture regarded as the outcome of the combined effect of the January 14, 2011 Revolution and of a fairly sudden, much wider access to films made available via the digital revolution. It has been necessary to reintegrate these new political and technological developments within the larger, 50-year development of a demanding film culture, the history of which has been told again and again but has yet to be written. Such an endeavor necessitates a more specific reflection on the terms of the "national," a concept that has recently come under close scrutiny due to its inadequacy with respect to the transnational character of cinema (Ezra and Rowden). While the realities of film funding, film production, film circulation, and film cultures supply obvious reasons for arguing against the relevance of the national, one can also object that national film cultures have always been immersed in and nourished by international films. In this sense, the history of the FTCA and of its festival, FIFAK, shows a strong attachment to the international character of its film culture (Caillé, "Fifak"). The present research raises the question of the impact of digital access to a much wider array of films on the national character of Tunisian film culture.[2]

The present chapter is based primarily upon the testimonies of current and former leaders of the FTCA concerning their motivations for and conceptualizations of engagement and collective action,[3] and upon

observations between 2013 and 2016 of the rituals and practices that characterize FIFAK as it reaffirms the values of a particular film culture. The chapter's main purpose is to understand the ways in which FIFAK has reconfigured its goals and objectives in view of the digital revolution, more specifically, the ways in which agents and witnesses of the FTCA's development understand the objectives and the means of developing and contributing to film culture in Tunisia today. In order to do so, I will focus briefly on the questions raised in the academic conversation about film festivals, before delving into an analysis of the construction of the FTCA's values, their continuities and discontinuities. This historical account, which is based not on archival work but rather on powerful storytelling and its *mise-en-scène*, will provide a framework for understanding the ways in which the construction of a national film history operates within a transnational film culture.

The summer of 2013, which corresponds to the onset of this research, was a period of bitter disillusionment. The Islamist Ennahda government generated much frustration across Tunisia due to its incapacity to curb the contemporary economic downturn or offer a viable political, social, and cultural project for the country. It also failed to investigate the brutal murders of two of its opponents, Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, purportedly by a French-Tunisian member of ISIS. Once again, demonstrators filled the streets of Tunis and occupied the Place du Bardo downtown, exhibiting small red cards with the now famous slogan "#Ra7il—an Arabic version of the French slogan "*Dégage*" used by crowds of protesters at the turn of 2010 to oust President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The 2014 edition of FIFAK, which ran from August 17–23, coincided with another moment of popular disenchantment with national policy: Ennahda agreed to leave power and was replaced by technocrats. FIFAK participants endlessly discussed the upcoming presidential election, fearing the return of the Islamists. Without enthusiasm, they discussed the "Appel du 16 juin" launched a few weeks earlier by 88-year-old Beji Caïd Essebsi, one of Habib Bourguiba's former Ministers—he had been both Minister of the Interior and of International Relations—the aim of which was to prevent human rights activist Moncef Marzouki from acceding to the presidency. Many feared that Essebsi's maneuver meant the return of the old political regime. For many FIFAK participants, this lackluster day-to-day struggle by the *Assemblée Nationale Constituante* (ANC), elected on October 23, 2011, to draft a Constitution (ultimately adopted on January 26, 2014) that would guarantee democracy and gender equality and

define a stable and democratic political regime capable of bringing about the political, economic, and cultural development of an empowered people, looked more and more like a bleak coming to terms with the nitty-gritty reality of a play for political power. National politics has become a common subject of conversation in Tunisia since the fall of Ben Ali, and FIFAK has been a place where national and regional politics have been the subject of many heated debates. The opening and closing speeches of each edition of the festival have always made references to contemporary struggles, and in 2013 they called for the liberation of imprisoned technicians, reminding the audience that the FTCA has resisted, through thick and thin, any political attempt to curb artistic and cultural freedom, and has remained a steadfast promoter of freedom of expression. Jihadism, the war in Syria, and Israeli military operations in Gaza, among other issues, have been widely discussed in the hotel lobbies and during the long nights around the swimming pools of the Palmarina or Mamounia hotels in Kélibia. As was the case during the 1970s, this renewed popularity of the FTCA coincides with a period of national disenchantment with Tunisian politics.[4]

4.1 Academic Research on Festivals

At a time when the total number of films produced worldwide has increased considerably, it is clear that traditional modes of film production, commercial distribution, and theatrical exhibition involve only a minority of these films. This is especially true of Nigeria, which today is the biggest film producer worldwide, with more than 1800 films a year available on platforms and/or on VCDs/DVDs, most of them genre films with a large circulation in Nigeria and beyond (Haynes, *Nigerian*; Haynes "African"; Barrot; Krings and Okome; Jedlowski). This new technological, economic, and cultural model, which initially developed without any state support, has already passed through several phases, blurring even further the already thin line between film and audiovisual productions. This industry has considerably renewed the range of academic questions that may be raised about the production, circulation, and reception of films and, more broadly, about the nature of national and African cinemas. Even though it is not quite as striking, the shifting landscape of the film sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Benchenna et al.) has been characterized by the decline of Egyptian cinema, previously the main regional film provider of Arab films. Still, in spite of

the disappearance of state support and dwindling exports, Egypt remains the main film producer in the Arab world, with about 35 feature films per year. In the Maghreb, Morocco's state-supported film production has reached 20 feature films per year but cannot curb the demise of film exhibition, even with the development of multiplexes in larger urban areas.[5] Film production in Tunisia has increased sharply since 2015, reaching 10 films a year in 2017; while 2018 was exceptional with above 30 films, many of which drew large audiences in the few remaining cinemas and at numerous screenings organized in the many cities and towns without cinemas. Similarly, film exhibition went from an all-time low of 12 cinemas at the turn of the 2010s to 19 cinemas in 2018 mostly in the Tunis area. The first multiplex with 8 screens opened in the northwestern suburbs of Tunis at the very end of 2018, and two others are being built, one in the south of Tunis and another in Sousse.[6] For a while, the major transformation of the regional cultural landscape was brought about by Gulf states eager to maintain their influence over the region in a post-fossil energy era. These oil-rich countries invested lavishly in prestigious artistic and architectural projects as well as in film festivals meant to boost their international reputation, and to develop a national identity "from the top down," at "home and abroad for the purpose of tourism" and business (Yunis 272). With the development of mall culture in the region, going to the cinema has become the favorite pastime for urban dwellers in countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and Kuwait, which do not have an autonomous film tradition. Large, hi-tech multiplexes show mostly Hollywood action films supplied by Lebanese distributors to well-off cinema-goers (Mingant, "Cinema"), as well as a few local films; there is not much room for art or other alternative cinema in this new film culture.

Films produced in the MENA region seldom circulate beyond their national borders, and film festivals have long been a means to increase their visibility. Likewise, for a few years new international film festivals in the Gulf were a primary venue for burgeoning film productions in Middle Eastern countries. Such productions have been supported by new funding programs set up parallel to the festivals. Recent studies have sought to account for the existence and impact of these festivals (Iordanova and Van de Peer), shedding light on their chaotic introduction against the background of Qatar and the UAE as they compete to become the "incubators and nurturers of a local film industry" (Yunis 271). While at first lacking the human resources, infrastructure, or cultural resources necessary for realizing their ambitions, in the end the development of film funding, film

training, and films festivals in these countries has been mutually reinforcing, enabling the fairly rapid growth of a regional film sector (ibid.) until the festivals progressively disappeared or scaled down. Alberto Elena and Jean-Michel Frodon focus on the reconfiguration of the international film circuit around established international film festivals in Marrakech, Doha, Abu Dhabi (now defunct), and Dubai (still more recently terminated) which had instituted a new film circuit aimed at valorizing MENA films outside the confines of European subsidies. Regarding this geopolitical reconfiguration of the circuit of international film festivals, Elena posited the decline of older and less glamorous festivals, in particular the JCC in Tunis, as the outcome of the growing inadequacy of "the Pan-African, Third World and revolutionary rhetoric" which used to be its defining feature (Elena 5), an assessment that may need to be revised. Likewise, Frodon associated the decline of older festivals with "the obsolescence of political systems, social organisations and cultural ambitions that marked the previous historical periods" (Frodon 15), characterizing them as festivals of a past era—an analysis which raises the question of FIFAK's own longevity.

Recent scholarship on MENA film industries has been eager to account for the impact of major changes, including not only the development of film festivals and funding programs in the Gulf but also the rapid dissemination of digitized film on platforms or individual portable media that have altered popular access to films. This scholarship led to a prominent focus on the recent past, resulting in a skewed view of history that overlooked the wide range of uses to which film events have been put as well as the ways in which such events may have affected existing film cultures. For example, Frodon's typology derived from then recent changes, distinguishes three types of film festivals: (1) glamorous film festivals that partook of a "kind of one-upmanship between the monarchies of the Gulf"; (2) those which strove for the development of film infrastructures and partnerships with other film industries; and (3) those which were part of the "accelerated rise of an alternative network of festivals, where artistic projects and critical political agendas [met] in constructive ways" (Frodon 16). Such a typology, drawn from a particular interest in the recent rise of the Gulf states, took for granted that film production and circulation have been transformed by the new circuit of international film festivals. While this may be so, we should ask nonetheless whether there is enough evidence at this point to support the supposition.

Nolwenn Mingant has questioned the purported development of indigenous film cultures in the Middle East around films whose directors have received training in the United States or England and whose models are Hollywood action films: "[A] crack may open between Image Nation's national project and the international imaginary of these young filmmakers," namely Ali Mostafa, Majid Al Ansari, Nawal Al-Janahi, or Yasir Al Yasiri, which may widen should they decide to address sensitive issues or try their luck in Hollywood (Mingant, "Entrer").[7] In the same way, during the discussion following her own presentation at a conference in Marrakech, Viola Shafik ("Arab") questioned the weight of Western expertise in the constitution of commissions in charge of allocating the resources available through these new funding programs.[8] Obviously, FIFAK could only fit into Frodon's third catch-all category—except that it is the longest running film festival in the Arab world. Its 55-year history, which has either run parallel to or overlapped with that of Tunisian national cinema, has also run counter to commercial entertainment cinema.

Recent studies have taken more interest in the existence and impact of film festivals in places where film production is low and/or where there is no infrastructure for exhibition (Iordanova and Cheung; Santaolalla and Simanowitz; Dupré; Dovey et al.; Iordanova and Van de Peer). This new perspective brings to our attention the wide range of experiences that these more or less ephemeral events can generate. Often organized on low and uncertain budgets, these festivals frequently profit from existing local resources, such as a local cinema, with local staff, as the main venue, in order to bring together a mix of national and local subsidies in cash or kind. Thus, press coverage can involve an exchange of services, such as partnerships with local associations that supply volunteers, and with local residents who provide room and board. In this way, these festivals draw a public that is eager to participate well beyond watching films. As Frodon puts it, festivals fulfill other functions: they can contribute to the "construction of a common sphere of influence, a shared synergistic festival circuit" operating beyond the singular interests of individual festivals and training different types of experts (24). This brings us closer to the questions raised by FIFAK. Such festival occasions are often used to draw attention to specific political issues, promoting audiovisual culture as a means of resistance, and nurturing cultural diversity and much more besides. Here again, however, the research on these events has privileged an understanding of the festivals as deducible from their published editorial material, opening speeches, film selection, and programming. Little

scholarship yet exists on festival audiences outside Europe or on the ways in which people respond to a festival's aims and intentions at specific junctures, with respect to particular political moments and economic and material constraints (Caillé, "Fifak" 4). A notable exception is the publication by Lindiwe Dovey et al. ("From, By, For") about Nairobi's Slum Festival. At a time during which a wide array of films are available on personal and portable technology, when going to the cinema as a consumer leisure activity is being redefined around new spaces and new desires, ranging from ultramodern multiplexes aimed at new socio-economic categories to very basic open-air screenings organized by a caravan across a country, it is important to take stock of the variety of experiences, their historical roots and their impact on a local or global political and cultural scene.

4.2 FIFAK: A Festival Devoted to Promoting Amateur Film Culture

Due to its long history and other particularities then, FIFAK does not fit neatly within the scope of recent scholarship on film festivals or research on MENA cinemas. It thus has the potential to change our way of thinking about film festivals and national film culture. As the main event of a small federation of amateur filmmakers, it focuses exclusively on amateur films, in particular a vast majority of shorts, and thus comprises a specific set of films with a much smaller circulation than standard feature films. While FIFAK may not carry the international weight of its more prestigious counterpart, the JCC, it is still the second largest film event in Tunisia, bearing a strong echo across the country—with coverage in both the national print, radio, and television media and within the confines of more specialized international film cultures.

The logistical organization of this week-long film festival reflects the purpose it has set for itself. The primary target of FIFAK has traditionally been the FTCA membership, especially younger members of the clubs for whom the festival provides one out of two national training sessions per year. In 2016, the Fédération estimates having about 450 members,[9] a large number of whom attend FIFAK, with 90 staying in dormitories (the *Ecole de pêche* for young men and the *Maison des jeunes* for young women) made available by the festival in Kélibia. Other attendees share houses rented for the week in the seaside resort.

The festival traditionally schedules training sessions, workshops, projects, and master classes in the morning, while debates with directors of films screened the previous night, probably the most significant moment at FIFAK, take place during the late afternoon at 5:00 p.m. The film screenings begin after nightfall in the open-air theater located behind the *Maison de la Culture* in the town center. Members of the public crowd onto concrete benches facing a large screen in an amphitheater built during the 1980s specifically for FIFAK and that can accommodate approximately 1200 persons. FIFAK boasts a national competition open to FTCA members, independent filmmakers, and film students, and an international competition of amateur films from European and Mediterranean countries as well as South America. Most screening sessions for the national and international competitions are appended by additional films on specific themes such as human rights, Palestine, or the development of amateur filmmaking in Rwanda. For the 50th anniversary of the festival, which was the 2014 edition of FIFAK, film screenings were extended throughout the city of Kélibia, in particular open-air screenings took place on the beach by the Sidi Bahri Café, a popular local meeting spot on the hillside overlooking the sea. The screenings in the open-air hemicycle draw large crowds of young people, not only FTCA members and their guests but also Kélibians. FIFAK is the main cultural happening of the year in this town, and it attracts out-of-town visitors, particularly those associated with Tunisian cinema who make the two-hour journey from Tunis or beyond. These diverse audiences cross paths in a very relaxed, friendly summer atmosphere but do not often meet and interact during the day.

The ways in which FIFAK may best fulfill its mission as a film training session has been the subject of some controversy. During the 2013 edition, young male FTCA members resented what they perceived as excessively theoretical training sessions led by academics or filmmakers, since they were expecting hands-on technical support for their own film projects. Significantly, young female participants, for whom the development of their own filmmaking projects seems not to have been the only objective, did not complain and enjoyed the sessions (Caillé, "Fifak"). During the 2014 session, a new project, "*Cinéma de quartier*," was launched under the supervision of Natacha Cyrulnik—a French documentary filmmaker with extensive experience organizing workshops in the region around Marseilles—to provide opportunities for young people in deprived communities to make films about their respective environments.

The goal of the project in Kélibia was to help teams of young filmmakers develop a film project related to Kélibia. The conception, filming, and editing of short documentaries mainly about the lives of poorer neighborhoods in Kélibia took place during the week-long festival, presenting a real challenge to the project, but the short and fairly rough documentary films which were screened during the closing ceremony received warm applause from the public.

4.3 The *Fédération Tunisienne des Cinéastes Amateurs*

Even though the FTCA's name does not appear in accounts of the Revolution of January 14, 2011, the revolution helped to increase its prestige. Individual members were involved, and the Federation is perceived as having never been infiltrated or corrupted by the dictatorial political regime.[10] Repositioning the FTCA within the historical context of its development in this way raises the question of the elements which have built its reputation. Here, I consider the films produced by the FTCA themselves, the shared or contentious conceptions of amateur cinema defended by the Fédération and its members, and the organization and functioning of the group, as well as the role and status of its fragmentary archive. The following brief historical account is primarily the result of interviews with a few long-standing FTCA members who were associated with the organization's steering committee, called "*bureau federal*," at various times. Significantly, only one of the interviewees ever promoted himself as a filmmaker. Instead they presented themselves as FTCA members. Furthermore, when describing divergent visions or other tensions within the Fédération at critical moments in its history, they tended to avoid using a personal vocabulary and instead talked about such issues from the perspective of their respective clubs. The interviews also revealed the extent to which these FTCA members are involved in groups outside the organization, engaging in activities related to film, filmmakers, film technicians, and producers, or participating more broadly, to varying degrees, in community life, in roles such as FTCC members, academics, and union organizers. This suggests that FTCA membership is not merely, or even primarily, a corporate affiliation but constitutes one element in a much wider social or political engagement for amateur filmmakers. Although the ethos of the engaged filmmaker is still a strong part

of the younger members' sense of their FTCA membership, the older generation sees the FTCA as an avenue of involvement in a much larger range of political, cultural, and pedagogical activities associated with cinema and national culture. These interviews conveyed the very clear message of shared attachment to the promotion of a set of values which have constituted the specificity of the Fédération and enabled it to survive, mainly by standing up to authoritarianism and for democracy, defending freedom of expression, denouncing socio-economic inequality, and providing an alternative to commercial film culture.

Founded in 1962, the AJCT (a forerunner of the FTCA) was the work of a group of young men that coalesced around the figure of Hassan Bouzriba, an amateur who bought his first camera in 1958, and followed Omar Khlifi's completion of an amateur film (Fehri), shown at the Lycée Carnot in Tunis (Naceur Sardi). Initially composed of four clubs—Tunis, Kairouan, Sousse, and Sfax—the AJCT constitutes part of a strong post-independence nationalist movement committed to the development of a national culture, the history of which cannot be separated from that of a number of associations, in particular the FTCC. Created in 1949, the FTCC became a formal federation with an elected president, Tahar Cheriaa, in 1954 (Cheriaa 167), with members of the FTCA either joining or associating with the FTCC by regularly attending FTCC screenings and debates (Khélil, *Abécédaire* 27; Ben Halima). The FTCC has a presence at FIFAK even today, as it is charged with moderating the afternoon debates with directors whose films were shown the previous night.[11] The FTCA was created during a time in which Tunisia was adhering to the socialist program heralded by Habib Bourguiba. Its founding members even met with Bourguiba during the early 1960s and received his personal support for their initiative.

All the accounts converge (either implicitly or explicitly) around the recognition that the creation of the FTCA was not the most significant moment for the Fédération. The development of the FTCA's defining values is linked to a time in which the enthusiastic popular support for Bourguiba's national project shifted to growing discontent with an autocratic and authoritarian turn, the end of a planned economy operating around cooperatives which Ahmed Ben Salah sought to implement, and the switch after 1969 to free-market economic policies that reassured international investors and the World Bank, but was soon regarded as serving the interests of a small group of political and business leaders.[12]

- **Foundation: The lasting ideological underpinnings of two distinct platforms**

The values associated with the FTCA today can be traced back to two distinct moments during the 1970s, each constructed around the concept of amateur cinema. The first moment dates from the end of the 1960s and marks the overthrow of an older generation of authoritarian FTCA leaders by a young and charismatic member of the Kairouan club, Abdelwahab Bouden, who succeeded in redefining amateur filmmaking in Tunisia and in turn obtained the enthusiastic support of his peers nationwide.[13] Bouden, who was a great fan of Hollywood Westerns with their lone, selfless heroes fighting for justice as a matter of principle, rebelled against what he saw as a strict and conservative Tunisian culture and the widespread government-backed violence deployed at the time on the streets, in schools (particularly Qur'anic), and in FTCA clubs. He believed that the leaders of the local FTCA clubs were motivated by self-interest and operated with total disregard for the desires and ambitions of the younger generation.[14] Such an absence of concern for youth in a country that has never made room for young adults is still a common complaint about Tunisian culture among intellectuals and critical thinkers.[15] Bouden was committed to overthrowing what he considered the "individual management and the hegemony of the managing caste that keeps the mass of amateur filmmakers away from the leadership of the movement and from any decision-making" (468).

Bouden was chased out of his local FTCA club for having contested the authority of the FTCA President, and moved to Tunis to study philosophy, which brought him closer to the head office of the Fédération. Bouden was staunchly opposed to the structuring dichotomy between members involved in the management of the Fédération or the clubs and the organization's younger members who were positioned as submissive and dependent upon the former group (464). He was neither interested in nor involved in the small left-wing political groups that fought against the increasingly dictatorial power of Bourguiba's regime (Chouikha and Gobe). His ambition was to transform the Fédération into an open and autonomous space for the development of self-expression and talent. To achieve this, he suggested that responsibilities at the federal and local levels be distributed and rotate more freely among the members. The FTCA's steering committee lent a sympathetic ear to Bouden's idea of a more collegial form of management, and helped him become head of the

Kairouan club, from which position he started converting other FTCA members to his particular concept of amateur filmmaking. Bouden then argued that the FTCA President should be replaced by a Secretary General, a decision that the Minister at the time deemed unconstitutional. In the end, it was decided that the FTCA would be headed by a Secretary General and a President. Charged by the organization's steering committee with the responsibility for training and production, Bouden refused to allow filmmakers to be assessed any longer on the basis of a scenario and thus disbanded the committee in charge of selecting scripts for development into films. As a result of this refusal to engage in what he regarded as a systematic form of censorship, about thirty films were shot in one year, many more than ever before, which led the Ministry of Culture to cut state funding for the FTCA for a short period of time.[16] These reforms generated stark opposition within the FTCA and a division within the clubs between those who supported the reform and those who sought to maintain the existing practices. An ensuing stalemate paralyzed the Fédération for the whole of 1971, until Bouden, who had been canvassing the clubs, successfully exhorted the younger generation to adhere to the reform. He did not attempt to take over as President of the reformed organization, however; instead, like a hero from a western, Bouden, considering his work done, and moved to Paris to study philosophy.

The second platform of the FTCA was developed eight years later, in 1979, and marked a significant shift following increased tensions with the Ministry of Culture, which had thus far retained its control over the organization of the festival. After a stalemate which led to the cancelation of the 1977 edition of FIFAK, the FTCA managed to wrestle FIFAK away from the Ministry's control by instituting a new rule that its Secretary General must be an FTCA member (often its President), thereby circumventing political pressure to some extent. Once again, however, during the summer of 1979, the Ministry of Culture forced FIFAK to shut down before its closing ceremony, because the Jury's comments as read by Nejib Ayed encouraged Tunisian filmmakers to continue exploring Tunisian sociopolitical realities (Ayed; Ben Halima; Fehri). Between November 24 and 27, 1979, the General Assembly of the FTCA, presided by Lotfi Ayadi from Sfax, met for a three-day congress at Mejez El Bab, a village 60 kilometers northwest of Tunis, bringing together approximately 60 people from 20 different FTCA clubs for the occasion. The three-page draft signed by "the majority present" at the meeting laid out the foundation for a militant approach to filmmaking that was

approved by the mandatory two-thirds majority of the FTCA members who attended the meeting. According to Ridha Ben Halima (Interview), who was present at the congress, this platform was the outcome of negotiation between two projects proposed by two clubs, Sousse and Gafsa. Conceived at a time when the members of FTCA were mostly left-wing political activists and couched in a language that was clearly inspired by Third Cinema, the platform deplored the fundamentally imperialist character of cinema in Tunisia which had squeezed out local culture. The platform proposed that, as part of an emerging cultural, patriotic, and democratic front, the FTCA should aim to bring together alternative cultural movements in an effort to counter the dominant culture, intensify the production of an alternative culture, and boost its circulation. In short, the platform called for the FTCA to provide an alternative to Tunisian film culture's total control by large international production and distribution companies by bringing a more substantial culture to those deprived of it, and by producing a militant cinema that would reflect the lived realities of its audiences thus questioning existing power relations. The platform also urged filmmakers to be aware of their responsibility for the development of this alternative culture (Hend Malek Ferjani 75–77).[17] Over time, adherence to the FTCA platform has become more symbolic than real. Films produced by the FTCA today are not all politically committed—far from it—but it is my contention that FTCA membership still requires members to embrace its spirit and history. According to one young FTCA member, the conflicts that arise today are often generational and related to diverging views about adherence to the platform. While the rhetoric of the document clearly sounds dated today, its political dimension remains an inspiration. The platform is echoed by political positions repeatedly adopted at FIFAK, in FTCA members' willingness to volunteer their time toward the development of noncommercial film culture, and the importance they lend to being part of a club. Even though the younger generation of FTCA members who sit on the national steering committee has recently insisted on the need to rewrite the platform, all persons whom I interviewed consider it a foundational document. The text is still posted in Arabic on the FTCA's Facebook page, the main means of communication among FTCA members today. What's more, some FTCA projects, notably the 2014 "Cinéma de quartier" mentioned above that sought to empower local budding filmmakers by giving them an opportunity to provide alternative images of their own environment, may be seen as responses to the platform's aims.

- **Continuity: A clear balance of power and a common platform**

The activity of the FTCA is directed primarily toward film training, which is carried out both at the level of each individual club and at the national level through two yearly internships, one of them in March and the other being FIFAK, usually in August. Thus, the FIFAK is not a typical film festival but has been primarily considered an occasion for training FTCA members, which explains why participants are expected to participate in other activities during the day. The number of clubs that constitute the Federation fluctuates from year to year; in 2013, there were 17 clubs, and in 2016 there were 25,[18] the same figure as during the 1980s. According to the by-laws of the Federation, each club must have a minimum of seven members, and the maximum number is 20, a bracket meant to prevent excessive disparities between the clubs. Each local club has a president who represents the club at the federation level, a general secretary who is charged with organizing training programs, and a treasurer who raises funds and manages the club's finances. While the FTCA has been subsidized by the Ministry of Culture,[19] it also seeks external funding, although it will renounce any sponsorship that imposes conditions at odds with its values. (Whether or not to accept sponsorship from a Tunisian bank sponsor for the 2017 festival provoked seemingly endless debates.)[20] Even though it has no legal status, the local club is the basic unit of the FTCA, and each club has one vote at the FTCA general assembly; thus, the clubs play a fundamental institutional role in the FTCA as well as directly fulfilling its most important, social function. The local club demands a significant level of personal investment from each of its members (although some clearly are much more active than others), with time delegated for organizing training sessions, participating in film projects, collecting funds, and developing the means for consensual management. FTCA platforms have helped develop an acute sense that a federation's mode of operation is constitutive of its identity and determines the relations of power both within the organization and with respect to other institutions. As a result, long-standing FTCA members agree that both the longevity and image of the Fédération are the result of its unflinching commitment to collective decision-making and practice. In case of conflict, a club member is expected to approach a member of the steering committee to seek resolution. Although the steering committee member has no specific delegated power to act in such cases, the process dictates

that s/he will facilitate a conciliatory discussion and advise the parties on how to reach consensus.

At the national level, the organizational steering committee is elected by the clubs and has served as a means of fostering democratic decision-making.[21] Even though the FTCA has always depended on public funding, it is characterized, on one hand, by the autonomy guaranteed by its rules of procedure in the management of its activities and membership and, on the other hand, by its close proximity to other cinema associations. FTCA members often circulate between several, different associations, a practice that has contributed to the circulation of information, expertise, and support in times of crisis.[22] Meriem Sardi contends that the capacity of the FTCA to resist infiltration by opportunists or by members of the *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* (RCD), the party funded by Ben Ali in 1988 that enabled him to centralize power until his flight in January 2011, is related to a strictly regulated internal process for integrating new clubs. Each new club must go through a six-month trial period before applying for full-fledged membership with the right to vote at the national level, and each member club votes at the subsequent FTCA general assembly on whether or not to accept the new applicants, based upon existing evidence that they adhere to FTCA principles. A club is never denied permanent membership definitively, as acceptance can either be granted or deferred until the club satisfactorily demonstrates its commitment. In the same way, while directors' and crews' names appear in their films' credits, the clubs retain ownership of any films made under FTCA auspices and collect any prize monies which their films may win. Likewise, films that are archived by the Ministry of Culture belong to the club—although former FTCA member-directors have sometimes complained of having been dispossessed of their artistic productions. When I circulated my questionnaires for this research in 2013, for example, a former member of the FTCA expressed deep frustration over a rule by which films screened at FIFAK would disappear into the archives of the Ministry never to be seen again. In general, these rules underscore a collective mode of filmmaking and nurture a strong sense of organizational belonging that is expressed repeatedly by FIFAK participants.

The FTCA's reputation has been constructed around its capacity to stand up to political power that denied freedom of expression, with its network of spies and informers exercising an insidious surveillance of Tunisia's public and even private spaces. The most obvious markers of this resistance are films which were produced by the FTCA and shown

at FIFAK. In *Le Roi* (1968), Moncef Ben Mrad denounced Bourguiba's self-aggrandizement, and Ridha Behi's *Seuils interdits* (1971) criticized the impoverishment and expropriation of a poor young Tunisian, beleaguered by sexual frustration. Both films were confiscated and provoked run-ins with the local and national authorities. But the most emblematic such film is Ridha Ben Halima, Med Abdesslam and Belgacem Hammami's somewhat later *Le Tunnel* (1983), an evocation of the impact of torture used by the Bourguiba regime against its opponents. These films have also served to support social and political causes, for example *Les Invalides* (1977), a film directed by Lotfi Maoudoud that succeeded in transforming public perceptions of disability and led to new legislation for handicapped people in Tunisia. More recently, *Le Sifflet* (2006), directed by Ridha Ben Halima, has exposed the oppressive conditions faced by subcontracted female workers in the global labor market.

A way of conceiving film analysis and filmmaking as necessarily intertwined, indeed as two sides of the same coin, was probably more significant than the films themselves for the construction of the identity of the Fédération. Thus, the FTCA's close ties with the FTCC enabled amateur filmmakers to understand the value of film culture to the development of their film projects, although FTCA members' senses of film culture were far from uniform. Up until the mid-1990s, each applicant for FTCA membership was required to produce a portfolio of photographs in order to demonstrate the extent of his or her reflection around composition, framing, camera angles, and so forth, as well as to confirm adherence to FTCA values. Until fairly recently, the film culture of the FTCA was rooted in a common corpus of films (those directed by Stanley Kubrick, Quentin Tarantino, Emir Kusturica, Toni Gatlif, and Youssef Chahine, with Tunisian films often included in members' personal pantheon) (Caillé, "Fifak"). In line with Frodon's argument about festivals training experts not only in filmmaking, but also in events organization or in the economy of culture (Frodon 24), FIFAK has been an excellent occasion for training press attachés and project coordinators. Members run the festival from A to Z: contacting potential sponsors, designing a communication campaign and interacting with journalists, booking accommodation, negotiating estimates and organizing a program of activities for local children. But one of the most impressive strengths of the FTCA beyond filmmaking has been its capacity to foster both a strong sense of belonging among a limited number of club members, and a sense of engagement based on volunteering one's time and energy toward a

common purpose, even if there is a quicker turnover among younger members. Male and female members value collective involvement and strive to realize a film project, even as research also shows that young men and women live film culture and the experience of filmmaking in very different terms (Caillé, "S'imaginer"). Many also claim that the most valuable part of their experience with FTCA clubs is the possibility of carrying out a project from scratch under conditions in which resources are scarce.[23] Most striking perhaps is the capacity of FTCA members to discuss their films and take part in sophisticated, often heated, debates about the ideological, political, and aesthetic choices they make. Regardless of the often rough quality of a film s/he may produce, an FTCA filmmaker is under considerable pressure to defend the work's screenplay, camera angles, dialogue, and composition. He or she must develop a very precise critical and analytical grid, thus honing skills which may be applied widely beyond FTCA debates. It is probably this capacity that has enabled long-standing FTCA members from the older generation to engage in political debates, work their way up within unions, institutions of higher education, and political parties, and maintain the visibility, power, and image of this small federation while withstanding the misappropriation or recuperation of its core values over the years.[24]

- **Discontinuity: coping with change and struggling over diverging conceptions of film culture**

We should not, however, let this conception of FTCA amateur filmmaking as a form of cultural resistance developed by a small, educated elite obscure the varying fortunes which characterize the history of the small and fragile federation as it has confronted a series of political, technological, cultural, and economic obstacles. Former FTCA leaders frame their accounts of the organization's history with reference to different phases, with the 1980s seen as a brief period of optimism and the early 2000s regarded as a period of agony. All of these leaders draw attention to the importance in this story of changing technologies, with Adel Abid[25] contending that most of the crises at the FTCA have been related to technological change, as each shift to a new format has raised new questions about the specificity of the medium and the appropriate role of the Federation. The accessibility of technology has conditioned the members' relationships with their local clubs and the Fédération, forcing the latter

to reconceive and adapt its objectives and methods. Mohamed Ben Tabib recounts the technological shift during the 1970s from 16 mm film to video.[26] In 1977, the FTCA owned approximately 25 16 mm cameras[27] which it made available to members, although lack of access to half-inch video-tapes[28] represented a real obstacle. In 1981, the FTCA enthusiastically embraced the much lighter and "revolutionary" Super-8 format that was much easier to use, produced higher quality images, and required a much smaller technical crew. That coincided with a trend toward international cooperation and intercultural exchange, as the FTCA joined the Super-8 International Federation, bringing international visitors to the FIFAK. While the technological shift to Super-8 was exciting, the lack of facilities in Tunisia for processing the film negatives compelled filmmakers to send them abroad, which was costly and resulted in the loss of much footage in the shipping there and back. In the end, of course, even the foreign facilities closed following the decline of Super-8. As its relationship with the Ministry of Culture improved during the early 1990s, the FTCA reverted to 16 mm alongside video, with the films processed by SATPEC[29] at a very low cost. At about the same time, the FTCA, FTCC, and the Tunisian Association of Filmmakers and Technicians joined forces against privatization, a movement that both strengthened the sense of community among amateurs and professionals and enabled the FTCA to benefit from professional expertise.

In spite of the strong symbolic adhesion to the FTCA platform, tensions often arose during this period over competing left-wing ideologies, in particular between two Marxist-Leninist parties: some were closer to the Tunisian Communist Workers' Party and others were associated with the Patriotic Democrat Movement. The latter envisioned socialism within the Arab nation-states over the internationalism of the working class.[30] Underpinning these debates was a deeper and more long-lasting rift between the proponents of more aesthetic conceptions of amateur filmmaking and those who clung to more political conceptions. Once again, the Kairouan club, followed by Tahar Haddad and the Tunis clubs, reopened the debate about the necessity of developing screenwriting, some describing the shift, with a dose of irony, as "self-criticism." If Kamel Staali (Interview), who was President of the FTCA during the early 1980s, recalls an increase in the number of training periods, closer cooperation with Tunisian associations of professional technicians, and persisting concern that films capture the "reality of the masses," Mohamed

Ben Tabib sees the end of that decade as signaling a shift in perspective, themes, and aesthetics: From a stance of proximity to the poor, the FTCA shifted to "looking at the individual in the script," with the films themselves becoming more psychological.

Finally, the transformation of the FTCA is also related to the changing landscape of film and audiovisual training, film education, and film culture in Tunisia due to the creation of film schools, whether public, like the *École supérieure de l'audiovisuel et du cinéma* (ESAC) or the *Institut supérieur des arts multimedia de la Manouba* (ISAAM), or private, like the *École des arts et du cinéma* (EDAC), as well as the development of additional film training programs within other schools or universities.[31] As a result, the FTCA gradually ceased to supply trained staff in Tunisia, a function it could no longer fulfill due to rapidly growing needs compared with its very limited means. Early on, the FTCA sought actively to recruit students enrolled in film programs, in order to recruit members with an artistic sensibility and foster cross-fertilization between the members trained in the associations and such film students. This mix, combined with technological development, brought new ways of thinking about films that in turn transformed the role and organization of the FTCA. As Mohamed Ben Tabib put it (Interview), there were three reasons to join the FTCA: first, to get film training; second, to gain access to 16 mm shooting equipment that was very expensive and therefore undemocratic; and third, and to adhere to an independent form of filmmaking for a progressive culture. The first two reasons are no longer relevant, whereupon the FTCA should focus on its third mission—the fight for progressive culture in Tunisia. Meanwhile, Adel Abid regards the gap in quality between FTCA films and the internationally produced films which are selected for competition at FIFAK as further evidence that significant efforts must be invested in amateur film development within the country, especially in the areas of screenwriting, storyboarding, and film form. The films from Iran or Eastern Europe are generally well-developed, semi-professional productions that cannot reasonably be compared to Tunisian amateur films made on shoestring budgets. In the same way, film students in Tunisia also have access to better equipment, more structured training, and can often devote more time to their projects than amateur filmmakers. Bringing together young amateurs with no previous experience, film students trained elsewhere, and independent filmmakers who may or may not be professionals might well jeopardize the tradition of close attachment to the clubs which has characterized the FTCA (at least in the collective and

idealized memory of the Fédération). Consequently, the FTCA is now in a position of having to redefine its project in such a way as to bring together a membership, coming from very different horizons, that is much more volatile—a challenge made all the more complex in the face of ongoing generational tensions over the ways in which the FTCA platform should be understood today.

Despite its many crises, the FTCA is described by former leaders, as well as by past and present members, as a "tremendous learning experience" in which members, young and old, benefit from being able to do great things with very little. They claim that adhering to the FTCA is first and foremost an "engagement" and "a lived experience" that creates a rare "sense of belonging" and teaches members to get things done no matter what. In this respect, a few older members reaffirm their commitment by volunteering their time and expecting nothing in return, thus emphasizing once again their personal investment in a noncommercial and political project, while others consider FIFAK a yearly family vacation.

- **Digital film culture and political forms of engagement**

In addition to transforming the means of making films, technological change has brought about cultural shifts and affected FTCA members' relationship to the institution and its activities. Ridha Ben Halima (Interview)[32] insists that, over and above the detrimental absence of cultural policy under Ben Ali, the development of new forms of cinematic access by the formation of video clubs and the introduction of satellite television has generated new and more private activities and relationships to film which have in turn led to an all-time low in the number of registered FTCA members.[33] As long as its members were compelled to rely on FTCA equipment, the Federation could exercise much stricter control over training, shooting, and other activities, insofar as members were dependent on their clubs: they had to submit film screenplays in order to gain access to cameras for limited periods. The need to shake up a deserted and agonizing FTCA at the beginning of the 2000s led to its former members being called back onto the steering committee. Today, "half an hour of images means half an hour of filming" (Abid), which anyone can produce anytime anywhere with a cell phone or a mini-camera. FTCA members may well skip the training sessions organized by the clubs

in order to advance their own film projects. Thus, for Mohamed Ben Tabib (Interview), the crucial question for the FTCA has become: "How can we succeed in preserving the fundamental principles and how can we develop our way of writing films?", with the boosting of screenwriting being regarded as essential to aesthetic development. More to the point, Adnen Jdey (Interview) raises a fundamental question: before the January 14, 2011 Revolution, the FTCA stood up to the dictatorship, but now that the dictatorship has ended, what does the Fédération stand up to?

Up until the 2011 popular uprisings, associations and federations like the FTCA or the FTCC were the only places where political discussions could be held under a regime that aimed to smother any form of resistance. Since then, and in light of this history, the question arises as to what the main vectors are for retaining the FTCA's reputation for resistance. Are they the Federation's regular activities (meetings, training sessions, and screenings)? Probably not, even though they remain an essential training ground for militancy. The films themselves? Probably not, as their circulation remains very limited. The outspoken positions taken up in the media by prominent spokespersons for the FTCA, as well as the proclamations made at FIFAK, which has remained a platform for the expression of the FTCA's continued engagement, have certainly reached a wider audience than the films themselves. In light of the FTCA's platform and activities, the public *mise-en-scène* of its intangible defense of democracy, social and economic justice, artistic freedom and, more particularly, of people in the film and audiovisual sectors, as well as its opposition to any kind of political oppression, has ensured its reputation. Thus, regular reminders of the FTCA's support of filmmakers who are being harassed by the police, opposition to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, or of its support for the emancipation of women as dealt with by a range of conventional narrative films (Caillé, "S'imaginer") are also the symbolic vestiges of a consensual agenda that still has the power to unite amateur filmmakers. But despite its commitment to inclusiveness and its policies for democratizing access to equipment and filmmaking, fieldwork has shown that the FTCA's modes of engagement may not be able to account for the diversity of issues with which the younger generation is confronted, in particular the marginal position of women who may not venture outside a path they regard as clearly signposted (ibid.).

The FTCA has taken stock of the changes brought about by the most recent technological revolution, ushering in the digital age of media. This revolution has made (1) the Fédération's membership more volatile

because less dependent on its equipment and training, (2) the members' film culture more diverse, less hierarchical, and less averse to entertainment films insofar as a much larger range of films has become easily accessible for private viewing (Caillé, "Fifak"), and (3) the forms of its members' political engagement more diffuse for reasons that may be related to what Ben Tabib (Interview) calls "the return of the personal," which means a more individualized perspective on larger political issues, although there is no reason to limit the analysis to this factor. Adherence to certain political ideals developed in the geopolitical conditions of the Cold War, with its confrontation between two main power blocks, along with the gradual muzzling of political opposition at home, gave rise to numerous left-wing oppositional groups in Tunisia that were central to shaping the political worldviews of older FTCA members. Through their long-standing presence, such members have been able to pass on certain values and analytical grids that have enabled younger members to question the structural relationships of power and domination in both the means of image production and films themselves. But a profound transformation has occurred: Using a contemporary analogy, older FTCA members often remark that the software has changed (*le logiciel a changé*), and the presence of long-standing members has been described as a "belt" stifling reflection on the objectives of amateur cinema today (Jdey). The grand narratives with their categorical ideological justifications, which informed opinion and discourse, no longer enjoy a consensus.

Although the 2011 Revolution revived a feeling of national pride and optimism concerning Tunisia's political potential, widespread disenchantment with the subsequent political stalemate and faltering economy penalizes young Tunisians. Meanwhile, and as Stéphanie Vermeersch ("Entre") notes, the valorization of individual autonomy speeded up by new media leaves young people confronted with the injunction to produce autonomous meaning "from within" rather than to expect an "outside" institution to play a strong role in the production of meaning.[34] Most young and not-so-young FTCA members now have free access to a wide range of news media and audiovisual productions, and a large international community on Facebook and other social media. They value the free speech they have gained from the toppling of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, but there is also an abiding disappointment with national institutions that have not given them much hope, leading to reduced commitment if not complete detachment. The "cleavage" Vermeersch describes "between the pure political activism and a more apolitical activism that is

invested in a cause" is the subject of the ironic and very popular *Mutation* (2016), directed by Sahar Elechi, a former FTCA member. Many long-standing FTCA members of the younger generation, at least in the Tunis area, hold jobs in the creative industries, often the audiovisual sector. This overlap attests to the ongoing proximity between the FTCA and professional networks. But these young Tunisians also live in a world in which self-employment and self-entrepreneurship have become a means to escape the specter of unemployment that is common even among university graduates. Such patchwork employment requires a higher degree of flexibility than traditional employment contracts, leaving little time for personal commitments. The result is a more discontinuous presence at the local clubs, with uncertain planning heightening the risk of local fragmentation. While many FTCA members from the older generation held positions that kept the FTCA at the heart of a powerful network of institutional relations in Tunisia, there is no guarantee that the new generation will maintain these sociopolitical networks.

The FTCA is caught between a series of exogenous and endogenous threats and has once again to prove its capacity to transform the collective intelligence and energy it has mustered into a sustainable project inscribed within a network of state and local institutions that can provide a workable framework for ongoing activities. Looking back, a number of collectives and associations called unsuccessfully for the institution of a new cultural policy in the wake of the 14 January Revolution. The still-tentative framework of a *Centre national du cinéma et de l'image* could be charged with fostering the coherent development of a film sector, but the mission and scope of such an institution remain unclear (Laurent, Ben Ouanès). Old reflexes and prevarication on the part of the Tunisian public administration remain constant despite the revolution. Amidst a wide range of cultural projects, however, a number of recent, private initiatives by former or current FTCA members attests to the organization's ongoing dynamism. These include a cultural project in Tunis, l'Agora designed by Mohamed Ali El Okbi, devoted to the visual and performing arts, Cinévog, a cultural space conceived by Moncef Dhouib and devoted to film, theater, and related practices that opened in 2015 but closed in early 2017, and Ser W Kamun,[35] a new café devoted to the promotion of music and other artistic projects in Tunis, a concept developed by Tarek Sardi, that was forced by the city authorities to close down under false accusations just a few months after it had opened, as a means to censor

its activities. The energy of this resourceful activist base may still have to expect political inertia and/or interference.[36]

Ongoing discussions about the future of the FTCA are still framed primarily in national terms: to think about a progressive culture is to think about a new Tunisia. The huge popular 2011 uprising against a corrupt ruling family probably contributed to this heightening of national sentiment, as did the recent reorganization of FIFAK, which brought together Tunisian FTCA films and school films within the same national competition. Yet all this also came at the same time that the JCC reinvented itself under the leadership of Ibrahim Letaïef as the higher-profile Carthage Film Festival, before Nejib Ayed proclaimed the need to return to basics (Boughayatia).[37] In so doing, the JCC loosened its ties with its activist base, mainly members of the FTCA and FTCC who were frequently present to introduce filmmakers and moderate debates.

4.4 Conclusion

Institutionally, the FIFAK has traditionally served as a training session for members of the FTCA who gather for ritual reaffirmation of a clear set of values based on the struggle for a progressive culture in Tunisia which is thought of as an alternative to commercial film culture. If the exact terms of this social engagement remain unclear, the struggle against authoritarianism and for a democracy, the defense of freedom of expression, and a posture of self-reflexivity in the decision-making process were until recently its clearest manifestations. A powerful sound system in the open-air hemicycle relays the FTCA President's speeches at the opening and closing ceremonies all over the small town center, disseminating repeated calls for vigilance by film presenters and for the liberation of imprisoned artists, as well as public warnings to Kélibia's mayor, who agreed to an alliance with Ennahda—a series of messages which attests to FTCA's persisting activism.[38] As such, FIFAK is still the main platform for this small federation, and the strength of a few protagonists' commitment to its collective endeavor remains evident in the interviews with its former and present leaders. The expression of such a commitment, however, also operates as a means to paper over very difficult periods of transition which have not always gone smoothly, all the more so as the only real consensus today is that FTCA has reached the end of an era.

Since film schools have taken on the task of training professionals, the Fédération has actively sought to recruit film and multimedia students

so as to benefit from their knowledge and sensibility. But the members' looser relationship with the clubs, their own private access to equipment, and the no-longer-so-strict emphasis on the member attendance at FIFAK sessions and master classes, has probably contributed to making FIFAK a more open festival and reconfiguring its appeal, all the more so as younger members of the steering committee have striven to develop numerous activities (concerts, workshops, etcetera.) around the city to enhance the festive character of the event and foster closer ties with the local, historically supportive, population.

At the same time, the visibility of FIFAK is the result of the unconditional support of a core group of long-standing members whose actions reach beyond the purview of the FTCA and its particular festival. These members, who have access to media and political fora, are still very present and contribute to maintaining the highly politicized reputation of the Fédération, an orientation not necessarily supported by younger members. Ideological debates about the extent to which the FTCA should stick to its primarily political platform of offering an alternative to the dominant economy of the transnational entertainment industry, or devote more time to thinking about film form and the overall quality of its output, have been recurrent, but nothing has ever come of them. For these younger members, the legitimacy of the FTCA's traditional concerns about the platform acts as a straightjacket, preventing them from exploring new subjects and new ways of making films (Caillé, "S'imaginer"; Jdey). The FTCA's activist mandate and its associated ideological vigilance have become increasingly out of sync with the current membership's more intermittent relationship with the organization. The shift to digital equipment, whether to make or to watch films, has transformed individual relationships not only to film but also to organizations like the FTCA. Last and maybe more pressing, the perceived necessity to fight tooth and nail for its values has always taken precedence over any preoccupation with the more formal construction of the FTCA's heritage. Today, even though it is seldom expressed, the generation in charge of keeping the historical narrative of the FTCA alive realizes that no matter how much energy is invested, there is a need for more institutionalization and for an archive to avoid what is left being scattered and all the institutional memory being lost. Mohamed Ben Tabib evokes the unheeded demand that the Ministry of Culture create a department with a director devoted to the administrative organization of the FTCA. The Fédération is also very open to private or institutional initiatives for collecting

and inventorying the films, documents, and files, most of them kept by former or older members with a small but significant stock held at the Federation's headquarters in Tunis. Evidently, a well-furnished and well-catalogued archive would help future researchers and future members of the FTCA better understand its functioning and multiple roles from the period of Tunisian independence to the January 14, 2011 Revolution and beyond.

Notes

1. Nouri Bouzid's*Man of Ashes* [*L'homme de cendres / Rih Essed*] (1986) and *Golden Horseshoes* [*Sabots en or / Safa'ih min Dhahab*] (1988) were critically acclaimed in the French film press when they were released in Tunisia but a conflict over a contract postponed their releases in France until 1994 and 1995 respectively. By then, it was much too late for them to draw significant audiences.
2. One of the questions posed by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden's "General Introduction: What Is Transnational Cinema?" is how and to what extent "digital distribution" might affect state control and censorship (6), an issue which had already been raised regarding Tunisia, where the market for VCRs and the circulation of illegal VHS-tapes was a means for bypassing state-controlled audiovisual media (Riadh Ferjani). But the international character of a national film culture is much broader, incorporating presence, participation, and cooperation with regional and transnational organizations.
3. Sylvie Ollitrault's work on the transformation of environmental activism and the distinction between primary and secondary socialization (family and childhood education vs. higher education) was very useful for framing my argument here. See "Les écologistes français, des experts en action" (2001).
4. This was Hédi Khélil's argument in the *Abécédaire du cinéma Tunisien*.
5. A press release from the *Chambre des producteurs marocains* dated April 4, 2017, and an article in *Le 360* published on the same day, announced a one-third cut in state funding for film production. See "CCM, Sarim Fassi Fihri place ses proches au fonds d'aide," *Le 360*, 4 Apr. 2017, fr.le360.ma/culture/ccm-sarim-fassi-fihri-place-ses-proches-au-fonds-daide-114007 (Accessed 19 Apr. 2017).
6. It is too early to assess the impact of the opening in December 2018 of a Gaumont-Pathé multiplex that is likely to affect cinemagoing in Tunisia, as it is much more expensive than other venues and courts a better-off customer base. See "La Tunisie aura son premier multiplexe en 2018," *Huffington Post*, 11 July 2017, www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2017/07/11/cinema-tunisie_n_17454108.html (Accessed 2 Aug. 2017).

7. Image Nation was created in the UAE in 2008 and split between a more international venture and Image Nation Abu Dhabi the purpose of which is to finance local productions and to become a talent incubator.
8. Abu Dhabi's Film Fund, formerly called Sanad Film Fund and now run by Image Nation since 2015, or the Doha Film Institute's grant programs, etc.
9. This represents a fairly small number, but it is still much higher than the unofficial figure of 250 that circulated two years previously among the FTCA membership.
10. As Giulia Sergiampietri noted in her 2017 thesis, there is no mention of the organizational presence of the FTCA in any of the accounts of the revolution, but FTCA members were individually very present in the uprisings.
11. The FTCC had until very recently been in charge of moderating debates with filmmakers at the JCC in Tunis. This attests to its ongoing presence in the development of film culture in Tunisia, and the prestige with which it is viewed.
12. Chennaoui, Henda. "50 ans après, comment réinventer le FIFAK?" *Nawaat*, 22 Aug. 2014, nawaat.org/portail/2014/08/22/50-ans-apres-comment-reinventer-le-fifak/
13. This account is based upon an interview with Abdelwahab Bouden in Kélibia on August 17, 2016, and upon conversations with other members of the FTCA at the same time.
14. This text of the "*Ré-forme*," first published in 1973, was expanded retrospectively by Bouden and published in Hédi Khélil's *Le Parcours et la trace*. It reveals Bouden's contempt toward the generation of leaders of official associations during the 1960s, who came from fairly modest backgrounds with few skills. Berating their incompetence, he describes them as opportunists more interested in social mobility than in genuine commitment to the training and development of activities for eager and interested young people.
15. This is one of the issues discussed, for instance, with Sophie Bessis in "*Y a-t-il toujours une exception tunisienne?*", in L'Invité idée de la matinale, Caroline Broué (producer), *France Culture*, 7 Jan. 2017, www.franceculture.fr/emissions/linvite-idees-de-la-matinale/y-t-il-toujours-une-exception-tunisienne?xtmc=sophie%20bessis&xtnp=1&xtcr=2.
16. According to Bouden, the Ministry reintroduced funding a few months later, once it realized that Bouden did not belong to underground political activist groups that were perceived as a threat to the State. Such a position was not uncommon among FTCC and FTCA members, who were at times eager to dissociate themselves from such groups. See, for instance, Nejib Ayed, who claimed that such groups did not have "an appropriate

conception of cultural action" and only used associations as a means to develop their political activity (Ayed 415).

17. I would like to thank Tarek Sardi and Zohra M'Zhoughi for their translation of this document at an early stage of the development of this project.
18. The number varies depending on whether one counts only clubs that have full status or includes those which have not yet been approved by the General Assembly.
19. The Ministry of Culture and Heritage Preservation has recently become the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.
20. The 2017 FIFAK Film Festival, which is beyond the scope of this research, was sponsored by a Tunisian bank: The positioning of its poster on the stage and the commercial advertisement screened every day led to endless discussion and debate. Many FIFAK members were furious at the steering committee, while a few argued that the bank was not just any bank but a state-controlled bank that contributes to the Tunisian economy.
21. This committee can be overthrown by a vote requiring a two-thirds majority of the clubs.
22. Naceur Sardi, a long-standing member of the FTCA, claims that associations like the FTCA have survived because of a long tradition of volunteering, which has contributed to the development of values alternative to those of financial profitability.
23. Fieldwork also shows that young FTCA members possess high or very high educational and cultural capital: young members may be high school or university students, young professionals, or unemployed graduates struggling to get by. While young members value the possibility of completing a film project with very few resources, they nevertheless resent the fact that there exist unequal resources among the various clubs. See Caillé, "S'imaginer."
24. Hearsay has it that standing before an educated audience that is prepared to push the filmmaker to his or her limits is such a challenge that some FTCA members choose to give up filmmaking rather than face such an audience—although I have never actually met or talked with anyone who made that choice.
25. Adel Abid was President of the FTCA and Director of FIFAK from 1999–2001 and from 2006–2011.
26. Mohamed Ben Tabib was General Secretary of the FTCA from 1991–1993 and Vice-President from 1993–1995.
27. These 16 mm cameras were offered to the FTCA by Finance and Planning Minister Ahmed Ben Salah, who had been asked by Bourguiba to implement a planned economy in Tunisia during the 1960s that would enable the country to become self-sufficient.
28. These videotapes were made available by a Canadian association.

29. Created shortly after independence in 1957, the *Société anonyme tunisienne de production et d'expansion cinématographique* managed film production and imports for a while until it closed down in 1993.
30. This issue of the relationship between the FTCA and national politics deserves a much closer analysis that goes beyond the scope of this particular contribution.
31. Both ESAC in Gammarth, a state school created in 2004, and ISAMM, created in 2000, were the outcome of larger international investment programs in Tunisia aimed at developing training in key sectors of the film industry through loans supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Ben Tabib). In that Tunisia was regarded as a pro-Western government, it received nine structural adjustment loans during the 1980s and 1990s and was given preferential rates for repayment.
32. Ridha Ben Halima is a filmmaker who was President of the FTCA in 1981 and Vice-President from 2002–2008.
33. About film spectatorship in Tunisia, see also Caillé, «Pratiques.»
34. According to the *Institut national de la statistique en Tunisie*, unemployment among 25–29-year-olds was 29.6% in 2014. This is almost twice as high as the national average, which is around 15.5%. census.ins.tn/sites/default/files/1_tunis-1_0.pdf (Accessed 24 Apr. 2017).
35. www.facebook.com/%D8%B3%D8%B1-%D9%88-%D9%83%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-Ser-W-Kamun-423541501324346/.
36. Fieldwork for research on festival participants has shown the extent to which a young, educated generation in Tunisia is teeming with initiatives aimed at developing cultural activities.
37. The 2017 session of the JCC has been presented by its new director Néjib Ayed, as "back to basics" and "no frills," thus moving away from the strategy of his predecessors. See, Rihab Boughayatia, "JCC – Depuis Cannes, Néjib Ayed annonce la fin du bling-bling et un retour aux fondamentaux," *Huffington Post*, 24 May 2017, www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2017/05/23/cannes-jcc-nejib-ayed-_n_16771094.html.
38. Ridha Ben Halima claims that Ben Ali exploited the freedom enjoyed by the FTCA to claim, falsely, that the regime was democratic.

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CHAPTER 5

"Not-Yet" an Industry: The Temporalities of Contemporary Palestinian Cinema

Viviane Saglier

5.1 Introduction

In 2006, famous Palestinian filmmaker and actor Mohamed Bakri declared to *The Guardian*: "Let me tell you about the Palestinian film industry. Very simply, we do not have one…We have no infrastructure because we have no country" (qtd. in Brooks). The convergence of the terms "Palestinian" and "cinema" often strikes foreigners, Palestinian audiences, and Palestinian film practitioners and scholars alike as an oddity. Despite the 1994 Oslo Accords meant to lay out the bases for a self-defined structure of governance, the absence of a fully fledged Palestinian state and the dispersion of the Palestinian people across continents challenges traditional understandings of national cinema as the congruence of national identity and state formation. Studies of Palestinian cinema have consequently often focused on the foundational trauma of the *Nakba* and the resulting fragmentation of the Palestinian people and territory,

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privileging theories based on national, diasporic, or interstitial identities (Dabashi; Massad; Bresheeth; Gertz and Khleifi).

Here I propose to deviate from the concern with a deterritorialized identity that has dominated the field and think of Palestinian cinema as an economic and industrial project based in Palestine. This new geography apparently brackets Palestine within the borders of a proto-state that so inadequately represents the whole of Palestinians. Does engaging with this new spatial focus mean falling into what Helga Tawil-Souri has called "the territorial trap" after John Agnew, that is to say, the confusion of the nation with the territorial boundaries of the nation-state? (Tawil-Souri) Or can this geography nuance the framework of dispersion without imposing further spatial confinement to Palestinian artists?

This chapter contends that the emphasis placed on statelessness has overlooked an important element for contextualizing contemporary Palestinian cinema: the proto-state of Palestine, envisioned in its territorial, economic, infrastructural, and political materiality, as well as its misleading promises; that is to say, a context of discursive and actual economic development, in addition to simultaneous, ongoing colonization. While the focus here remains on the West Bank, Gaza and Historic Palestine are subjected to paralleling processes, which I describe elsewhere (Saglier).

Here I want to consider Palestinian cinema through its infrastructures and as a specific mode of social formation and production, which unfolds at the intersection of settler colonialism and a series of broader global economic processes. Spatial inquiries of Palestinian cinema must be supplemented with an investigation of time-based structures of governance. The political economies in which the Palestinian film industrial project is embedded produce temporalities that partially determine horizons of possibility, as well as imaginaries of what the future can look like.

I expand the idea of a "not-yet" industry introduced by Nitin Govil in the context of Bollywood to describe the unsustainable context of development under colonization, in which imagining a future for Palestine and Palestinian cinema seems impossible. The temporality of the "not-yet" articulates two coexisting understandings of Palestinian film-industrial futures. On the one hand, the concept repeats Eurocentric narratives of progress in which postcolonial countries remain stuck in the "waiting room of History" (Chakrabarty 8). This discourse of "underdevelopment" materially structures global economies and sometimes pervades Palestinian workers' understanding of their own practice. On the other hand, this chapter critically reappropriates the term in order to take

seriously the "now" of industrial formation itself as well as Palestinian practices and strategies of "figuring out" how economic forms come to acquire the status of industry. In other words, this is the opportunity to understand industry as a construct that relies on several mechanisms of legitimation, while acknowledging that this status is not necessary for economies to exist in an organized and significant manner.

The Days of Cinema (hereafter DoC), an event recently branded "Palestine's biggest film festival" (Goodfellow) and founded in the West Bank in 2014 by FilmLab, a group of filmmakers and cultural workers, serves as a good example to apprehend these dynamics. Although the event borrows many tropes from the festival industrial model, the local organizers of DoC have, until recently, refused to name it a festival for lack of featuring elements characteristic of the international art film festival, here taken as the standard. I call this event "not-yet festival" in order to emphasize the tensions between the international imaginary of global art film festivals and its Palestinian implementation, in the specific context of the uprisings of the Fall 2015 when I attended DoC. I thus argue that the semantic instability around the event's status reflects the broader film-institutional context in Palestine and reveals certain mechanisms at work in the making of a future Palestinian film industry.

This chapter mobilizes postcolonial approaches of film economies to analyze contemporary Palestinian industrial formations. At the same time, the epistemological instability of Palestine as a fragmented and elusive space as well as an articulation of contradicting temporalities challenges positivist understandings of film industries. I start by providing the context for the emerging project of a Palestinian film industry around institutions that I call "unstable." Such instability emanates from a political economic context in which film industrial futures are framed as permanently "not-yet" possible. The dominant European theorizations of film festivals directly partake in reinforcing the normative discrepancy between contexts of so-called "development" and "underdevelopment." The example of DoC, to which I finally turn, allows us to assign new meanings and epistemological foundations to film festivals. More broadly, the Palestinian present of industrial formation manufactures expansive spheres of exchange that exceed both European theorizations *and* economic networks.

5.2 Unstable Film Institutions

The occupation has left an institutional void that the promises of Oslo have not filled. The Palestinian Authority's (PA) all-encompassing support of a news broadcasting network in 1994 and its lack of interest in funding cinema has proven consistent with the proto-state's economic dependence on international aid and its integration in global markets. The politics of privatization and deregulation in Palestine after Oslo allowed the flourishing of the Information Technology (IT) industry but did not extend to cinema. The private sector—including major sponsors like the telecommunications companies Jawwal and Wataniya—and the national television channels have shown very limited interest in investing in local film productions. The funds allocated to culture in 2013 represented 0.003% of the total budget (Med Culture). As for the yearly cinema budget, it oscillates between US$100,000 and $500,000.

As Sabreen Abdulrahman puts it, "the Palestinian cultural policy model can be described as an unorganized model that tends mainly to replace the official authority with the non-profit sector" (Abdulrahman 3). Not unified by a national legal and strategic framework, the cultural sector is fragmented into civil, official, and semi-official cultural institutions as well as individual initiatives that maintain their own separate missions and identities. It is no surprise, then, that filmmaker Sobhi al-Zobaidi describes Palestinian cinema's mode of production as "independent from the authorities of state, religion and commerce" in 2008. He continues:

> Independent filmmaking in Palestine is better understood as individual filmmaking because of the absence of the institutional base such as foundations, film collectives, film schools, groups, and most important censorship. In fact, Palestinian filmmakers act competitively, most often incompatible with each other. (al-Zobaidi)

Al-Zobaidi provides a good sense of the non-centralized, non-institutionalized and fragmented film community in Palestine. However, the period of the late 2000s following the Second Intifada also saw the creation of various film production companies, film collectives, film festivals, and film courses and diplomas within universities, as well as an increased visibility of Palestinian films internationally, which suggests that a transnational film community has been organizing despite the absence of state policy strategies.

As early as 2004, festivals of a global reach, established by Palestinians started to emerge in the West Bank and Gaza. Most of them adopted a multi-site model that covered the largest cities in Palestine and in the 1948 area (especially Haifa and Nazareth) as well as adjacent refugee camps. Many explicitly promoted art cinema. Primarily invested in film exhibition, these festivals have gradually come to complement the film training offered by the developing university audiovisual programs and have built networking opportunities with international filmmakers, TV buyers, and festival directors.

The Ramallah International Film Festival (RIFF), the first initiative of the type, was established in 2004—for one year. Faten Farhat, its co-director, explains that the festival's ambition was "to develop the Palestinian audiovisual sector, to give the opportunities to Palestinian directors, to allow them to develop and to become known to the guests of the festival" (qtd. in Dickinson 268). Over the years, festival organizers have elevated the role of film festivals to incubators of an art film industry. In his introductory letter to the fourth edition of the Al-Kasaba International Film Festival in 2009, Al-Kasaba theatre director George Ibrahim stated that the festival's "aim[…] [was to] contribute to the development of [a] cinema industry besides it being a space for knowledge sharing and entertainment" (Ibrahim).

More recently in 2014, the organization FilmLab: Palestine (FLP) launched the program "Days of Cinema" as part of its plan to "effectively promote film art and film culture in Palestine with the greater aspiration of creating a productive and dynamic film industry" (Days of Cinema 3). Finally, film producer and director May Odeh and her team have worked to revive the Jericho International Film Festival. Last held in 2005 as an attempt to relocate the ephemeral Ramallah International Film Festival, the project did not endure. The new international platform was tentatively scheduled for March 2017.[1]

Several factors have contributed to the expansion of global art cinema festivals in Palestine in the early 2000s. These elements directly converge with the developmental logic of foreign investment as a means of infrastructure- and institution-building in supposedly post-conflict areas. First and foremost, the festival circuits of art cinema constitute the privileged networks where Palestinian cinema, until then produced mainly in the diaspora, has circulated since the 1980s. Palestinian filmmakers such as Michel Khleifi, Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu-Assad, and Annemarie Jacir have received many awards and built their fame through this economy,

thus opening a market for future investors that bank on the Palestinian "brand." Since the 1980s, the development of co-productions between Palestinian filmmakers and European TV networks (mainly French and German) has been increasingly mediated by global festival markets and industry meetings featuring pitching sessions, including at the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) and the Berlinale.

On the other hand, international film festivals, foreign institutions, and supranational organizations like Euromed Audiovisual have intensified investments in countries of the Global South through various means: the development of film grants tailored for "countries with a weak infrastructure" (the Berlinale's World Cinema Fund), specialized training workshops, exchanges and scholarships, consultations about film funding or festival organizing, and direct financial support for festivals themselves. Finally, festivals follow an economic model familiar to the NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy and the government's neoliberal policies of social disengagement. Like NGOs, festivals are initiated by the Palestinian civil society, and their organization is contingent upon the support of foreign institutions, international foundations, and European programs. For example, the Kasaba International Film Festival cited above was partly funded by the European Union and Germany's Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. I discuss later the involvement of the Danish government and the Aarhus Film Workshop which proved crucial to the development of DoC.

The institutional status of film festivals in Palestine is however quite unstable, and not everyone in the Palestinian film community recognizes their central position in the building of a film industry in Palestine—this goal remaining quite distant. The prominent Palestinian cinema scholar George Khleifi acknowledges that festivals are key to the exhibition of Palestinian films but suggests film schools are more likely to instigate structural change (Interview). Similarly prudent, the former director of the now discontinued Al-Kasaba International Film Festival, Khaled Elayyan, modestly conceives of his own project as a mediation between artists and films—as opposed to the theater director's emphasis on a film industry (Interview).

Film festivals' instability also translates in their organization. They constitute a paradoxical institution, one that is epistemologically and logistically unstable and easy to disrupt. Cancelation, postponement, make-up screenings, change of location, and volunteering are only a few of many characteristics that make film festivals both precarious and flexible events

par excellence. Due to this structural precariousness, they are in turn particularly adapted to the hostile environment of the occupation in Palestine, where checkpoints, curfews, interruptions of screenings, confiscation of film material, and denial of entry to guests, among other things, destabilize preset programs and constantly threaten events with their discontinuance.

Festivals can be described as "institutional sites of impermanence that temporarily disrupt the spatial order," like many contemporary art initiatives in the West Bank such as Qalandiya International and the Riwaq Biennale (Fadda 156). As a result, they participate in "the cultural turn towards 'biennalization' and 'eventicization' that has emerged in Palestine over the past decade or so, [which] insist[s] on institutionalizing cultural continuity in a sociopolitical context that is constantly in flux" (ibid.). Festivals' instability stems from their adaptation to the environment of development under colonization, but also their incapacity to fit the dominant conceptions of a film industry. Much of the imaginary around film institutions and film industries relies on ideals of stability that do not reflect Palestine's conditions of possibility. The next section unpacks how the instability of Palestinian film festivals allows us to elaborate on a critical approach to film industries and festivals.

5.3 The "Not-Yet" Film Industry

The unstable Palestinian film industrial project operates on two levels. First, it takes shape amidst developmental politics that continue colonial logics of economic domination. As Tamara Falicov reminds us, most of the European film funds—which now sustain Palestinian film production and festivals—were historically established "as a former colonial power's legacy to dispense development aid through the form of cultural funding to the developing world" (Falicov 215), starting in the 1920s, through the Cold War era, until today. In Palestine, the European Joint Partnership, signed in 1997 with the PA, enshrined economic intervention in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and Enlargement Negotiations. The policy functions as an extension of the free-trade agreements which the European Union has forced upon many postcolonial Mediterranean countries with the collaboration of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the 1980s. Randall Halle's investigation of the contemporary North African context reveals a telling landscape, in which the implementation of these devastating economic policies led to

the collapse of national film industries in the very countries that European co-production treaties now seek to subsidize (Halle 311).

A major and intended consequence of developmental politics has thus been to effectively secure the so-called "underdeveloped" status of specific (non-)state formations in the Global South—understood as an ever-moving geographic border. The various European trade partnerships are designed to mend a supposed gap between "levels of industrial advancement," but really locate the proto-state of Palestine as an outsider waiting to join the global capitalist world. Anthropologist Johannes Fabian describes as "allochronism" this "denial of coevalness," that is to say, "the persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent…in a time other than the present of the producer of…discourse" (Fabian 31). By being relegated to an incommensurable temporality, Palestinian economies are assumed to remain perpetually unrealized. Yet, the proto-state also constitutes one necessary market of expansion for European film economies, which makes evident Dipesh Chakrabarty's claim that "late capitalism [i]s a system whose engine is located in the third world" (Chakrabarty 7).

Chakrabarty opposes European historicism and its proponents' refusal of the possibility of third world self-government, with popular movements' and anti-colonial demands for a "now" of action which recognizes the irreducibility of the present. The now we inhabit should be seen as always already partaking in global dynamics of capitalism through exploitation, at the same time as third world populations already possess the tools for their own self-governance. In the context of this chapter, the now of action is one of perpetual negotiation with the industrial demands preestablished by dominant economies. It also contains the possibility to redefine what industry means for the needs of Palestinian cinema and as a category of analysis more broadly.

In his contribution to the *Cinema Journal*'s dossier on media industries studies, Nitin Govil contends that the term "industry" itself needs to be problematized beyond its emphasis on the structural and the regular and should be understood as a construct. The Mumbai film industry, for instance, was not recognized by the Indian state as such before 1998 although it had the capacity for production and distribution, as well as a division of cultural labor. The state recognition of an industry status to Bollywood ushered a shift from informal transactions and unregulated structures to a rationalization of its financial operation and an official measurement of its capacity.

The term "industry" thus becomes charged with more than a descriptive function and should be studied as an epistemic system that produces value, legitimacy, and modes of organization. Concomitantly to this conclusion, Govil advocates for introducing indeterminacy to the study of media industries, so that each instance is considered "not as a pre-existing structure of calculation but as a way of figuring things out" (Govil 176). Similarly, Ramon Lobato's foundational book *The Shadow Economies of Cinema* accounts for the growing field of informal media studies. Stemming from the assessment that "the international pirate economy exceeds the legal film industry in size, scale, and reach" (Lobato 4), he examines how practices that fall outside the scope of the legal and the formal both challenge our assumptions about cultural value and reveal highly organized modes of production that obey fluctuant and ad hoc codes. Informal economies also maintain ambivalent relationships with regulated industries. The Nigeria-based film economy, for example, grew out of piracy networks but is now increasingly pressured by copyright campaigns to embrace a more formal structure (Miller 93). More generally, the balance between the licit and the illicit has come to organize contemporary media worlds to the point of pressuring the mechanisms of formal industries and recalibrating media infrastructures (Lobato and Meese; Sarkar 195). The fact that practices can "move in and out of industry status" (Govil 173) as in the two examples of Bollywood and Nigeria means both taking seriously unrecognized economic processes and questioning the forces at play in their becoming legitimate and regulated. Such fluctuations finally inform notions of cultural value, either by tethering creativity to copyrights regulation, as is often the case in Western theories, or by recognizing that legislation often aims to develop global control over specific situated creative practices that threaten the colonial imaginary (Sarkar 197; Pang).

The Palestinian project of a film industry primarily takes shape around film festivals. We must thus further attend to what "film festival" entails in the Palestinian environment. The term was first defined with respect to specific dominant European practices. It is now embedded in an academic enterprise to essentialize its industrial features based on the historicist assumption of European primacy. For Christel Taillibert and John Wäfler, the denomination "film festival" only acquired stability in the late 1940s, following a gradual cultural incorporation of the event in the contemporary European society and the developing perception of the new medium of cinema (Taillibert and Wäfler 17). Because of the worldwide

reproduction of the festival model however, the term has come to be normalized, and its study divorced from a critical apparatus that could appreciate the instability of festivals' structure and epistemology both historically and geographically. Film festivals are now included in a teleological narrative of success retrospectively justified by historical inquiries. One of the founders of the emerging field of film festival studies, Marijke de Valck explains the emergence and continuity of the film festival network as a "success" in opposition to the "failure" of the cinematic avant-garde (de Valck 19). However, this view places contemporary film festivals outside of time. Here, festivals' temporal incommensurability does not signify underdevelopment, but rather the other side of the coin: the successful endpoint of a teleological journey of progress.

Significantly, Dina Iordanova recently defined the stakes of film festival studies as follows: "What is important today is to ensure that the film festival is studied as a phenomenon complete in itself, emptied of *specific* content […], independent of particular national cinema frameworks […], and separate from film industry considerations […]" (Iordanova xii, original emphasis). The film festival (note the singular) becomes an unquestionable and abstract product of European modernity, and "complete in itself." Such fixed definitions generate cultural norms and economic standards that organize the global map of festivals according to their conceptual proximity to the *ur*-film festival. This is further encouraged by festivals' canonical function of instituting cultural value and distributing prestige. Fixed definitions similarly guide discourses of development—which can be compared to, and extend, colonial discourses—as they foster forms of subjectivities through which people come to recognize themselves, by contrast, as underdeveloped (Escobar 10).

It is significant that the rigidity and forced stability of the concept mirrors the secure environment of spectatorship which film festivals are expected to create—which is at odds with the Palestinian context. In her report on the Ramallah International Film Festival (RIFF), Kay Dickinson points to the incongruity of holding an international film event in Ramallah in the midst of the Second Intifada. The destination hardly fits the common imaginary of a touristic site and local as well as international audiences had to cross checkpoints and take diverted routes in order to access the screenings. (See Lippard in this volume for further discussion of festivals and tourism). For Palestinians, she adds, watching the local news at home would have seemed a more sensible option under these circumstances. Television occupied a central position during those times,

and the repetition of the news also served to build a sense of solidarity and support in a context of fragmentation. Yet Dickinson remarks,

> Lengthy, supportive articles in *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *Le Monde* appeared, and, by the end of the festival, there was a web presence that ran into hundreds of references…deflecting attention, if only momentarily, from the constant reports about suicide bombers, and so on, elsewhere in these newspapers. There is also a distinct possibility that the festival's multicultural guest list…may have provided a protective umbrella over Ramallah for this very brief time. (Dickinson 270)

The RIFF, both discursively through its coverage and by challenging the habit of watching the news at home (for the Palestinians who attended), worked as a moment of disruption, marginalizing the effect of the occupation to a consistent murmur.

Media and cultural theorists of festivals have pushed such carefully contextualized observation to a point of definition, supporting the view that festivals produce their own separate temporality. In the following theorizations, largely European-based, both festivals and cinephilia reflect ideals of stability by securing the space and time of screening and spectatorship away from the context external to the theater. Contrary to the example exposed above, these conceptualizations also tend to evacuate the political context. In 1987, structuralist anthropologist Alessandro Falassi introduced the edited volume *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, by pointing to folk festivals' modification of the daily functions and meanings of time and space through the four imperatives of reversal, intensification, trespassing, and abstinence (Falassi 3).

Ger Zielinski prolongs the carnivalesque exceptionality of the film festival's time and space with Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Here he seeks to capture the heterogeneity of time, space, and norms at play in the cultural formation of queer, gay, and lesbian film festivals, which by his own account also apply to festivals more generally. Festivals form spaces of difference, but also rely on "a break in traditional time" (Zielinski 2). Finally, Janet Harbord extends the shaping of a privileged social space to economic considerations. "Traditional time" in that context refers to the economy of late capitalism. Festivals' synchronic creation of "real-time," she argues, runs counter to the deregulated environment

that dominates the era of globalization (Harbord 69). Harbord's argument, partly drawing from Mary Ann Doane's reflection on early cinema's role as a distraction for the masses, opposes the spectacle of film to the temporality of daily work. She elaborates:

> The festival model has built into its form a managed contingency whose function it is to produce a moment of real time, a time that cannot be harnessed for productive-labor, nor for the ethos of a deregulated time of deferral and displacement, but can only be an affective and emphatic "now." (ibid. 72)

In this conception, film festivals can become "one of the last refuges for the cinephile" (Czach 140).

Theaters prove integral to the model of film festivals, which sell not only films but a total experience. In her famous *New York Times* article on "The Decay of Cinema" held to mark the revival of a discussion around cinephilia in the 1990s (De Valck 33), Susan Sontag mourned the death of cinephilia and the ritual of "going to the movies," picking the right seat, and "being kidnapped by the movie" (Sontag).

Palestinian filmmaker, producer, and festival organizer May Odeh similarly laments that the new screening venues established after the Second Intifada, located in malls, are not conducive to film appreciation (Cattenoz). The attachment Palestinian organizers express for the specificity of the festival space is also tangible in the welcoming words of Days of Cinema's artistic director Hanna Atallah, cited in the catalogue of the 2015 edition. There, he emphasizes the importance of cinema as a space of "control" to develop "our personal story," one of "freedom," for the audience to reflect "on their personal experiences in response to what they feel from observing a film" (Days of Cinema 1). Such a statement may not stand out as particularly original; however, if we extend the "space of cinema" from its metaphorical meaning to the materiality of the theater, Atallah's introduction importantly sets the stakes for cinema in a context where all levels of cultural productions are conditioned at some level by colonization.

Achieving the "perfect conditions" for film viewing has great implications in Palestine's context of occupation. Sontag's kidnapping metaphor proves most unfortunate in an environment where Israeli soldiers regularly raid private homes and arbitrarily arrest Palestinians. The stakes of

film festival spectatorship in Palestine exceed the quasi-religious experience of enjoying art. In Palestine, fully engaging with such visual pleasure means, purely materially, not being interrupted, not being captured, and keeping control over the viewing space.

It thus implicitly falls under a film festival's responsibility to create a safe space outside of the militarization of daily life. In other words, what is at stake is festivals' capacity to produce a film time: an environment organized around the possibility to watch films in "perfect conditions," which hinge on contexts of viewership predefined by the films' global economies. The not-yet of Palestine's film industry thus encompasses models of economic sustainability as well as stable infrastructures of spectatorship. Stemming from the instability of their circumstances, Palestinian film festivals pluralize modes of industrialization and upset normative foci on what constitutes a film economy. How *do* films get watched, produced, and circulated in film festivals in Palestine? The next section examines how the Days of Cinema imagines itself in comparison with the "models" of European art cinema festivals but supersedes the limitations of the "not-yet" to establish its own possibilities of industrial formation.

5.4 The Days of Cinema

Considering the epistemological dominance of European film festivals, added to the fact of Palestinian cinema gaining strength through those very influent networks, it is unsurprising that the global imaginary of film festivals provides the blueprint for DoC, while simultaneously being in constant negotiation with the specific institutional context of Palestinian filmmaking.

Created in 2014, DoC was initiated by the local nonprofit organization FilmLab: Palestine (FLP) started in 2011. Inspired by the model of the Aarhus Film Workshop in Denmark, FilmLab received financial support from a number of Danish institutions established in Palestine such as the Danish House in Palestine (DHiP) and the Danish Ministry of Affairs' Center for Culture and Development (CKU), both an expression of the European country's active interest in developing its presence in the Middle East through pedagogical and economic means (Hjort). Since 2014, DoC engages with the five areas of action identified by FLP as follows: "elevating film as an art form in Palestine," "strengthening the creative-cultural industry," "facilitating dialogue among the film industry," "creating a hub for filmmaking in Palestine," and "enhancing capacities and

creating jobs for youth" (website). FilmLab and DoC have concomitantly worked to expand their international network and recentralize the dispersed local community. FLP plans to further develop training workshops (dedicated to scriptwriting, storytelling, videography, production, and sound mixing), residencies, and co-productions meant to both send Palestinians abroad and bring foreigners to Palestine.

Days of Cinema 2015 pursued these goals by formalizing partnerships with foreign cultural institutes and Ramallah Doc's pitching sessions, which introduces Palestinian film projects to international TV buyers. On the other hand, FilmLab also does the work of an institution by centralizing the information necessary to develop labor and legal infrastructures. In association with the Department of Culture at the Ramallah Municipality in 2015, the FLP unit of the "Palestinian Cultural Observatory Project" gathered data about Palestinian institutions and current policies in order to assess new modes of operation within the possibilities set by the limited framework of Palestinian law. In 2016, the FilmLab website inaugurated a database of the Palestinian labor force in the film industry ranging from filmmakers, film researchers, and critics to the wardrobe and the transportation departments.

Although describing itself as a relatively small event, DoC considerably expanded from one year to the next. In 2014, it featured 17 short films, eight feature films, and five master classes and workshops. In 2015, with 14 shorts, 23 features, 18 documentaries, seven children's films, and five panels, the event diversified its pool of productions and brought in more than double the number of films, which were carefully selected according to Palestine's diverse audiences and screened over seven different cities (Bethlehem, Gaza City, Haifa, Jenin, Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Ramallah). The event introduced more international art films than all of Palestine's theaters combined show in their regular programming in one year.

Much like the Days of Cinema event itself, the mother organization FilmLab constitutes a site of impermanence specific not only to the contexts of development and occupation but also to the deregulated economies of global creative industries. In return for Danish financial support, DoC featured a presentation on the Aarhus Film Workshop in 2014 as well as a Danish film program in 2015. The collaboration with Danish institutions went beyond mere funding. The three-year-plan that launched FLP in 2011 was crafted in consultation with the Danish Film Institute (DFI), whose representative Charlotte Giese provided similar

advisory work in other sites such as Uganda. Artistic director of FilmLab, Atallah, explains: "She goes to countries like us where there is no film industry, and she knows how we can begin" (Interview).

The FilmLab functions here as a "format" that can be repackaged from North to South—albeit always with Northern funding. In the context of television, Sharon Shahaf defines format as a "concept rather than finished text [that] opens up new opportunities for players from previously hopelessly marginalized markets, which can now compete on the home turf of the world's most influential industry" (Shahaf). In this conception, the FilmLab's structure, with its major reliance on year-long training workshops that require minimal infrastructure, is presumably applicable to all places. Workshops function as an "easily relocatable 'generating formula[…],' into which local cultural content gets infused as afterthought" (ibid.). The lab accommodates both the flexibility of global neoliberal economies and unstable contexts of political unrest, while homogenizing the systems of film production via grant systems that secure further dependence on established film economies.

The myth of the global format, also applied to the festival model, has forged a standard by which Palestinian events are expected to be measured. The Palestinian festival's nonconformity to the global definition has effectively placed doubt on the local implementation of the format rather than unveiling the epistemological instability of the term "film festival." The Palestinian event is consequently suspended in a status of "not-yet" festival. In 2015, Atallah stated that DoC could not qualify as a festival. According to his definition,

> filmmakers, distributors, and producers apply to […] festival[s]. A festival has a jury; a festival has awards. A festival has the capacity to screen in always good situations. A festival allows you to welcome people whose films you chose. In Palestine […] we are not ready for it. (Interview)

This understanding permeates the Palestinian filmmakers' community beyond the organizers of Palestine's film festivals alone, informed as it is by examples of "successful" Palestinian directors "who have made it" to the international (European) circuits.

In this context, Palestine becomes one of many sites where "Cinema" cannot be carried through, according to unchallenged norms of stable exhibition and spectatorship. The practices of cinephilia standardized by European global art cinema festivals are here articulated with the material

possibilities for proper film infrastructures. Invited to introduce his latest film, *The Mountain between Us*, at the opening of the 2017 Cairo International Film Festival, the renowned Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad interrupted and canceled the screening because of the "low" quality of the projection and after spectators left the theater in the middle of the film to head out to the buffet ("Renowned"). The Egyptian filmmaker Mohamed Diab sympathized with Abu-Assad in a public Facebook post in which he castigated the lack of professionalism not only of the festival, but of the Egyptian industry as a whole, for not supporting its own Arab filmmakers (Diab). The interruption and the outrage on display reveal more than a prejudice; rather, they suggest that a given festival film is produced with a specific environment and spectatorship in mind. In this discourse, the film becomes inseparable from, and inherent to, the very infrastructures of viewership. This begs the question of which films are left to be shown in spaces that do not fit the needs of conventional European cinephilia.

Days of Cinema's 2015 programming reflects an attempt to extend global networks to Palestine and further, in a gesture of South–South economic solidarity that has been imperiled by the conditions of possibility set by the occupation. Among the 62 films screened in 2015, 12 were Palestinian, including the opening and closing films (Tarzan and Arab Nasser's *Dégradé*, 2015; and Muayad Alayyan's *Al-Hob wa al-Sariqa wa Masahkel Ukhra / Love, Theft and Other Entanglements*, 2015). A majority hailed from the Arab world, including co-productions from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Syria, and Yemen, with special programs dedicated to shorts from Iraq and the Gulf. Other countries from the Global South were also represented such as Argentina, Iran, Uganda, and Uzbekistan. The themes of these non-Palestinian films ranged from the struggle for national independence and the return to the homeland to the place of women in society, which would all hit a familiar nerve in Palestine. Such consolidation of alternative circuits of exchange is reminiscent of anti-colonial film festivals in the 1960s and 1970s. The main goal of FESPACO, located in Burkina-Faso (then Upper-Volta), and the *Journées cinématographiques de Carthage* in Tunisia, among others, was to build national industries embedded in regional networks of political and economic affinities outside of European control. These institutions have since been reconfigured around the demands of global art cinema.[2] Yet their legacy lives on and also inspires contemporary production

practices. For example, Annemarie Jacir sought diverse funding opportunities from Colombia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in addition to the usual suspects (Germany, France, Norway, Denmark) in order to make her latest film, *Wajib* (2017). Similarly, Rashid Masharawi revived anti-colonial ties by co-producing *Writing on Snow* (2017) with Tunisia.

The project to build a Palestinian film industry and the formation of a broader cosmopolitan film culture cannot be separated. Yet, by not prioritizing productions from the Global North, DoC proposes its own interpretation of what art cinema means and who its main actors are. Moreover, many of these films, produced two to four years before DoC's 2015 edition, had already completed their round in the international festival circuit. No longer qualifying as "discoveries," they had already been released in regular arthouse cinema networks worldwide. By including them in its selection, DoC both reasserts its interest in marginal productions, and functions as a replacement for limited local distribution networks.

Days of Cinema emerges from within the politics of development, enmeshed in possibilities set by the occupation, which mediate the event's possible stability. During the 2015 edition, the discrepancy between the imagined event and its actual realization amid the contingencies of the uprisings was locked down in the printed material. The catalogue presents an ideal and stabilized version of an event and functions as a record of a time that has not happened yet. Oftentimes—and not only in Palestine—it is in fact inaccurate. In 2015, echoing Atallah's claim that the Days of Cinema could not be considered a festival, many panels and screenings announced in the catalogue had to be canceled because films could not get through, or guests were denied entry at the Israeli border. These guests and films hailed from the surrounding Arab countries as well as Turkey and Iran, and the panels that could in fact take place reflected a global geography of the cultural discourses that are authorized by the occupier, and those that are not. By contrast, the guests' absence drew a map of potential and unrealized regional alliances and solidarities.

The panels' topics revolved around the present and future of the potential film industry in Palestine, and their cancelation or reconfiguration uncovered the options left to Palestinian imaginations. For example, the panel dedicated to "the status of independent cinema in Palestine" was canceled altogether because four out of five speakers—from Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Sudan—were stopped at the border controlled by Israel. Scheduled to discuss "What are the main obstacles preventing the

development of a strong independent cinema sector in Palestine?", the panel's very impossibility spoke for itself.

In a second panel on "the value of cinematic critique in the development of cinema culture and industry," Berlinale project manager Vincenzo Bugno conducted the discussion alone, because Turkish film critic and producer Alin Tasciyan had been denied entry. Instead of addressing film criticism in Palestine—a sector much in need of support—the conversation shifted toward Bugno's expertise as an advisor for the Berlinale's grant provider World Cinema Fund (WCF), and the strategies Palestinian artists could mobilize to obtain subsidies. Structural questions about the possibility of a film industry were replaced by individual concerns that highlighted the competition between cultural workers. Forced to limit the discussions to interlocutors whose presence was approved by Israel, these panels could only reinforce the status quo of crisis rather than open up the possibility for collaborations with new international actors.

In 2017, after a controversy around the closing film, Ziad Doueiri's *Qadiat Raqam 23/The Insult*, which some Palestinian groups called on audiences to boycott, Days of Cinema issued a statement in which the organizers forsook their self-identification as "not-yet" and designated DoC as a "festival." The 2018 name change to "Palestine Cinema Days" also reflected a shift in self-perception resulting from internal structural modifications. In 2016, DoC introduced the Sunbird Award for feature-length documentaries and narrative shorts about or taking place in Palestine, delivered by an international jury. The same year, the Sunbird Production Award was also instituted in order to support the shooting, post-production, and distribution of one Palestinian short film project in cooperation with the Danish Aarhus Film Workshop and MAD Solutions, a Cairo—and Abu Dhabi-based pan-Arab studio providing marketing and creative consultancy for the Arab film and entertainment industry. In 2017, the Palestine Film Meetings (PFM) were launched as a "cutting-edge industry networking platform for local and international film professionals" (website).

The quick evolution of the Days of Cinema from its first implementation in 2014 until the latest edition in 2018, where the event has discursively overcome its unachieved status, suggests that Palestinian cinema and cinema in Palestine are gaining traction among international, regional, but also local funders, with recent support coming from the telecommunications company Jawwal despite its previous disinterest. We can thus see the elaboration of a model that diversifies funding sources by

cultivating European support and slowly integrating the regional creative industries. These are consolidating around the multiplication of Arab film institutions which are themselves embedded in developmental economies and are themselves unstable, sometimes discontinued or rebooted, such as film funds (SANAD in Abu Dhabi and Enjaaz at the Dubai International Film Festival, both discontinued, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, the Doha Film Institute Grants Programme); market and industry hubs (at the El Gouna Film Festival in Egypt and the *Journées cinématographiques de Carthage* in Tunisia), and regional awards (such as the projected 2018 Arab Film Awards organized by the Dubai-based Arab Film Institute, where six Palestinian productions were to be presented). By negotiating the temporal networks of the supposedly not-yet developed and unstable stability, Palestine Cinema Days demonstrates one possible way of establishing self-defined film institutions.

5.5 Conclusion

Despite its infrastructural instability, which developmental economies have mistaken as symptomatic of Palestine's "not-yet" temporality, the Palestinian project of a film industry navigates neocolonial and settler colonial structures. It arranges a space and a time where Palestinian films can be produced and exhibited. The "now" of Palestinian film economies does not conform to European ideals of stable film festivals. Subjected to the deregulation of neoliberal economies and military colonization, Palestinian film time produces its own present of industrial formation.

Notes

1. As of March 2019, there is no indication that the festival has yet been established.
2. In her contextualization of global art film festivals, Marijke de Valck explains how the re-structuration of leading institutions like the Venice, Berlin, or Cannes film festivals in the 1960s demanded the integration of third world cinema in order to diversify film selections (de Valck 94). From the 1980s onwards, film festivals systematically promoted third world film productions, the "discovery of new talents," and national "new waves" in order to enhance their own prestige and distinguish themselves from other events, a process that was backed by the economy of prizes and awards. At that time, third world countries were undergoing massive debts, and third world film productions and the anti-colonial networks that supported them lacked

financial support. These films and anti-colonial institutions thus became gradually subordinated to the global art cinema circuit.

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CHAPTER 6

Mobilities of Cinematic Identity in the Western Sahara

Chris Lippard

Sahrawi cinema has not been afforded a lot of critical attention. Unsurprisingly perhaps, since the continuing standoff in the Sahara between the Moroccan state and the would-be Sahrawi one, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR—or RASD after the French Republica Arabe Saharaui Democratica) is also little attended to and the latter can hardly be considered to have a national cinema by any commonly used standards. These two claims are indeed closely linked since it is the very lack of visibility afforded their situation that has prompted the Polisario government of the Sahrawis to favor cinema as one means of publicizing and advocating for their territorial ambitions. Most notably this has taken the form of hosting FiSahara, a human rights-themed film festival, known colloquially as the Festival in the Desert, in the Dakhla refugee camp in the Algerian Sahara. My purpose in this chapter is to trace some threads in the relationships between the place and use of cinema within the Sahrawi project

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of identity and of state-building. I argue that the concept of Sahrawi cinema must be an inclusive one, appropriate to a stateless people, including not only those texts made in and about the territory by both Sahrawis and their supporters—and detractors—but also the use of film and video recording and distribution as part of the virtual battlefield, the media infrastructure available to the Sahrawis, and indeed, the consumption of film by the refugee population and by visitors at FiSahara. I approach this idea via attention to several important tropes which intersect aspects of the political and cultural stakes in the Western Sahara. The most overarching of these is the concept of mobility, its restrictions and encouragements, reflections in cinema and in the landscape, and key role in establishing claims for nation and state on the part not only of the Sahrawis but their Moroccan antagonists who have occupied the Western Sahara since the Green March of 1975. A key component of mobility in this context is migration and I conclude this essay by relating the issues it has raised to Abderahmane Sissako's *Waiting for Happiness/Heremakano*. Sissako is the kind of internationally recognized auteur filmmaker that the Western Sahara lacks, but his second feature is set literally just over the border—in Mauritania—from what is nominally the non-state's territory and it is possible to read the film as both an allegory for Sahrawi displacement and a cohesive compendium of many of the motifs that constitute the Sahrawi identity. I begin, however, by tracing some key events in the history of the Saharan conflict.

6.1 The Western Sahara: An Unseen Conflict

Commonly described as the last colony in Africa, the area that we now refer to as the Western Sahara was occupied by Spain and known as the *Rio de Oro* (to the south) and *Saguia el-Hamra* (to the north) or, more generally, the Spanish Sahara, from 1884 until 1975. One of the least populated lands on the planet, the area is largely desert with few oases. According to a United Nations-backed census in 2000, there were at that date approximately 86,000 native Western Saharans of voting age.[1] Nearly half the Sahrawi population lives across the border in Algeria in the inhospitable *hamadah* (Devil's Garden) desert near Tindouf—in refugee camps named for settlements in the Western Sahara itself. The remainder live as a minority population under Moroccan control in, broadly speaking, the western half of the territory including in El Ayoun,[2] the biggest city, in the north-west, about 80 kilometers from the Moroccan border. To the

Moroccan state, however, such a border does not exist; the land that was once the Spanish Sahara is seen as part of Greater Morocco, reclaimed for the nation by the mass movement of people that constituted the Green March in which King Hassan II attempted to regain his "Southern Provinces" by orchestrating a crossing *en masse* into the previously Spanish colony. This endeavor was, Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy explain, undertaken at least as much in an attempt to cement the power of the Alawi monarchy as to acquire the phosphates and fishing rights of the disputed territory: "liberation" of Spanish Sahara presented itself as "a way for the monarchy to disarm its opponents and redirect national attention. By playing on still potent anti-colonial sentiments, a politics of division … would allow Hassan to buttress his rule" (39). Furthermore, "King Hassan's intent regarding Western Sahara was not a classic land grab for natural resources, but a way to reassert royal legitimacy, afford him more political leeway domestically. He was able to mobilize the country behind him by tapping into a powerful idea—Greater Morocco—that had become central to the national identity" (40). The language of "buttressing"—reasserting what is already there—and "mobilizing"—extending beyond what one currently has—constitute motifs that recur in this essay and which may also be applied to the cinematic context. Here they are taken as indicative of a monarchial directive that produces a flow of people in order to invigorate a myth that will sustain the power structure. For the Moroccan government, then, the Sahrawis are simply another ethnic population, not a separate national group, somewhat akin in this sense to the country's Berber/Amazigh population. On the other hand, the Sahrawis claim a nomadic heritage in which their mobility prevented them from becoming subject to the Moroccan or any other African power prior to Spanish colonization.

Prior to the Green March, in 1973, the Polisario organization was founded specifically to lay claim to a postcolonial Sahrawi state. Such a claim was pressed by the foundation of SADR, immediately following the departure of the last Spanish authorities, on February 27, 1975. Since 1979 Polisario has been recognized by the UN as the representative of a stateless people. After the Moroccan invasion in 1975, Polisario oversaw the establishment of the refugee camps around Tindouf, following Moroccan air force bombing of Sahrawi refugees in makeshift camps within Western Saharan territory. The four biggest camps have names taken from cities in the occupied territory: Smara, Laayoune (El Ayoun),

Dakhla and Ausserd. More recently additional camps have been established: Bojador, and the smaller, more administratively oriented Rabouni and "February 27." The camps are dependent on the support of Algeria and on international humanitarian aid. The goal of the population, however, remains the establishment of the Sahrawi Democratic Republic over the former Spanish Sahara, now divided between Polisario and Moroccan control, following Mauritania's abandonment of its claims to the southern part of the territory in 1979.[3]

Sporadic fighting between Moroccan and Polisario forces continued until 1991, ending in a stalemate when international negotiations promised a plebiscite on the status of the territory. This agreement has however yet to be fulfilled—floundering on the failure to agree who was eligible to vote[4]—and Sahrawi resistance to oppression and displacement has taken various forms, mostly nonviolent and much of it clandestine, until what became known as a first *intifada* at the end of September 1999, which was followed by a second, later to be known as the *Intifada al-Istiqal* (Uprising for Independence), beginning in May 2005. Although both protestations lead to quick Moroccan reaction, this was more notable in the second instance, in which Sahrawi activists were detained within hours, probably because this second *intifada*, as its name makes clear, much more explicitly addressed claims of independence. On the earlier occasion the emphasis had been on human rights and humanitarian demands, a means by which to possibly mitigate the violence of Moroccan retaliation (Barca and Zunes 159). As I will discuss in the course of this account, the strategy of emphasizing human rights has been used to direct international attention to the plight of the Sahrawis: an emphasis on direct oppression rather than occupation and displacement evidently being seen as a more effective means of establishing and consolidating international solidarity.[5]

A combination of lack of international visibility and the desire for stability in and support from Morocco in the United States and France has led to considerable ignorance and indifference to the plight of the Sahrawis.[6] Popular support in Spain for the Sahrawi cause has, however, remained strong with numerous Western Sahara solidarity groups, which would appear to cut across traditional political divides, extant in the country. Spanish families host 10,000 Sahrawi refugee children each summer; still, Spanish foreign policy initiatives have not materialized. This is due perhaps not only to the strategic importance of Morocco and the Alawi monarchy to the West's transnational neoliberal agenda, but also

specifically to Spain's maintenance of its own heavily fenced enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta on Morocco's Mediterranean coast.[7] Algerian support has been important if somewhat inconsistent and Morocco has commonly tried to paint the Polisario as Algerian-controlled, and the conflict as one against Algeria rather than the Sahrawis. Algerian policy has evidently been a factor in sustaining the struggle; nevertheless, most commentators recognize that the Algerian role has been supportive of rather than fundamental to Sahrawi objectives. In the words of Zunes and Mundy: "Algeria did not create Western Saharan nationalism, nor can Algeria make it disappear by kicking Polisario out of Tindouf" (xxxv).

Attempts to tie the plight of the Sahrawis to that of the Palestinians have been largely unsuccessful in the Arab world and elsewhere, partly due to Morocco's apparent success in framing the issue as one of separatism and as a "local", intra-Arab dispute with Algeria.[8] (Statements of support for Polisario have, however, been forthcoming from both Syria and the PLO.)[9] In addition to Spain and Algeria, many Sahrawis—including several filmmakers—have been educated in Cuba (where most of the doctors working in Polisario-controlled Western Sahara were educated), while a small but significant number were "secondary refugees"—as were some Palestinians—in Libya, prior to the demise of Qadaffi.[10] Still, despite U.S. support of the Moroccan state as a bulwark against Communism, the Saharan dispute never became an integral part of the proxy cold war, while the Moroccan communist party, for example, largely supported the 1975 invasion.[11] (Early Polisario proclamations suggested a socialist or Marxist-Leninist orientation, emphasizing radical social equality, similar to other African anti-colonial nationalist movements: its founding secretary-general, El-Oauli Mustapha Sayed was apparently influenced by his reading of Frantz Fanon, and its flag, imaging a hammer and a Kalashnikov, echoed Soviet iconography. For many years, life in the Algerian camps reflected this radical vision: communalism and egalitarianism were practised and even the camps' layout and physical structure reflected the desire to establish a classless society; indeed, money rarely changed hands [San Martín 120]. However, the organization has commonly refused to identify as Marxist, arguing that political orientation is a matter for the population of the new state once achieved [101]. Thus, the commitment is to national liberation rather than any specific ideology. The desires to appeal to and retain the support of as many Sahrawis as possible and the [largely unfulfilled] hope of attaining international recognition for its cause from powerful western nations are presumably also factors in this positioning

[Zunes and Mundy 115]. By the 1990s, a cash economy was flourishing in the camps.)

Sahrawi responses to the lack of international attention, failure to progress toward independence, and continuing violent Moroccan suppression of national sentiment—with a consequent lack of mobility and opportunity both in the camps and in the occupied territory—has inevitably led to frustration, especially in the disenfranchised youth, which means that the potential for more violent opposition to the status quo lies beneath the surface of Polisario's initiatives to increase the visibility of their independence struggle and build international consensus for SADR. Notably, even in May 2005, following the resignation of then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker after the failure of renewed efforts at a negotiated settlement, the *Intifada al-Istiqal* received little attention outside the region. Zunes and Mundy suggest that the lack of visual spectacle attached to the conflict was partly responsible, representative of a conflict which has been "relatively bloodless and so rendered uninteresting by an international media environment driven by spectacular images of horror and misery" (25). This was true too of the events at the Gdeim Izik camp, 15 kilometers outside El Ayoun in Moroccan-occupied territory, in November 2010. The recently established encampment where Sahrawis had gone to escape the city was burned by Moroccan forces and opposition from Sahrawi nationalists spread to El Ayoun itself, with the insurrection and its suppression by security forces causing an unknown number of deaths and injuries. (I will consider how this event has been depicted, mostly in YouTube videos, later in this account.) Noam Chomsky is perhaps the best-known of a few commentators who suggest that this series of events provides as good an occasion as any at which to locate the beginning of the so-called "Arab Spring,"[12] uprisings normally said to have started with the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, the following month. Certainly, there are similarities between the demands of the Gdeim Izik protesters and other Arab insurrectionists in the following years, including those in Morocco, although—as with so much in this dispute—the nature of those demands has itself been contentious with many commentators as well as the Moroccan state arguing that they represented an economic protest against social conditions, rather than a political process aimed against an occupying force. On the other hand, anthropologist Alice Wilson employs visual and aural metaphors in contending that the promotion of social and economic causes for the

protest has been used to obscure other aspects of its genesis and development, making it "unseeable," and concluding that: "[o]n the margins of the Arab Spring, the 'silencing effects' of naturalization, ahistoricism, and complicity make a whole uprising seemingly disappear" ("On the Margins" 93).[13]

6.2 Film in Morocco

Moroccan film has flourished in recent years, even seen as a source of inspiration for other Middle Eastern and African cinemas.[14] Numbers of films produced, coproductions, screens for exhibition, notable auteurs and festivals—including the glitzy Marrakesh Film Festival, which has been developed and marketed as a major international event—have increased substantially in the twenty-first century. Since the ascension of Mohammed VI to the throne in 1999, abuses of state power during the rule of his father, Hassan II in the so-called "years of lead"[15] have been scrutinized by the resurgent cinema in films such as *The Black Chamber* (Hassan Benjelloun, 2004), which includes television footage and an implicit critique of the Green March, and *Memory in Detention* (Jillali Ferhati, 2004). Indeed, social critiques have appeared in many films both fiction and documentary; nevertheless, Sandra Carter argues that "[t]here are no political films (except those which safely criticize Morocco's years of lead) or films which critique the government, unless the topic is abstractly represented in the extreme or the [critiquing] character is a failed social misfit" (308). Certainly, the occupation of the Western Sahara, seen as a reclaiming of territory taken from a greater Moroccan state by colonial powers, remains a rigidly monitored subject, a "red line" that cannot be crossed by a resurgent media.[16] Thus, annexation of the Western Sahara has been tied from the beginning to the image of the nation and of the monarchy as a topic inappropriate for discussion or debate. Indeed, recent comments from within the *Centre cinématographique marocain* (CCM) and festival nexus continue to echo the establishment line that national unity requires forbearance. We can trace a direct line from restored monarch Mohammed VI's attempts to prevent any questioning of the Alawi-controlled state to more film-specific comments. In a speech from 1963—which Carter describes as intended to make censorship activities seem "more like brotherly protection"—Hassan asserts that "[i]t is the obligation of each to distinguish between

the problems which could valuably be the object of discussions and differences of opinion, from those problems around which there must be national unanimity. These latter cannot be the subject of disputations that would thwart efforts sincerely deployed in the national interest" (59). Souheil Ben Barka, who preceded his lengthy tenure as director of the CCM with the celebrated (arguably third cinema-oriented) *Les Mille et une mains*, later claimed that only two things could make a film censurable: if it insulted Islam or if it defamed Morocco—evidently many films have fallen into the broadly understood latter category and any questioning of Western Sahara policy has certainly done so.[17] Carter also cites Mustapha Derkaoui's rejection of: "subversive cinema, that does not interest us. It is more a factor of making cinema an adequate means of denunciation, and not a force in the quest for a foolish and insupportable subversion" (96). As Kevin Dwyer's piece in this volume indicates, recent efforts to fund pro-Morocco Sahrawi films accompany the continuing restriction of criticisms of the nation and monarchy.[18]

Just as cinema has been incorporated into the state-building designs of Morocco since independence from France, Moroccan cinema has become increasingly a part of a transnational culture of mobility, with the biggest stars of international cinema, such as Martin Scorsese and Abbas Kiarostami feted at Marrakech, while Mohammed VI's limited social reforms are credited for Morocco's having avoided the more substantial revolts against government that occurred in the "Arab Spring." Morocco has long been a site for international filmmaking—an exotic location for Hollywood, but also, for example, substitute for Iran in Shirin Neshat's video projects and in her feature, *Women without Men*, and for Cairo in *The Nile Hilton Incident*—which it has developed based not only on infrastructural and institutional support and a variety of inviting locations from remote Atlas mountain and desert geographies to the big city cosmopolitanism and poverty of Casablanca, but also on a reputation for freedom of expression and movement. This is also reflected in a specifically Moroccan art-cinema identity, spurred especially by the stylish fictions of directors such as Nabil Ayouch and Faouzi Bensaidi. Although the latter has made a point of claiming that his films are not political or social critiques, they might certainly be read that way, while Ayouch's evidently confront certain social conditions and taboos.

The Sahrawis lack such mobile figures, stars of the festival scene. While Sahrawi cinema shares its neocolonial status with Palestinian cinema, it does not have the infrastructure or individuals to support an auteurist

cinema and must instead be defined primarily through a set of relationships that cross multiple borders and are characterized by the tropes of mobility and visibility. The FiSahara festival at the Dakhla refugee camp has provided festivalgoers a very different experience from Marrakesh's gilded hotel rooms with visitors typically sharing accommodations with Sahrawi families—by necessity but also to suggest something of the experience of camp life. Indeed, the static immobilities of the political situation and consequent restrictions inherent in the refugee camps contrast with the emphasis on transnational movement characteristic of Marrakesh and other major film festivals. Still, FiSahara does attract its share of traveling celebrities, many of whom have previously embraced the Sahrawi cause or at least do so after visiting. The most important of these is certainly Javier Bardem who has pleaded the Sahrawi case in Spain and before the United Nations and whose film, *Sons of the Clouds*, I consider briefly below.

6.3 Film as Cultural Empowerment: Sahrawi Cinema and National Identity

Thus, it is possible and I believe useful to position FiSahara and the relationship between cinema and the Western Sahara as nation more generally in the context of mobility, an increasingly recognized factor in the discussion of contemporary neoliberal society where the flow of goods, ideas, money, and (some) people is constitutive of globalization. Attempts to loosen restrictions on such flows have been characteristic of recent trade agreements, while pressure to tighten them as regards free movement of peoples may be said to have reached fever pitch recently as migration levels across the Mediterranean region (among other locations) have surged in response to multiple sites of violence, poverty, and/or oppression. The writing of Arjun Appadurai and Zygmunt Bauman, among others, sees migration and mobility as central to the work and experience of modernity. Timothy Cresswell argues that mobility "is more central to both the world and our understanding of it than ever before" (*On The Move* 2), and his reminder that lack of mobility is of equal importance ("Towards" 22) is reflected in the imagery and narrative of Sahrawi cinema/cinematic culture which is also intimately tied to discourses of human rights, sovereignty over land and peoples, and nation-building. Cinema, I contend, extends other cultural traditions that have been mobilized in the attempts to determine and perform national identity.[19]

The term "Sahrawis," simply an Arabic version of "Saharan," literally people of the desert, and its adoption as a national identity is contested by Morocco. Alice Wilson, citing John Davis, argues that it can be understood as a "residual category," one that does not constitute a part of any of the relatively clearly defined neighboring regions (*Sovereignty* 13–14). Historically the Sahara has been crisscrossed by traders and by routes determined by dispersed resources and centers of population. One attribute that links those who identify as Sahrawis is the Hassaniya dialect of Arabic. This is not, however, a distinguishing characteristic since the language is also spoken in Mauritania and parts of western Mali in addition to southern Morocco, areas that are not within the territory claimed by the Sahrawis as part of their putative nation.[20] Hassanophones have used no single name to distinguish themselves; nevertheless, Hassaniya plays an important part in the nationalist discourse. Tara Flynn Deubel has addressed the role of traditional Hassaniya poetry within such a matrix. She discusses its position in precolonial society, part of a Saharan lifestyle in which *griots* moved back and forth between tribal encampments. This traditional oral form has been modified but not destroyed by sedentarization and, especially since 1975, has functioned as a means of constituting and expressing national, cultural, and ethnic identity, detailing feelings of loss, solidarity, and Sahrawi distinctiveness. Deubel cites a poem, popular in the refugee camps, by Beibuh Ould El Haj that emphasizes differences with Morocco, partly through infantilizing the (former) king: "We are separated from Morocco by creation, behavior and religion … We are already separated by origin and they betrayed the religion/ Their lord is little Hassan and our lord is Allah." This refrain is repeated periodically and integrated with specific assertions of Sahrawi difference, such as: "Watch the Moroccans and Sahrawis walking together in the market from afar/ Watch their way of walking and move up to their features, to their poise" (Deubel 309).[21] Thus in addition to the delinking of Hassan from Islam—the demeaning and degreening of the march, if you will—the verse distinguishes the very embodiment of the Sahrawis from Moroccan ways of being that are represented as inferior. It is hardly accidental that this includes a discriminatory focus on mobility as well as on appearance in a melodramatic style that will be familiar to film scholars. However, there is a competing national discourse: poetry has been employed by the Moroccan state as assiduously as by the stateless Sahrawi nationalists, this time with the goal of fortifying a postcolonial, multiethnic country. Thus,

Hassaniya poetry recitations accompany festivals of traditional dessert cultures/arts such as tent-construction in Morocco, including in TanTan, in the South close to the occupied territory (299). Sahrawi nationalists see this as an instance of state appropriation of local cultural heritage (306), though from a postcolonial perspective, it may also be seen as a response to divisions promoted by colonial divide and rule policies.[22]

Evidently, cinema is not a cultural tradition in the same way as Hassaniya poetry, and thus individual instances must be positioned internally (narrative, *mise-en-scène*, and imagery), or externally (means of distribution, strategies of exhibition, and accompanying discourses) as part of the Sahrawi struggle. This is indeed what happens. It is somewhat paradoxical to instigate an investigation of Sahrawi relations to cinema through the lens of mobility: after all the most apparent facts about the Sahrawis are that they are literally and metaphorically going nowhere, with seemingly no progress toward an independent state and half the population constrained to live outside the claimed territory in the Algerian refugee camps, while the other half is restrained from agitation in the Moroccan-controlled Western Sahara itself as witnessed, for example, in the battle to control the public space of the Gdeim Izik camp. Indeed, the commonest imagery and iconography of films by and about the Sahrawis reflects their restricted circumstances and desires; it is imagery that will be familiar to many audiences and that is frequently used to signify the Middle East. The central tropes are the land, specifically the desert, and the (refugee) camps therein; secondary images include the wall or sand berm gradually constructed by the Moroccans, which now runs for 2700 kilometers making it the second longest such wall after the Great Wall of China, and—on the Moroccan-occupied side—confrontation between poorly equipped protesters and armed, uniformed men. The ocean functions as a further absent trope, a focus of longing, unavailable to the Sahrawis in the Tindouf camps, but a key site anchoring the national imaginary. The Atlantic coast's possibilities as a tourist destination have lately been promoted by Morocco, supplementing its exploitation of fishing resources, which continue to be factored into European Union-Morocco fishing agreements, the subject of regular Sahrawi protests.[23] The recurrent metaphor of the landscape as the "inscape of national identity" (Bhabha 295) is evidently applicable to the Western Sahara, while the city, the other frequently cited ground for emergent identifications described by Homi Bhabha and others, is here split between the occupied capital and the camps which stand in for the "lost" cites referenced by their names (320).

For many centuries prior to colonization, peoples in the region moved between locations of power in Mali, Ottoman Algeria, and the Moroccan sultanate, but operated outside the control of these imperial structures, identifying largely as members of their specific tribes (*qabilah*), while the Western Sahara itself remained largely without sedentary or urban centers until the 1950s when droughts led to some settlement in a few Spanish-built cities.[24] Wilson points out that "later inhabitants and observers [looking] back on such interactions … have disagreed over whether they signify the effective *local* presence of a state authority" ("Ambivalences" 81). However, those supporting independence for the Sahrawis today are likely to insist that the territory of the Western Sahara was *sibah*, that is an area outside state control rather than *makhzan* in which an outside power, such as the Moroccan sultanate could assert control by such activities as raising taxes.[25] In any case, Sahrawis' sense of their identity is intimately tied to the Sahara for which they are named and over which they have traditionally ranged as pastoralists, valuing a highly mobile lifestyle. The desert constitutes the vast majority of the national landscape, and perforce plays a large part in Sahrawi-engaged films. Bardem's documentary, *Sons of the Clouds*, as its very title suggests, depicts the Sahrawis at home in nature, tied to the land. In interviews included in the film, Sahrawi refugees comment on the beauty of the desert, while toward the end we see moonlight over dunes, camels on the horizon, a land that promotes peaceful contemplation. Cutting to such images at an earlier point, the narrator intones: "[t]he sons of the clouds knew nothing of borders." Thus, the film invokes a nomadic Bedouin heritage of mobility—one left behind by many Sahrawis during the 1960s and 1970s—historically resistant to state control from afar, a nostalgic and idealized past that contrasts with demeaning and demoralizing present circumstances. Such a self-definition is key to the Sahrawis' separate identity but it is one that must now be tempered by the desire for a state defined by territorial boundaries (Wilson, "Ambiguities" 53). Thus, Polisario's objectives, reflected by nearly all camp residents, are nationalist and state-building. The goal is settlement but not the maintenance of the current situation—as reflected, for example, by the absence of mosques in the Tindouf camps where their presence would suggest an acceptance of the permanence of an exiled settlement. Thus, individual Sahrawi refugees in Algeria are extreme examples of disempowerment through the regulation of movement, opportunities for migration to work or study being themselves severely modulated by a series of hierarchies including some combination

of the Moroccan state, Polisario, Algeria, and former or current allies in Libya, Cuba, and Spain.

The refugee camps inevitably connote both refuge and prison, functioning somewhere between the traditional nomadic encampments which they resemble in some facets but differ from in others, and sedentary towns (Wilson, ibid. 40). The organization within the camps that is depicted in *Sons of the Clouds* and other similar documentaries discussed later evidence Polisario's ability to provide for the people, to legislate a state. We commonly see institutions of civic engagement such as the school. Women are seen to control much of the everyday life of the camps. Men work but are restless, conscious of the lack of progress toward statehood and willing to fight for it. We see animals and soccer games, food preparation and sweeping, quotidian episodes in a civil society. The refugee camps avoid the legibly hierarchical structure of traditional nomadic camps. Concrete and breeze-block structures are visible beside tents suggesting a delicate balance between the temporary and permanent, the attempt to live as fully as possibly countered by a resistance to construction of buildings that might suggest abandonment of the right of return. Representations of the camps thus emphasize the Sahrawis making the most of their limited circumstances, building a democratic society, but also the restrictions and lack of hope for change. Unlike the camps, arrayed just outside, on the edge of the claimed territory, the Moroccan wall or berm cuts across it; it is visualized for the camera in Sahrawi documentaries in two primary ways, either as a stopping point to which we travel in a jeep or as a line in the sand seen from above in aerial shots that follow its winding course, an extrusion upon the landscape. If deserts and oceans, along with rivers, have functioned as natural barriers defining the limits of national territory, the berm in such imagery is symbolic of an arbitrary line that defies nature and prevents mobility on the ground—not only because it is a barrier itself, but because the heavily mined area approximating it permits only very restricted and careful movement, so that its nature and function are properly visible only from the air.[26]

Within this context, mobility is both a key node and a paradox.[27] Wilson has explored how both Polisario and Morocco use it to lay claim to the land, and how Polisario, as a state-movement lacking control over the majority of its territory has been able to manipulate "mobile resources" to construct and sustain its claims to and practices of sovereignty" (Wilson, *Sovereignty* 6). The most obvious mobility restrictions are on the

exiled Sahrawis, unable—or at least unwilling—to return to their country and often without a passport to travel elsewhere, and on the annexed Sahrawis, policed and surveilled by Morocco. The berm has obviously been constructed to restrict Polisario and Sahrawi mobility. Similarly, after the protests at Gdeim Izik in 2010, the Moroccan authorities forbade tents from being set up near towns (Boulay 274).[28] Meanwhile, in response to their bottling up in the Algerian camps, Polisario has actively encouraged Sahrawi refugees to visit lands in the still accessible eastern part of the claimed national territory. It maintains camel herds on the eastern side of the berm and promotes visits to the "pastures"—which, Wilson argues, brings pleasure to the refugees: visiting the camel herds out to pasture away from the refugee camps and within Western Saharan territory provides a means for those in the camps to experience the land to which they lay claim ("Ambivalences"). This strategy of mobility is designed, then, to instill national pride, in addition to counteracting Moroccan claims that such areas, bereft of economic resources, have consequently been abandoned.[29] Conversely, the movement of Moroccans into the territory that began with the Green march is part of a familiar strategy to "Moroccanize" the Western Sahara. Thus, paradoxically, at the same time that state authority of one kind or another is touted as the modern way and nomadism continues to be seen as transgressive, such freedom of movement is also seen as a means to realize somewhat contrary goals. Wilson summarizes, "[b]oth state authorities have encouraged their claimed citizens to move through the disputed territory as a means of embodying respective claims to rule over people and territory" (ibid. 84). Recently, such claims have been conducted explicitly and implicitly by means of the moving image and technologies of virtual travel. The use of mobile phones to capture images of violent abuse by the Moroccan authorities—for example by university students in Agadir, Morocco—is noted by Deubel (303) as an aspect of the digitization of Saharan culture and has been actively promoted by the Sahrawis as a strategy for visualizing and disseminating such activity, while discussion about the content and context of footage posted on YouTube, discussed below, provides a further forum for executing or discrediting such claims; an initiative organized by FiSahara trains Sahrawis to shoot, edit, narrate, and curate such videos.[30]

6.4 FiSahara

The Western Sahara International Film Festival or FiSahara, through its mission of publicizing the Sahrawi cause by drawing visitors to the refugee camp of Dakhla, functions as a special case in the global process of commodification and consumption characterized by flows of people, capital, images, and cultures. (Meethan 4).[31] Like the annual Sahrawi Cultural Festival (the ArTifariti arts festival held at Tifariti in the liberated territories), and the annual Run the Sahara marathon, coordinated by London-based nonprofit, Sandblast,[32] FiSahara has always been envisaged as a nexus for attracting attention to and promoting Sahrawi claims on land and sovereignty, rather than selling those attributes to the mobile tourist. Indeed, the festival plays a significant role in what Irene Fernández-Molina calls the "central issue of recognition" (236) for the Sahrawis; it is part of the virtual battlefront that has continued since the 1991 ceasefire[33]: a declaration for recognition, visibility, and independence which is appropriately and unambiguously made on the audio-visual front. The specificity of the location and of the Sahrawi situation is envisaged at FiSahara within the context of human rights and colonial exploitation occurring elsewhere—especially in the Arab world with *Five Broken Cameras*, and *The Square* about struggles in Palestine and Egypt, respectively, among films that have been recently screened.[34] The significance of the dominant thread of films with a human rights-oriented protest theme is supported by FiSahara's affiliation with the Human Rights Film Network, with the highlighting of abuses in other parts of the world—in Argentina say, or in Leste-Timor—reflecting on the situation in Western Sahara. The presence of honorary guests also gestures toward such other struggles. Nora Morales de Cortiñas, cofounder of Argentina's Mothers of the Disappeared, attended the twelfth iteration of the festival in April/May 2015, at which the top prize, a white camel, was awarded to the documentary *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator*, a record of attempts to achieve a measure of justice following the Guatemalan indigenous genocide.

FiSahara, meaning "in the Sahara" in Arabic, was started by Javier Corcurera, a Peruvian documentarian living in Spain, and while Polisario has throughout played a key role, the festival organizers operate from Spain, including its current long-time executive director, María Carrión, who describes the festival, unambiguously, as a "Trojan Horse" that brings leading figures from the worlds of film and human rights to hear the story of the Sahrawis and then sends them home to fight for the cause.

FiSahara's main partner in the camp is SADR's Ministry of Culture; its head Khadija Hamdi positions the festival as part of a "cultural war" with Morocco ("Screen of the Desert"). In 2016, the winning film was, for the first time, one that could be called a product of Western Sahara, *Leyuad*. It was shot there, and its codirector and coeditor is a Sahrawi, Brahim Chagaf. Other award-winning films that year were *Sonita* (Rokhsareh Ghaem Maghami, 2015), an Iranian film about a teenage Afghan refugee girl whose promising singing/dancing career is threatened by the prospect of enforced repatriation, and the Palestinian short, "Out of Frame," directed by Riham Ghazali, which details the struggles of two Palestinian women who confront the Israeli occupation in the context of additional constraints of gender. As winning film, *Leyuad* took home the White Camel: or rather, of course, it did not—FiSahara winners, presented with a real white camel, invariably donate the prize to their hosts, returning instead by jeep and plane! The chosen award, however, not only highlights for festivalgoers the exoticism of their surroundings but perhaps also alerts them to the very different circumstances of mobility that they enjoy. Thus, although mobility has been regularly identified as a characteristic of bourgeois capitalist society and of modernity, and more recently of postmodernity, the camel hearkens back to an early technology that its domestication made possible, functioning as the key to human trading, travel, and nomadic lifestyles in the dessert. A map of the Spanish Sahara published in 1946 shows camel tracks rather than roads (Wilson, *Sovereignty* 16).

FiSahara foregrounds its location to an extreme degree, festivalgoers experiencing the difficulties of both traveling to the most remote of the camps, Dakhla—to which the festival moved in 2007, four years after originating in the Smara camp—and those of being there in the extreme heat and sandstorms. As Ellen Strain has noted in the context of its applicability to and similarities with film-viewing, the tourist gaze is far from confined to tourism alone (2), and FiSahara amplifies the commonalities between tourism and film-viewing suggested by many film festivals.[35] FiSahara's audience consists of the camp-dwellers and outside festivalgoers, who are probably not very different from those who attend most film festivals, not least in the sense that they are advantaged in terms of their mobility. Supported by numerous developing technologies of transportation and communication, the free subject of Western culture has been afforded an expansive consciousness of movement with accompanying discourses of sight, sound, and selfhood (Kaplan 395). FiSahara promises to promote such discourses, adding the sights and sounds of

cinema to those of the desert setting. Still, films are also shown for what might be called purely entertainment purposes, these aimed primarily at those who live in the camps. *Winged Migration* was one of the first films screened at the inaugural FiSahara in November 2003, where Chaplin shorts also featured; *Kung Fu Panda* screened in 2016. Films shot in workshops during the festival now typically screen on the last day. Indeed, programming has been adapted since the festival began to accommodate local tastes in addition to an increased human rights emphasis. Thus, for example, screenings that include partial nudity no longer occur in deference to cultural norms and there has been a movement both toward family films and Arab language films alongside Sahrawi-themed cinema (Carrión 189). Thematic *haimas* (residential tents), camel races, clowns, football matches, and video game workshops round out the entertainment in accordance with Carrión's assertion that leisure, culture, and entertainment are themselves basic human rights (191).

While the commodification of difference in world cinema can hardly be denied,[36] the fact that FiSahara's primary purpose is advocatory—rather than financial—modifies the usual festival experience. Staying with local families in the camps rather than at hotels where workers are organized for maximum invisibility, mitigates against objectification of the Sahrawi refugees as part of the natural landscape, and qualifies the experience of FiSahara as a vacation for the privileged, a critique which most festivals would find hard to avoid. Polisario does want to convey the message of a deprived society but one that functions effectively and equitably, thus encouraging visitors' rubbernecking at a poor, but in other ways exemplary society within the highly circumscribed conditions of exile.[37] (Although the term "rubber-necking" has acquired other undeniably negative connotations, I use it here in the context of the earliest theorizations of tourism as founded, like cinema, on the gaze, in this case of moving the body so that the eyes can see the unusual, the different, the other, and the exotic. In such early theory the idea of the gaze tends to presume little or no interaction—or indeed interest in interaction—with the destination, a view now commonly qualified, and which FiSahara's structure and practices are designed to disrupt.)

There has so far been limited critical attention to FiSahara in Film Studies. Isabel Santaolalla and Stefan Simanowitz entitle their essay on

the festival, "A Cinematic Refuge in the Desert," prompting one to wonder whether they are thinking primarily of the largely immobilized residents of the Dakhla camp or the visiting festivalgoers.[38] While the adjective "cinematic" apparently applies to the visitors, who possibly also find refuge in the cinema, the camp is of course a refugee camp for the displaced Sahrawis. Indeed, Santaolalla and Simanowitz later describe the camp's residents as a "captive audience," wishing for entertainment, thus providing a group of spectators with different though overlapping interests (142–143). Certainly, cinema makes the space of the Dakhla camp temporarily more available and safe for a cosmopolitan visitor—someone highly mobile, open to experiences of the other, and willing to take small risks—by providing justification for an organized visit. It is not clear to what extent interest in/support for the Sahrawis or the appeal of a remotely located human rights based film festival provides the main draw for visitors—although it is presumably some combination of the two. Surely, the appeal is partly that of the—perhaps temporary, perhaps more long-standing—solidarity that Santaolalla and Simanowitz celebrate in their conclusion that FiSahara "is an extraordinary example of a film festival as an 'imagined community' in which hundreds of participants from around the world and thousands of Sahrawi refugees live together …eating… watching… sharing a land that ultimately belongs to none of them" (137). Here, the use of Benedict Anderson's famous term for how nation-states are created and sustained, points to exactly the kind of sovereignty that the Sahrawis do not have but also to a primary goal of the festival—to aid visitors in understanding their experience through the lens of national identity. Thus, to use Appadurai's descriptions of the overarching cultural flows, FiSahara concerns itself less than more glamorous festivals with financescapes, but intimately and more coherently with mediascapes and ideoscapes and their interrelationship.

FiSahara is clearly a very different location from Venice, Berlin or Rotterdam, those sites that are the focus of Marijke De Valke's pioneering critique of the festival circuit, but her words, referencing Walter Benjamin, are still pertinent: "'spectacle' is important in holding both the audience's and media's attention… It is not simply the artwork itself, but more specifically its spectacular exhibition that has become a commodified product in the cultural economy" (19). The films screened at FiSahara fall into typical world cinema circuits in that they are liable to provide that traditional pleasure of cinema to stationary spectators, by "transporting" them to places around the world, especially those less known in the

West, offering implicit challenges to despotic regimes, while avoiding critiques of (presumed) core audience beliefs. In the case of FiSahara the kind of spectacle evoked does not flaunt glamor and expense, but perhaps is open to accusations of a different kind of voyeurism, predicated on displacement and disempowerment; in the terms of the mobility paradigm, the event emphasizes the stratification of human experience via the free mobility of some and the place-bound existence of others.[39] While the festival provides an experience of difference for the visitor, it also offers the Sahrawis visibility and mobile friends such as Bardem. Elmo Gonzaga, writing about depictions of poverty in Philippine cinema, has argued that: "slum voyeurism may succeed in creating awareness of and sympathy for the plight of the poor, [but] its images do not necessarily demand that their viewing be accompanied by concrete action which would improve the prevailing situation" (118). In the case of FiSahara, with the ultimate goal of the festival being political change leading to self-determination for the Sahrawis, audiences, it is hoped, leave the desert, not only with enhanced cultural capital but also energized, their position as potential advocates cemented.[40] The contextual experience of cinema in Dakhla thus attempts the demand Gonzaga commonly finds missing in images of deprivation. However, his use of the colonially inflected term "improve," points to the difficulties with this theorization since such improvement of, say, conditions in the camps, fails to address the inhabitants' more overarching objective, one that would presumably be fulfilled at the instigation of the Sahrawis themselves. Still, FiSahara constitutes an important element in Polisario's/SADR's strategy of fortifying territorial claims via the discourse of inherently somewhat depoliticized human rights discourse, in this instance perceived to be especially palatable to festival-goers.[41]

6.5 Sahrawi Films/Sahrawi Cinema?

In the subtitle of his piece on the 2016 FiSahara for *Sight and Sound*, Alex Dudok de Wit asks if film can "really save the Sahrawis?" (14), a question reflecting not only a realistic doubt about the efficacy of film to provoke change but also a concern with the uninventive, traditional formal qualities of the majority of revolutionary pro-Sahrawi films which have resulted, he concludes, in a "rather monotonous line-up of worthy anti-Morocco polemics…. it is a festival which was founded in order to speak truth to power, yet cannot transcend its own political constraints" (15). This may be too much of an ask for a festival with so clear an activist

agenda at its heart, but, as Dudok de Wit hints, the appearance of ethnic Sahrawi filmmakers may be one step toward developing a more complex aesthetic, as a compliment to the nation-building mandate.[42] (For the time being, however, it remains secondary.) On the heels of FiSahara, a film school, the Abidin Kaid Saleh Institute, named for the Sahrawi photographer who first took up Polisario's request for visual documentation of the war, was established, with mostly Spanish-funding, in the Bojador camp in 2011. Its head, Omar Ahmed, who trained as a cinematographer in Cuba in the early 1980s, comments: "it opened doors we didn't even know existed" (Lamin). Building on his metaphor, it is apparent that film has come to be seen not only as a way out for restricted, contained Sahrawis but also as a way in for educating, politicizing, and consolidating worldwide attention to their cause, an integral part of the propaganda battle with Morocco. María Carrión observes that, "[t]he Sahrawi people have adopted cinema as an essential tool with which to defend their culture and fight for their freedom" (qtd. in Mayka). Evidently the possibility of studying on-site increases the options for would-be Sahrawi filmmakers, some of whom were not able to participate in oversubscribed courses in Cuba and elsewhere. Upon winning the White Camel for *Leyuad*, Chagaf, a graduate of Abidin Kaid Saleh acknowledged the school's importance to him and his work, announcing: "I want to share this with my school, my second home, the cradle of Sahrawi film" ("Leyuad wins the White Camel"). Indeed, one of the school's goals would appear to be the enabling of a distinctly Sahrawi cinema. Instructor Marino Villaa sees his role as instilling a narrative self-confidence, so that cinema is no longer only something other brought to the desert by FiSahara and seen from the point of view of Europeans (Williams). Ahmed, also a member of FiSahara's organizing committee, argues that the Sahrawi students at Abidin Kaid are eager to take the lead in the creation of their nation's evolving narrative, contending that the school will "create its own, uniquely Sahrawi cinematic style" (ibid.).

Despite Ahmed's comment, however, Sahrawi film production, distribution, and exhibition remain at this point a transnational endeavor, one intimately tied to the discourses of liberation, territoriality, and human rights. As more filmmakers graduate from the two-year course at Abidin Kaid Saleh and continue their education at other better-resourced film schools around the world such as San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba, their greater mobility and visibility may lead to the deployment of new cinematic strategies. Current work hints at some such possibilities but

the relationship between cinema and national status is likely to remain crucial. Certainly, if nations exist and represent themselves in the form of narratives, as argued in the work of Hayden White—or what Tony Bennett calls "never-ending stories" (74; White and Frew 3)—then it is appropriate to see *Leyuad* as an ownership claim, a national story for the not-as-yet state.[43] Credited to Gonzalo Moure Trenor (who wrote the book, *The Stride of the Deyar*, upon which it is based), Chagaf, and Inés G. Aparicio, the film is a Spanish-Sahrawi coproduction, with Chagaf the most prominent Sahrawi contributor.[44] As a cultural object, flowing, within the bounds of world cinema, it is also a film that builds upon the latent Sahrawi desire for mobility, a road movie that leads to the desired destination, figured here as Leyuad—a mountainous region 2000 kilometers from the Tindouf camps in the Tiris region in the south of Polisario-controlled Western Sahara, where poets are traditionally inspired by drinking from wells—the arrival at which allegorizes the founding of a nation. The seeker, Madrid-based Sahrawi writer Limam Boisha, travels to regain his inspiration which is achieved not only by drinking from the well, but more generally through experiencing aspects of specifically Sahrawi identity as revealed to him and us by elders such as poet, Badi uld Mohamed-Salem and scholar and mystic, Bunana Busseid, and by the landscape through which they travel to reach what the film's official synopsis calls "the genesis of the identity of the Sahrawi people." The film begins with Boisha leaving his apartment in Spain, from which, in the opening shot, we see his car depart—as it turns out, for the airport. Shots of the plane are followed by images from the camps where he discovers his guides and traveling companions. Thus, the importance of the diasporic or exilic Sahrawis living outside the Sahara region in neither Moroccan nor Polisario-controlled territory is established immediately. Camera position and movement then emphasize the journey through the landscape—characterized by its unspoiled beauty and vast emptiness. Yet this is an emptiness waiting to be filled by movements of people such as the one the film describes. We see many high-angle extreme longshots that show a vehicle creating or following a track through the flat desert or the rock formations of Leyuad. The pristine environment also emphasizes the long-standing Sahrawi tie to land upon which they have traditionally lived and moved, upon which they are familiar, at home. If many road movies inscribe a different space that provides a renewal of perception within an individual provoked by experience of the "authentic," either on the trip

or at its end, *Leyuad* nationalizes that effect and gives it a consciously temporal aspect (Fig. 6.1).

Indeed, the journey in *Leyuad* is to the past—and potential future—as much as to the sacred place. Intermixed with the longshots of the journey in the landscape are many close-ups of (mostly old male) faces, composed to express wisdom and specifically understanding of that environment.[45] Similarly, a bird's-eye view shot looking down a well as a bucket of water is pulled up—a stock image in desert set films—represents past claims on the land, while presumably fulfilling audience expectations of crucial desert infrastructure. However, although it is far from a talking heads-cum-archival footage documentary, and focuses on a journey rather than summarizing the events and injustices in recent Sahrawi history as in say *Sons of the Clouds*, or *Gurba* [*The Condemned*] (Miguel Ángel Tobías, 2014), and *The Runner* (Saeed Taji Farouky, 2013), both discussed below, *Leyuad*, is not made in the aesthetic traditions of Third Cinema, favored by Dudok de Wit, but rather practices Hollywood-style



Fig. 6.1 *Leyuad: A Trip to the Verses Well* (Gonzalo Moure/Brahim Chagaf/Inés G. Aparicio, Western Sahara, 2016)

imagery and use of sound in addition to an episodic approach more characteristic of world cinema. The emphasis throughout is upon a sense of return, even for characters who have not previously visited Leyuad. Thus, its metaphoric appeal for independence is established, for example, by a soundtrack that includes periodic voice-over from Boisha ("I travel to pay homage to our poets"), much of it in the form of poetry closely tied to the Sahrawi identity and condition ("my footsteps stayed by weight of exile"); pervasive reference in the dialogue to places all over Western Sahara and their orientation in relation to Leyuad and reminiscences and extensive use of original flute music, often solemn in tone, especially used to accompany a camera that explores the landscape.[46] (After its appearance at FiSahara, *Leyuad* featured in mostly Spanish language film festivals though a version subtitled in English played the Arusha African Film Festival, held in 2016 in St. Johns, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Texas African Film Festival in June 2017.)

Contrasts between constricted and open space, or between restricted, restrained, and free movement, are characteristic of many films on the Sahrawis, whether traditional documentaries or more scripted story films. *Gurba* (which won third prize, behind *Leyuad* and *Sonita*, at the 13th FiSahara in 2016) is a film divided into four sections, dealing, respectively, with life in the Tindouf camps, especially the prevalence of psychological problems and the lack of water; repression in the Moroccan-occupied territories, including the failings of the only UN mission not mandated to monitor human rights[47]; the work of landmine disposal teams in the heavily mined areas on the east side of the berm, and a briefer final section in which Ángel Tobías interviews Mohamed Abdelaziz, long-time head of Polisario, as well as various other Sahrawis he has so far encountered, asking them the meaning of the term, "gurba." The film begins and ends on shots of a group of kids sitting on a dune, before the camera pans to reveal a refugee camp, thus converting a sense of their freedom into one of entrapment. In the sequences around the wall, the disposal teams must walk slowly and deliberately, and are often shot from extreme low angles that emphasize their footsteps: the apparently empty space might in fact be a highly constrained one in which one misstep causes disaster. The curtailment of mobility is, however, most clearly represented in the scenes in the Martyr El Sheriff Center for those who have lost multiple limbs in the war or, more commonly, through the explosion of ordinance placed around the berm.[48] The director's on-screen presence as he experiences everyday life for the Sahrawis is designed, surely, to provide a surrogate

who can channel the emotions we feel ourselves—or which the film wants to instigate in us. However, his own distinctive outfit and manner (like a trendy backpacker) also emphasize his transnational mobility and access to resources denied his subjects. Throughout the film, mobility or its lack carries the burden of meaning.

Life Is Waiting (Iara Lee, 2015) emphasizes artistic responses to this lack, to occupation and displacement, and indeed juxtaposes such art-making, seen as a peaceful means of moving toward Sahrawi goals, to the possibility of a return to armed struggle. In addition to interviews with more traditional activists, the film includes many with artists who explain how their art expresses or advances the cause. Exemplary in this regard is Mariem Hassan, a traditional singer of international renown, the "voice of the Sahara," whose work might indeed be said to have provided a soundtrack for the Sahrawi condition.[49] However, younger hip-hop performers and rap poets are also featured, emphasizing cross-generational solidarity and commitment. Baba Weld Blas, a member of the band *Tiris*, explains that Sahrawis in exile and under occupation use dance as a form of expression, and that in the latter case, such movement is surveilled. "Sahrawis use dance to express themselves. Moroccans are always monitoring dance and body language. A Sahrawi dancer uses dance to emulate a Sahrawi map or flag with the movement of the hands—as a gesture of resistance." Another traditional art form, calligraphy, also briefly features: practitioner Mohamed Sulaiman welcomes the camera into his tent which, he explains, has four doors, facing in the four cardinal directions—intimations of migration and freedom of movement are thus mapped onto the architecture of the tent.[50] *Life is Waiting* also illustrates how film and other visual arts have been added to the traditional musical and poetic art forms of the desert. While media activists explain how little coverage their footage receives despite being sent to such news outlets as Al-Jazeera, CNN and the BBC, a section on the establishment of the Saleh film school stresses how the students use cinematography for self-expression and to detail life in the camps—a clip illustrates the wisdom of a blind old man. Also included are interviews with Nadhira Mohamed, described as the first Sahrawi actress, who won the Best Actress award at Abu Dhabi in 2011 for her performance in the narrative feature film, *Wilaya* [*Tears of Sand*] (Pedro Perez Robado).[51] This film adopts a traditional world cinema plot in which the main character, Fatimetu, returns to the Sahara from a long stay in Europe and gradually rediscovers forgotten elements of her identity as she reconnects with family while she retains some of the

privileges of mobility by acting as a driver between the refugee camps; it also screened at the Berlinale.[52]

Another documentary, one that focuses on sport rather than art as a conduit for activism and is also intimately tied to the idea of movement, is *The Runner*,[53] which tracks the life and experiences of Saharawi long-distance runner, Salah Hmatou Ameidan. Having wrapped himself in the Sahrawi flag when winning a race in France as part of a Moroccan team, Ameidan, from occupied El Ayoun, has become an exile in France where he has continued to run competitively, but also to support Sahrawi independence, including trips to the annual Sahara Marathon. Ameidan tells us that many Sahrawi kids grow up good runners, useful for escaping Moroccan authorities, and that the way he walks distinguishes him as a Sahrawi, while his preference for running barefoot in the desert visually emphasizes his connection to the land. He sees running as a duty, enabling his political activism. Indeed, the film continually links his ability as a runner to the Sahrawi cause, so that images near the end of the film, in which we see Ameidan having to abandon a race, then (temporarily) in a wheelchair, because of back problems—previously ascribed to an attack on him as he ran by Moroccan spectators at an earlier event—function as representations of the difficulties of progressing in Sahrawi independence endeavors, the lack of movement toward resolution. Similarly, enclosed spaces such as Ameidan's small apartment in Avignon, contrast starkly with the landscapes through which he runs while the invariably dank, cloudy weather in the French scenes emphasizes his distance from the Sahara (Fig. 6.2).

Eimi Imanishi's short narrative "Battalion to My Beat" (2016), apparently substituted for a documentary the filmmaker had intended to complete after visiting her ex-husband's family in the Western Sahara, uses discourses of both sport and art to address gender identity issues in the refugee camps. Mariam is a tomboy who likes to play soccer and wants to follow her brother when he is called to active service. Her desires to break free are given a specifically gendered context as she is variously directed instead to do the laundry, clean the house, tend the goats, look after the baby, and watch television. Dressing in fatigues, she declares "I hate dresses. I only wear pants" and heads off to join Polisario forces in training. Again, a high-angle extreme long-shot emphasizes the space and freedom of the open desert as she heads away from the crowded camp. Her service refused by a sympathetic but unyielding commander, the film



Fig. 6.2 *The Runner* (Saeed Taji Farouky, U.K./France/Ireland/Western Sahara/Algeria/Spain, 2013)

ends in oneiric mode as Mariam takes control of the movements of a battalion of soldiers, directing them to turn, sway, and bend in accordance with sticks that she drags along the ground and waves in the air to the accompaniment of rhythmic editing and sound, thus creating a screen-dance or dance for the camera, cut loose from the oppressive reality of her situation.

Lost Land (2011) is the work of Belgian filmmaker and erstwhile anthropologist Pierre-Yves Vanderweerd, whose films typically explore conditions of loss and exile and who has worked extensively in West Africa including the teaching of a documentary-making class in Senegal. Despite its non-Sahrawi genesis, it is this film on the Sahrawi struggle that best fits Dudok de Wit's call for a more experimental aesthetic that can reframe the story of Moroccan aggression and oppression. Almost entirely in black-and-white and shot on Super 8 film without synchronized sound, *Lost Land* is usually described as one of Vanderweerd's "poetic essays."[54] The terminology, as often in the discourse of avant-garde filmmaking, does not so much reflect on the use of words as on the image and an unconventional narrative structure, thus presumed to be more akin to poetry than, say, novelistic prose. In fact, Vanderweerd's distrust of words and insistent focus on the gaze is expressed in *Lost Land* in a variety of ways:

most notably, in addition to the disassociation of narrative from speaker through the lack of synch-sound, by his consistent framing of his subjects as gazers who look out from tents on to a landscape but also onto a timescape that integrates their past experiences and future goals. Vanderweerd's insistence on filming the gaze provokes a metacommentary in *Lost Land* of film's—and indeed travel or tourism's—"promise" to "offer up the illusion of a more intense and plentiful reality than that which lies outside the theater doors" (Strain 5). Thus, we do not see what the gazing figure (at whom we in turn gaze) describes—Moroccan bombing during the retreat across the desert in 1975, the loss of family members, torture in Moroccan prisons—but, in addition to those images of looking out onto the desert, a series of faces almost entirely wrapped up against the wind and sun so as to disrupt vision. Later in the film, one sequence is a three-minute traveling shot, the camera pointing down from a vehicle so as to capture the shadow of a figure riding on the truck holding a rifle. Although the audience will likely equate the unseen figure with the voice that accompanies part of the shot, and while the image of the gun perhaps prepares us for the next thematic section of the film which is entitled *Intifada*, we do not know the purpose of the current journey. (We are not enlightened but left in the dark.) The emphasis on the shadow suggests the film's attempt to reposition the filmmaker, challenging his authority to represent the history, appearance, and circumstances of the "lost land." Strain, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's work and on the figure of the objective scientist—or one might add anthropologist—suggests that "[s]eeing the object through the filter of one's own shadow is assurance of one's dominant position and, metaphorically speaking, one's close proximity to the light" (25). Contrariwise, Vandeweerd's camera consistently frames its subjects in silhouette, emphasizing an inevitably partial account of their place in the land. Extreme close-ups, asymmetric compositions, overexposed or grainy footage, a shaky camera and a soundtrack that often leaves us trying to work out what we hear add to this lack of definitive narrative, producing what Vandeweerd calls "a choreography of lost people," his dance metaphor implying an element of motion, apparently absent from poetry, as integral to the film (Fig. 6.3).[55]

Thus, Sahrawi cinema, although rooted in exile and containment, must be seen, I suggest, in the broader terms that include texts made more or less professionally in and about the Western Sahara, both by Sahrawis and (much more commonly to date) their supporters. And indeed, their



Fig. 6.3 *Lost Land* (Pierre-Yves Vanderweerd, Belgium/France, 2011)

opponents, since any conception of Sahrawi cinema must include the use of film and video recording and distribution as part of the continuing propaganda battle. Similarly, media infrastructure and the consumption of media images in the camps—whether by the displaced population or visitors to FiSahara—is a vital part of this visual culture: local and regional programming but also films from elsewhere reflecting Sahrawi circumstances. Such an approach acknowledges a certain fluctuating coextensiveness between culture and nation and is one that must remain critical of potential neocolonial dissonances, while striving to identify and confront the political, rhetorical, and artistic stances deployed. Thus, Wilson notes that when she visited in 2007 and 2008, she was struck by the "connected" nature of the isolated camps, through television sets linked to satellite dishes. In addition to SADR's own television service, she notes, "[t]he latest Al Jazeera news bulletins—or soap opera storylines—were regularly available in refugee homes" (*Sovereignty* 27). More recently, in 2016, in collaboration with the Abidin Kaid Saleh school, the Solar Cinema Western Sahara initiative, a program of Amsterdam-based Solar World Cinema,[56] was launched, with the goal of providing access to cinema in the camps using solar power provided by a custom-fitted Toyota Landcruiser.[57] The idea of Sahrawi cinema and media covers a wide discursive area that intersects with policy, perception, and mobile technologies of the visible, both old and new.

6.6 Media as an Instrument of Policy and Rhetoric in the Western Sahara

Alice Wilson has described how Polisario has striven to substitute traditional Saharan allegiances to particular tribes with attachment to the modern state-in-waiting ("Ambivalences of Mobility"). This process has been conducted with some success though she notes that tribal loyalties still function as a kind of palimpsest, alongside or underneath national consciousness, and that Polisario has indeed backtracked in certain areas, attempting to link tribal to national aspirations where the former have proven too hard to root out. Sometimes tribal traditions can be effectively retooled to suit contemporary needs. The important role of women from the earliest days in the Tindouf camps, for example, builds on traditional instances of female empowerment in the highly gendered Sahrawi society as well as the fact that up until 1991 most of the men were involved in the war. In addition to leading their own political committees, women run much of the day-to-day life in the camps, taking charge of sanitation, and health concerns. They are also, for example, the greeters of arrivals at FiSahara. Polisario policy promoting women's development and the presence of women as official spokespersons for SADR not only helps in the mitigation of tribal loyalties but also allows Polisario to showcase female participation as leaders and decision-makers in an attempt to influence the world's powerbrokers.[58] In other words, a strong female presence is indeed crucial to the Sahrawis for the establishment of a modern state apparatus but also appeals to western savior desires to support Muslim women. In this case, the appeal to the empowerment of women suggests an appropriate ally for the United States—though this strategy has apparently not sufficiently countered American support for Morocco.[59] Nevertheless, Sahrawi human rights activist, Aminetou Haidar's 2009 hunger strike following the Moroccan authorities blocking of her return to El Ayoun—because she refused to identify her nationality as Moroccan—from the United States where she had been awarded the Train Foundation's Civic Courage prize, provoked relatively robust coverage in world news outlets. Taking her to the verge of death, Haidar's protest solidified her status as the most significant personification of the struggle for an independent Western Sahara. Conducted at Lanzarote airport in the Canary Islands, from which Haidar refused to move anywhere other than her own country, the hunger strike persisted for over a month, with Haidar, after an earlier abortive attempt to return on a private Spanish

plane, eventually carried out of the airport on a stretcher and returned to El Ayoun following a Moroccan back-down, presumably adjudged strategically appropriate as pressure from its allies in the United States, France, and Spain mounted.[60]

Polisario's occupation of the moral high ground in the dispute with Morocco was challenged at this same time by the release of a film, *Stolen* (2009), that made accusations of the existence of slavery in the Tindouf camps. Human Rights Report's 2014 report, "Off the Radar" regarding human rights in the refugee camps, while noting that traditional nomadic practices of slavery "appear all but non-existent" (3) in Polisario-controlled territory, also addresses the persistence of isolated cases of the practice and documents one in particular, suggesting that Polisario could have pursued it more assiduously. Polisario's response, included in the report, is that the family involved were not originally on the territory they controlled and that, as soon as they were, the slaves were recovered and returned to their families (65, 85). Overall, the report does not dispute Polisario's long-standing commitment to combating practices of race-based enslavement that previously existed in the Sahara—and the firm commitment to its eradication is forcefully stated in the Polisario response (85). In terms of the relationship to the discourse of human rights and the virtual battlefield for worldwide recognition of its good governance, it is clearly crucial that Polisario is so perceived. Hence the disruption when two Australian filmmakers produced *Stolen*. In response to the premiere at the Sydney Film Festival, Polisario flew the purported slave, Fetim, a black Sahrawi, to Australia to deny the accusation. The film screened widely at festivals including in Toronto later in 2009 and was broadcast on PBS in the United States in 2013, accompanied by a debate about the veracity of its claims. Meanwhile, Polisario commissioned a film, *Robbed of Truth*, shot by a cinematographer, Carlos Gonzalez, who had previously worked with the *Stolen* directors, that effectively counters their claims and objectives.

The virtual battle between the Sahrawis and Morocco, fought on the Sahrawi side with the goal of increased visibility and mobility has been especially and intensely joined in a variety of ways online. These reflect the postmodern, postcolonial truth that all cultures get remade as the consequence of the flows of people, objects, ideas, and images and cannot be closed off from other cultures (Rojek and Urry 11). For the Sahrawis they provide a possible means of resistance to Moroccan rule, both in terms of internal communication and spreading information more widely

inside and outside the region.[61] *Watching Western Sahara*, for example, set up at FiSahara 2016 to curate citizen videos, uploaded its first annual report and collection of such material in April 2017.[62] The site aims to document human rights abuses in the occupied territories with the goal of influencing the UN to include their monitoring in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)'s mandate. Videos are tagged with such headings as "police intervention," "police brutality," and "injury". *Watching Western Sahara* acknowledges that Moroccan security forces are aware that they may be being recorded. For example, the site includes a video that shows female protesters being taken to a side street to avoid their abuse being filmed; the documentation ends abruptly when the person recording is spotted. The report also identifies the importance of videos recording protests in response to the treatment of political prisoners, specifically Brahim Saika, a Sahrawi activist who died in April 2016 while detained by Morocco, and the defendants from the Gdeim Izik encampment including Mohamed El Ayoubi who died in prison in El Ayoun in February 2018.

YouTube is also a major site of contestation, and again the Gdeim Izik confrontation provides a telling example. From the Sahrawi side the demonstrations and their aftermath are chronicled, for instance, in "Gdeim Izik: The Sahrawi Resistance Camp," a half-hour documentary upon the establishment, dismantling, and aftermath of the protests in October and November 2010.[63] Shot by self-identified human rights activists Isabel Terraza and Antonio Velazquez Diaz, the film begins by describing the atmosphere and appearance of the camp, the voice-over emphasizing the wide range of people present and the values of hospitality and sharing on display, symptomatic of a people united in opposition to the Moroccan occupation. We see bread being distributed, arms welcoming the filmmakers into *haimas*. Interviews with Sahrawi activists, others present at the camp, and with Sahrawi United Nations representative, Ahmed Bujari are used to explain the goals of the Sahrawis and the camp—ultimately self-determination. The filmmakers themselves are frequently on camera, describing how they smuggled in the camera. Velazquez Diaz explicitly subjugates his own importance to that of the apparatus, explaining that he is not a professional cameraperson but that the camera will be able to capture a vital document, irrespective of his skills. Indeed, following footage (which also appears briefly in *Life Is Waiting* and *The Runner*) of Moroccan forces advancing on the camp, confronting stone-throwing young men, we see a series of jerky handheld

shots, suggesting Sahrawi confusion amidst the attack and attempts to take care of the injured, accompanied by shouts such as "Keep filming," "Don't stop filming" and "Film this." Velazquez Diaz responds by saying he is filming everything and exclaiming "Don't worry. It's my job," indicative of the idea that the human rights campaigner's most important task is to document, to mobilize world opinion. The film continues with interviews with those captured and tortured, with footage of rioting in El Ayoun after the breaking up of the camp, and with Terraza and Velazquez Diaz in a two-shot, addressing the UN Council and the Red Cross, apparently from an empty house in El Ayoun where they have hidden. A quick insert of a map of Western Sahara, showing the Moroccan berm functions as a further attempt to explain the circumstances of the struggle, and the film ends by repeating several earlier images, many in slow motion, while Mariem Hassan is heard on the soundtrack. Thus, the piece showcases Sahrawi solidarity and Moroccan brutality as it emphasizes the importance of the mobile image.

The Sahara Thawra organization posts videos on YouTube and Vimeo, as well as hosting Facebook and Twitter sites.[64] One, that first appeared in 2012 and translates as "Gdeim Izik, Catalyst of the Arab Spring" or "Gdeim Izik: Sparking Off the Arab Spring,"[65] opens with footage from the U.S. television and radio show *Democracy Now* in which Noam Chomsky identifies Gdeim Izik as indeed being such a catalyst or spark. This clip is followed by a montage of still images, including several of injured or maimed bodies set somewhat disconcertingly to a fast hip-hop beat before the traditional desert guitar and Mariem Hassan music takes over. After an explanation of how the camp at Gdeim Izik was established, on-the-ground footage from the Moroccan army's destruction of the camp, footage of the ensuing protests in El Ayoun and interviews with some of those arrested and tortured, this 45 minute-long account spends its last third on the Spanish response to the violence—or rather the lack of response, epitomized by an official position that regretted rather than condemned Moroccan actions at the camp. Spain's retention of the Melilla and Ceuta enclaves and its implication in Atlantic fishing treaties with Morocco off the Saharan coast are raised in one interview; however, the video ends with uncharacteristic use of imagery that offers a more visually compelling nonverbal narrative: after a shot of the coast, a man walks slowly up a dune. Such interventions are attempts to make the events of Gdeim Izik visible and to contextualize them politically, and to some degree aesthetically.

Meanwhile, pro-Moroccan postings on YouTube and similar sites tend to emphasize that Sahrawi refugees are victims of the stubbornness of Algeria and Polisario leaders. Unsurprisingly, they present different material from the events of Gdeim Izik. One posting from *Saharaouimarroqui*, dated February 25, 2013, uses white circles superimposed on the image which is also slowed down, so as to depict Sahrawi aggression with four activities emphasized: throwing stones at bodies on ground; a man holding a large knife; throwing stones at an ambulance and breaking one of its windows; and a man apparently urinating on a dead body, presumably that of a Moroccan soldier.[66] This video uses mostly footage shot from a helicopter although some early shots are taken from the ground using a telephoto lens. The technique of directing the viewer to actions inscribed within specific encircled spaces emphasizes the priority of vision, especially within the context of texts designed to persuade. Seeing is believing, such videos contend, and any aesthetic technique that might detract from the possibility of seeing is disdained; hence the traditional, if often amateur, look of such postings as well as the standard documentary techniques of better-financed and produced works with similar designs.

The image of the apparent urination has drawn particular attention from pro-Moroccan sources. Another YouTube video juxtaposes it with interviews with grieving relatives—some of whom hold up photographs of the deceased labeled "The Victims"—of the Moroccan soldiers who died at Gdeim Izik, to the accompaniment of mournful music, as they argue that justice should be applied to "all Moroccans."[67] Another pro-Moroccan group that posts regular videos is *Sahara Question* which accompanies its postings with the claim that its mission is to "broadcast the true situation on the ground in Western Sahara." Many speeches of Moroccan officials are available, in addition to a variety of material designed to discredit Polisario. For example, a video published on July 7, 2017, "Clashes in Tindouf between Drug Gangs," shows largely indecipherable, mostly telephoto, images of violent movement and screaming and is accompanied by a putatively explanatory text: "Armed clashes broke out between two drug smuggling gangs in the Tindouf camps belonging to former Defense Minister Buhali and President Brahim Ghali."

YouTube, both in the posted footage and the comments made upon it, is evidently now a prominent forum for conducting the war of perception between Morocco and Polisario. This may be very directly the case as in the examples of the various postings around the Gdeim Izik

events, but it may take myriad other forms. As one example of such cultural diplomacy, consider the promotion of surfing along the coast of the occupied territory. The Dakhla camp in the Algerian desert takes its name from the original settlement located on the southern coast of the Western Sahara, known as Villa Cisneros during the Spanish colonial era. Although Moroccan control of the coast has mostly facilitated the kingdom's control of the fishing industry, it has also featured a tourist activity most prominent around Dakhla, where surfing has recently been heavily promoted.[68] As Rosaleen Duffy observes "tourism practices are increasingly about travel in conjunction with other special-interest activities, such as scuba diving, cycling or working on a conservation project" (33)—or, we might add, attending film festivals in the Dakhla refugee camp that also attempt to mobilize political support or the annual surf festival at Dakhla itself where such political contention is, in turn, hidden.[69] Thus, many videos of tourists discovering the waves around Dakhla and celebrating it as a new go-to destination have appeared on YouTube. Typically, they emphasize the discovery of an unknown coast, although occasional references to the fact that they are in the occupied territory do occur. Such is not the case, of course, in Moroccan tourist authority postings or those of commercial surfing outfits, such as Sahara Surf.[70] Comments accompanying the videos do, however, often reference the dispute, with pro-Moroccan sentiments somewhat more numerous, often couched in the crass language common to the genre.[71] Fishing and kite surfing are also promoted, and while images of the city of Dakhla itself are less frequent, when it is shown, we see a modern, clean city, peppered with Morocco's flag. The description in one Moroccan tourist video refers to the area as "the pearl of the Atlantic in the middle of the Sahara Desert."[72]

Putting aside the geographic inaccuracy, the intent to further push Dakhla as an adventure tourism destination is clear—the periphery is the exciting, "edgy" place to be, paradoxically the new center. Such an attempt to combine the appeal of the peripheral and the center is also apparent in a video entitled "Western Sahara: Hawaii of Africa," posted in 2011, in which we see José Kamal, identified as codirector of the Dakhla Surf Festival, argue that Dakhla is "increasingly on the map," and that the goal is to make it the premier surf location in the world. To this end, the video showcases Bernd Roediger, a 13-year-old surfing phenomenon who speaks approvingly of the conditions. The four-minute piece concludes with reporter Kiki Wright acknowledging that Moroccan claims are disputed by "local Sahrawi Arabs who have won much

international support" and that "[b]oth sides remained locked in negotiation." The failure to accord national recognition and the suggestion that negotiation is ongoing betray the perfunctory nature of this apparent attempt at balanced reporting. Perhaps because it at least entertains the question of sovereignty however, this video did provoke a couple of pro-Sahrawi comments, which were followed by pro-Moroccan rebuttals, mostly profanity-laden personal attacks on the former but including one that aligns closely with the Moroccan position in subsuming the Sahrawi identity to an overarching Moroccan national identity: "I'm sahraoui and it's moroccan Sahara you are wrong." (Another, presumably unintentionally, opens up to further debates about continuing colonialism by picking up on the desired connection to Hawaii "Only Hawaii isn't occupied by a foreign country…").[73]

6.7 A Wider Perspective: *Waiting for Happiness* and *Sahara Chronicle*

Although their circumstances are quite specific then, and, as many of the films discussed above have indicated, those specificities must be acknowledged in the striving for any long-term solutions to their plight, the displaced and occupied Sahrawis are also part of a region-wide, postcolonial experience of migration and the policing of movement in the Maghreb predominantly characterized, as *Waiting for Happiness* illustrates, by various displaced and migrant travelers' attempts to reach an increasingly fortified Europe. Abderahmane Sissako's 2002 film, presenting at the opposite extreme in visual sophistication from the videos I have been describing, and a much better-known film than those I have discussed to this point, was made just across the border from Western Sahara's extreme south in the Mauritanian city of Nouadhibou—much of it on the beach.[74] Its title—at least in English, based on the French—is indeed peculiarly apt for the situation of the Sahrawis. Also known as *Heremakano*, Sissako's film depicts various characters in Nouadhibou, emphasizing the dilemmas of Abdullah who we see arriving from across the desert to visit his mother and waiting around somewhat aimlessly before apparently departing for Europe. The film lends itself to a transnational analysis, since it contrasts Nouadhibou's transient residents with its more permanent, while setting traditional cultural practices (such as the playing of the cora) against global and/or modern technologies (karaoke, electricity, the radio, and modern transportation mechanisms) in a classic slow cinema style of long

takes and episodic narrative with an added element of magical—or at least fanciful—realism. It is also a film that invites analysis via its representation of mobility. Nouadhibou is a transfer point to use the terminology of the New Mobilities Paradigm (Sheller and Urry). It is home to the world's largest ship graveyard; serves as the port for the export of iron ore, transported 650 kilometers along the northern border of Mauritania, just south of Western Saharan territory from the mines at Zouerate; and, in recent years, has become a departure point for immigrants seeking to reach the Canary Islands. It lies on the eastern coast of the Cabo Blanco peninsular or Ras Nouadhibou which is divided between Mauritania and Western Sahara. However, unlike the rest of Western Saharan territory, the sliver of land on the western side of the peninsular is administered neither by Polisario nor Morocco but by Mauritania, while the now abandoned Sahrawi town of La Guera, cut off from the rest of Moroccan-occupied coastal Western Sahara by the wall and accompanying minefield, is deserted.

Waiting for Happiness and its director's status as an internationally known and appreciated maker of art films provide some fascinating parallels to the situation in Western Sahara itself. Sissako is the epitome of an art-film director, his work eagerly sought out by, well, people like me in the West. His latest film, *Timbuktu*, screened at FiSahara in 2015, while its predecessor, *Bamako* was a withering critique of international and institutional political aid organizations in the era of neoliberalism. *Waiting for Happiness* makes a similar critique, though less directly and in a way that encapsulates some of the dilemmas of African filmmakers. The purview of funders *Fonds Sud* is "the production of films that are off the beaten track and display a strong cultural identity, [to be] a support mechanism for the preservation of cultural diversity" (Cinefan qtd. in Falicov 8). In fact, the film shows how for some people Nouadhibou is "the beaten track": its controlling paradox is how, as in so many refugee journeys, there is an alternation between hurrying and waiting. Indeed, Sissako illustrates how modernity has refashioned aspects of a traditional community's experience of space and time. After performing awkward social visits between hours spent watching the feet of passers-by from the traditional tent-inspired, low, movie-screen shaped window in his mother's home, at the conclusion of the film, Abdullah apparently departs, walking over the dunes. The film's uncertainty about this detail, however, leaving an open ending that invites audience contemplation, is in opposition to the unambiguous death of Michael who leaves for Europe halfway through the film but

whose body washes up on the beach in an obvious indication of the limitations on mobility for so many people in today's world. He is himself shipwrecked and, like the decaying vessels offshore, is no longer going anywhere—although unlike his depiction of the ships, Sissako is careful not to aestheticize Michael's death. If the largely unknown, implicitly exotic, nature of the location was a factor in securing French funding for the film, its "authenticity" is further guaranteed by the fact that its director did indeed himself wait in Nouadhibou with his mother's family.[75] No doubt the film is one of many set in liminal spaces that have become transitional nodes exemplifying Zygmunt Bauman's dictum that globalizing processes, while, "signaling a new freedom for some, upon many others…descend as an uninvited and cruel fate…. The freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late modern or postmodern times" (2). To which he adds, echoing other parts of Sissako's *ouevre*, "[a] particular cause for worry is the progressive breakdown in communication between the increasingly global and extraterritorial elites and the ever more 'localized' rest" (3) (Fig. 6.4).



Fig. 6.4 *Waiting for Happiness* (Abderrahmane Sissako, France/Mauritania, 2002)

The structure and infrastructure of this scenario of migration is the subject of Zurich-based intermedia artist and video essayist Ursula Biemann's *Sahara Chronicle* (2006–2007), subtitled a "Video Collection on Mobility and the Politics of Containment in the Sahara," which comprises 12 short video essays with a total running time of 76 minutes, different selections from which have been screened in different spaces.[76] Biemann emphasizes the systematic, large scale nature of transit migration through the Sahara, representing the practice not through a narrative structure, but rather spatially, through investigating how migration is ordered, facilitated, discouraged or contained at a series of pivotal sites each of which plays an important role in the process. Notable among the sites at which she shows the containment and prevention of further movement by various authorities are the Mauritanian Red Crescent Inspection center in Nouadhibou and the Moroccan prison in El Ayoun, where we see and hear various sub-Saharan Africans stopped on their way to a Europe that has attempted to outsource the containment of migrants. They are identified by nationality and many complain of police ill-treatment and interference in their plans. In another section, Biemann focusses on the Zouerate-Nouadhibou railway line, built along the border with Western Sahara, which functions to transport not only iron ore but also large numbers of migrants seeking out Europe. "Algeria/Morocco Borderlands, Oujda, Morocco," on the other hand, simply records a sandstorm which prevents Moroccan soldiers from watching the border; instead, image is replaced by sound—that of empty sardine cans rattling in the wind—providing, for those cognizant of the Sahrawis' predicament, its own comment on migration and displacement. The topic of national self-determination in the wake of colonial exploitation functions much more directly in "Algeria Transit Route" via the discussion of Tuareg identity and ethnic loyalties that trump those to the five countries (Chad, Niger, Libya, Algeria, and Mali) over which they are distributed.

Sahara Chronicle represents Biemann's own artistic contributions to a more broadly conceived curatorial project, *The Maghreb Connection*, which incorporates theoretical and activist work with artistic approaches to the creation and depiction of alternative, informal, or what Biemann refers to as "counter" geographies of the region that emphasize practices of mobility. The project culminated in a conference in Cairo, exhibition at Cairo's Townhouse gallery—and later in Geneva, and a bilingual (in Arabic and English) book that includes essays of various natures that explore the postcolonial conditions that have made the Maghreb a transitional

zone of migration. Biemann's work typically attempts to map how movements of peoples characterize and reveal the conditions of today's neoliberal world order. Like the Sahrawi struggle to found a nation, this goes on against the background of world power struggles that grant it little significance, rendering it largely invisible.[77] While it sustains those displaced Sahrawis effectively trapped in the inhospitable *hamada* and cut off from all economic resources, such a national identification plays a different role for many migrants who camp in national groups as they seek destinations, often with an established connection to their countries of origin, where work and income is more attainable. Such destinations are accessible perhaps via the sea crossing to the Canary Islands[78] or the land route to the north coast of Morocco where migrants might attempt to enter Ceuta (the focus of Biemann's much earlier *Europlex*, codirected with Angela Sanders) or Melilla. Thus, is movement constrained, contained, enforced, encouraged, prevented.

In a different sense, the places I have been discussing in this chapter are hard to get to for most people outside the region. As Kay Dickinson argues at the beginning of her *Arab Cinema Travels*, it is perhaps important to explain how I got there, "in" as she says, "every sense" (20). She quotes Ali Behdad: "To avoid a new mode of critical transcendentalism, the conjunctural position of the speaking subject has to be figured into his or her discourse" (22). Thus, my own knowledge of and interest in the conflict over Western Sahara begs explanation, especially since this account has attempted what might be called a survey of circumstances around the idea of a Sahrawi cinematic presence. I am a British-born (and the British were arguably the first people to colonize the Western Sahara), U.S.-based academic, writing about world cinema, able to leverage considerable freedom of movement, interested, I hope for more generally productive as well as personal reasons, in retelling the circumstances of the displaced, and relatively disenfranchised. Thus, I "trade in migrant metaphors," in Graham Huggan's words, furthering my own work while attempting to do no harm—and striving neither to deemphasize nor disconnect political and social justice issues in the manner that some interventions, privileging cosmopolitanism, into global aesthetics, including in world cinema, may have tended to (Dickinson 23; Ginsberg [in this volume]). I can of course make no claim to speak for any "national group"—certainly not the Sahrawis. I hope I have been able to write with respect, appropriately without appropriating; without the recourse to too much alienating academic expertise, and in a manner that

will encourage further work that will move toward an understanding of, even an amelioration of, their predicament.

Notes

1. What allows someone to claim that ethnic/national identity has, however, been much disputed, and is indeed key to opposing efforts to claim the space. At the time of the proposed UN census on the status of the Western Sahara, following the ceasefire in 1991 (described below), Morocco claimed that a much larger number of people—about double the number proposed by Polisario—should be allowed to vote: a position consistent with its claim that the territory is in fact a part of Morocco itself. Large numbers of Moroccan citizens were moved into the Western Sahara—in defiance of the Fourth Geneva Convention—to solidify this stance and attempts to sort out eligibility collapsed in 1996. Currently, Moroccan settlers outnumber the indigenous Sahrawis by a ratio of more than two to one, though this is complicated by the fact that some Moroccan settlers are ethnic Sahrawis from southern Morocco, especially from the border region of the Tarfaya strip, once administered from the south by the Spanish, but not claimed by Polisario as part of SADR (Barca and Zunes 164).
2. Or, in French, Laayoune. The city was established by the Spanish colonizers in 1938 and became the capital of the Spanish Sahara in 1940.
3. Mauritanian arguments for a greater Mauritania including the old Spanish Sahara reflected similar Moroccan irredentist claims; however, they were based not only on a strong ethnic relationship and historic trading connections but also on the shared Hassaniya dialect of Arabic.
4. See Note 1.
5. As in Palestine, these two modes of establishing solidarity are politically contested and not simply a matter of practical consideration. (This chapter will return to this issue in the context of the FiSahara Film Festival.)
6. From 2000 to 2004, former U.S. Secretary of State, James Baker worked to implement a permanent peace plan and the referendum but abandoned the effort in the face of Moroccan intransigence in 2004. See Zunes and Mundy for more details.
7. For a depiction of sub-Saharan refugees attempting to enter Melilla and thus Europe, see *The Land Between* (David Fedele, 2014). For an account of domestic workers in Ceuta see *Europlex* (Ursula Biemann and Angela Sanders, 2003). I discuss Biemann's work on migration briefly at the end of this chapter.
8. Possibly also because the Sahara does not hold sites—like Jerusalem—of religious significance to Islam.

9. There are, of course, many significant differences between the Palestinian and Sahrawi displacements and ensuing struggles. Any attempt to render comparisons—such as a violent and disproportionate military presence, the construction of a wall, the continuing movement of and increase in settler populations, and the nature of certain opposition movements (the *intifadas*)—threatens to undermine the importance of very specific and compelling differences. For example, although both occupations may be seen as the consequence of the power plays and missteps of earlier colonial powers, Morocco is a postcolonial state in a sense that Israel is not. One consequence of the very different historical circumstances is that Sahrawi energies are directed at the previously colonized Morocco and to some extent Spain has become a source of support—though not at the highest political levels. This circumstance, combined with the *relative* restraint of the Spanish colonizers, has the danger of minimizing Spanish culpability for the current situation. As San Martín observes: "[t]he friendliness of the Spanish strategy in the Sahara is, as is any justification of Western colonial past, an ideological operation, a fantasy, aimed at inscribing the past in a historical narrative acceptable from our present position" (44). Both Morocco and Israel, however, have received support from western powers, with the United States providing vital political, financial, and military support to Israel and, to lesser degree, to Morocco. (See Khoury.) The Moroccan monarchy has largely been supportive of Israel, although such an alliance is contested within the population.
10. For more details about Sahrawi refugee-migrants in Libya see Fiddian-Qamiyeh.
11. Still, Morocco's close ties to Saudi Arabia and the educational opportunities offered the Sahrawis by Cuba and Venezuela may be drawing the dispute into the wider contemporary geopolitical situation. On May 2, 2018, for example, Morocco cut diplomatic ties to Iran, accusing it of supporting Sahrawi independence claims, at a period of increased U.S. saber-rattling and threats to withdraw from the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran that were fulfilled, along with the imposition of new sanctions, shortly afterwards.
12. I use the common term for the unrest of 2011, but see Massad for an analysis of the reasons why such a term was adopted—to promote regimes friendly to neoliberal policies.
13. See Fernández-Molina, 241 and Wilson ("On the Margins") for a more detailed justification of this link. I follow Maha Abdelrahman and Wilson in questioning the wisdom, indeed the possibility, of effectively separating the economic from the political, and that such divisions are, in this as in many other instances, strategies of reactionary rhetoric.

14. At least it has done so relative to other regional cinemas. However, see Carter for a less rosy view of the situation of a Moroccan cinema characterized by a continuing divide between on the one hand festival, government, and CCM objectives and, on the other, the needs of filmmakers.
15. The period that constitutes the years of lead is imprecise, with most commentators emphasizing the 1970s and 1980s, but some extending the definition to include as early as the late 1950s and as late as the early 1990s. In any case, shortly after Mohammed VI's succession, there appeared greater willingness to address human rights violations. In 1999, a coalition of Sahrawi groups forwarded 1200 cases of abuse to the newly established Independent Arbitration Committee. Later, after its rejection of the Baker plan, Morocco established the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER) in 2004. However, the results were disappointing, "especially for the Sahrawis who accounted for 23% of complainants, and a precious opportunity for recognition was lost. 'We were treated like numbers.'" (Fernández-Molina 240. The internal quotation is from her interview with Elghalia Djimi and Brahim Sabbar, respectively vice president and secretary-general of the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Gross Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State [ASVDH]. El Ayoun, 9 June 2013.) Indeed, Barca and Zunes argue that despite Mohammed's domestic reforms, allowing parliament a greater role in policy-making and establishing a new family law that protects women's rights, "repression has actually increased in severity in the occupied Western Sahara, with some of the worst repression taking place in broad daylight…." The reference to daylight is indeed telling. Metaphorically, such actions can remain in the dark, unattended to by the world that keeps a closer eye on domestic civil rights, especially as regards gender. More on the significance of gender issues from the Sahrawi perspective follows later in this chapter.
16. See Kevin Dwyer's essay in this volume.
17. Ben Barka's claim is quoted in Carter 120.
18. See Dwyer's chapter in this volume.
19. For an approach tied to the related lens of travel as a means for understanding the role of cinema, see Kay Dickinson's account of recent circumstances in Syrian, Palestinian, and Gulf cinemas and cinematic infrastructure in *Arab Cinema Travels*. She justifies her use of travel as a productive matrix for this purpose, by explaining how, relative to terms such as the global and transnational, it "offers something further. It opens us out to the actual experience of moving through as well as perceiving and reconfiguring space … bringing questions of motive into the frame too." Here, I prefer the possibly somewhat more general and less personal term, mobility, which I believe holds similar advantages while being more applicable, in its connotations of practical and mundane necessities, to the

specificities of the circumstances in Western Sahara. As her title, *Maghrebs in Motion* suggests, Suzanne Gauch makes a similar choice in her analyses of key films in Maghrebi cinema.

20. The meaning of 'the term 'Sahrawi' clearly also fails to distinguish those from the old Spanish Sahara and—after the detaching of the Tarfaya strip which became part of Morocco—now Western Sahara from desert dwellers in neighboring countries. The bounds of national ambition are founded on colonial borders. For a development of this idea, see Zunes and Mundy, especially pages 93–95.
21. Deubel's article contains a complete transcription of the poem in Hassaniya Arabic and translation in English.
22. Compare the attempts to integrate Bedouins in Jordan, or indeed Israel.
23. Following a new EU-Morocco agreement including Western Sahara waters in February 2018, protests occurred in Spain, the Tindouf camps and El Ayoun. (Self-sacrificing protests against the Moroccan authority also include instances tied to the sea, though the most recently publicized of these—in which a fisherman was crushed in a dumpster attempting to retrieve a confiscated swordfish—occurred in the Rif in the restive north of Morocco.)
24. Wilson notes an early use of the term, "saharaui" by Angel Domenech Lafuente in 1953, as she explains that during the Spanish colonial period a sense developed amongst the tribes that they populated a distinct area (15). While Morocco continues to reject the appellation, it is now widely used as a term for national and ethnic identity, constituting part of the claim to statehood. Polisario used the terminology "Sahrawi Arab African people" immediately after its founding, in its first manifesto in 1973, a part of its objective to replace tribal affiliation with the national/ethnic (Zunes and Mundy 110). (It should also be noted at this point that the term 'tribe'—and indeed "qabilah' are themselves controversial terms in anthropology as Wilson remarks [*Sovereignty* 14]. A more neutral, though less specific, term favored by Zunes and Mundy is "social grouping.")
25. These Arabic terms, commonly used as polarities, in fact have overlapping connotations. See Wilson (2016, 41–43).
26. Other walls built to discourage unwelcome movement use and elicit similar strategies, as, for example, in depictions of the Israeli wall across Palestine, likely a more familiar instance to many readers. Many of these attempt an evenhandedness from *Wall* (Simone Bitton, 2004) to animated *Wall* (Cam Christiansen, 2018), emphasizing the structure's harmfulness to Israelis and Israel as well as Palestinians and Palestine. (However, Christiansen's film also stresses the wall's scarring of the landscape and its use as a canvas on the Palestinian side, including in several instances by British graffiti artist Banksy.) More innovatively, *The Color of Olives* (Carolina Rivas, 2006) uses a broadly *cinema verité* style to explore the

effects of the wall on one family whose house is surrounded. The wall is also prominent in many of the best-known Palestinian features including *Ticket to Jerusalem* (Rashid Masharawi, 2002) and *Divine Intervention* (Elia Suleiman, 2002).

27. Beverly Skeggs has argued that the focus on mobility in sociological research and discussion has been at the expense of a retreat from class, replacing it as "the new universalizing condition" (52). The danger is apparent: if mobility is emphasized, the current status/stasis of prevailing structures is apparently less important. Citing Bourdieu and the work of Mike Davis in the United States, Skeggs insists that emerging discussions of mobility must in fact be conducted alongside analyses of class and power. Thus, for the well-off, for example, a hi-tech environment which grants quick access to a range of transnational experiences is in fact predicated on a "settled form of residential localism" (49).
28. In response to these restrictions on the erection of tents in the desert, many Sahrawis, seeing them as both symbols of freedom of movement and of their nomadic culture, responded by placing them on rooftops in El Ayoun.
29. See Wilson's discussion of this activity in "Ambivalences" 85.
30. The Witness methodology for producing video content for purposes of human rights advocacy is used in such workshops (Carrión 191). This is explained on Witness's website: witness.org/about/.
31. Meethan, amongst other theorists of tourism, applies this terminology, originally from Appadurai, to his subject, but does not himself apply it to film festivals with which he is not concerned. It is worth noting at this point that one reason festivals are like tourism or a part of tourism is the sense that, unlike most forms of commodification, the site of production is also the site of consumption. See Meethan 15.
32. Sandblast also organizes arts and language programs in the refugee camps, including sponsorship of the Stave House, established in 2016 to provide music education to children in Bojador. Sandblast's website is www.sandblast-arts.org. The organization's director, anthropologist Danielle Smith, has long worked on and with the Sahrawis and made a short film, "Song of Umm Dalaila: The Story of the Sahrawis" (1993) in the Dakhla camp, focused on the prominent role of women in Polisario initiatives aimed at building and sustaining preventative health programs, Sahrawi cultural traditions, and literacy campaigns.
33. Zunes and Mundy argue extensively and convincingly for seeing various activities surrounding the disputed territory as constituting such a virtual battlefield, although they pay little attention to broadly cultural activities.
34. Many of the films mentioned reflect an arguably western perspective on other struggles—hardly surprising for a festival that targets such audiences. In the context of the Arab world for example, *Five Broken Cameras* has

been largely dismissed by the Palestine liberation movement because of its Israeli funding and apparent resulting influence over the final cut, while *The Square* has been criticized for its (exclusively negative) portrayal of the Muslim Brotherhood.

35. Having lived and worked in Salt Lake City for some years, I have experienced what cinephiles in Berlin, Venice, Cannes, Toronto and New York, for example, also know—the oddity of experiencing a major film festival without leaving home. Fitting screenings at Sundance into my normal routine determines a quite different relationship to festival and films from the festival norm, one that includes little in the way of ancillary activities, related, for example, to experiencing a different location.
36. See De Valke 195. The issue is more fully addressed in Broe and Ginsberg.
37. See MacCannell and Urry for the development of the theory of the tourist gaze and Strain for a more recent approach informed by film theory and by the multiple similarities between watching a film and visiting a tourist attraction. For Strain, the tourist gaze is "mobile, portable and even culturally promiscuous" (2).
38. See Iordanova and Cheung 136–150.
39. See Bauman, *Globalization*.
40. Thus, it would be possible to position FiSahara as an international public event that both makes use of and challenges the commodification of leisure and tourism.
41. The privileging of the human rights discourse over the political does not, of course, go unacknowledged or uncriticized by Sahrawi activists. For more on the increasing danger to rights activists around the world in the context of attempts to depoliticize human rights discourse, including right-wing attempts to disconnect it from discussions of unequal access to services and increasingly vast income disparities in the world today, see the work of Boaventura DeSousa Santos. Recent scholarship on challenges to western conceptions of human rights is summarized in Nelson Maldondo-Torres's *On the Coloniality of Human Rights* which traces an alternative vision of human rights out of the work of Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire. See also Spivak and Mignolo.
42. See also the discussion of *Lost Land* (Pierre-Yves Vanderweerd) later in this chapter.
43. Like many subject peoples who did not control the camera, Sahrawis attending the cinema were encouraged to misrecognize themselves in colonial texts. San Martín transcribes part of an interview he conducted with Ahmed who grew up in the Spanish Sahara, and recalls: "… the cinema, the Westerns and all the other children clapping when the cowboys chased the Indians… it was only later that I realized that we [the Sahrawis] were the Indians in this story" (55).

44. *Leyuad*'s producer is Nicolás F Calvo, who had earlier produced *Roots and Clamor* for young Sahrawi filmmaker Ebbaba Hameida Hafed who acted as director, editor and on-camera interviewer for the short film, which premiered at FiSahara in 2014. The title, taken from a poem by Zahra Hassan, emphasizes the stability of roots and the potential mobility of clamor. The film cuts back and forth between the Western Sahara and Spain, a tracking shot across the desert, continuing as one across a Spanish city. Much of the film consists of interviews with young Sahrawis in Spain who explain that they are studying Law, Business, or Nursing in order to help the cause of Sahrawi independence. As we see and hear them interviewed, we hear traditional Sahrawi music—mostly sung by Sahrawi singer, Mariem Hassan—in the background.
45. Strain remarks upon the similarity between cinema's switching between close shots and high-angle long shots, comparing it to a tourist who looks at close objects then consults a map or plan. "This type of movement, from immersive to distanced, is a continual fluctuation within the tourist experience" (27).
46. The end credits list multiple compositions by Fernando Blanco and Gabriel "Gabo" Flores, including the latter's "Flute Flow" and "Long Flute."
47. In the film, writer Mohamidi Fakala describes the MINURSO personnel as "tourists who come and go, spending their holidays." We then see the United Nations flag and ranks of national flags outside the New York headquarters, then a shot of the SADR flag through bars and grill work.
48. The short film "Musawat," Hassaniya for "inclusion"—and thus with something like the opposite of the meaning of "gurba"—tells the stories of several disabled children in the camps, who struggle to integrate into the surrounding community.
49. Mariem Hassan died shortly after the completion of the film. It is dedicated to her.
50. Sulaiman also appears in the brief YouTube posting made to coincide with the 5th AU-EU Summit on 29–30 Nov. 2017, "Investing in Youth in Western Sahara," in which a series of Sahrawis ask the European Union not to cooperate with the Moroccan occupation. It is available for viewing on Vimeo at: vimeo.com/245408332.
51. Interestingly, the internationally mobile Mohamed is one of the least optimistic interviewees regarding the possibilities of resolving the conflict without resort to further violence. Another interviewee is radical Moroccan filmmaker, Nadir Bouhmouch, employed at the beginning of the film to describe the Green March. See Kevin Dwyer's essay (pp. 231–278) in this volume for a discussion of Bouhmouch's attempts to 'push the envelope' within the red lines of Moroccan cinema.

52. Perhaps the best-known example of such a homecoming story in Arab art films is Moroccan Farida Benlyazid's *Door to the Sky* (1988), although the complete immersion in the home culture and abandonment of European/western manners is more extreme than is usually the case in such narratives. In *Wilaya*, of course, Fatimetu's return is not a homecoming in the sense that the camp is not home, although its name and the name of the *wilaya* or province, Smara, is taken from the eponymous region, the true home, in occupied Western Sahara.
53. Director Saeed Taji Farouky was born to a Palestinian father and Egyptian mother in the United Kingdom, where he remains based.
54. This term is used, for example, in the preamble to Andrew Northrop's interview with Vanderweerd, "Poetic Encounters: "A Discussion with Pierre-Yves Vandeweerd," 5 Sept. 2017, mubi.com/notebook/posts/poetic-encoiuters-a-discussion-with-pierre-yves-vanderweerd.
55. As part of his response to a question about why he chose to shoot *Lost Land* on super-8, Vanderweerd avers: "I have the impression that digital cameras are often too heavy or too light, that they are not well adapted to the bodies and hands that carry them. The images that they produce regularly contain shaking. But this shaking is rarely the expression of your own interiority, it is often more the consequence of this technical reality. You can carry a Super 8 or 16 mm camera with your arm stretched. It then becomes part of the filmmaker's body; the extension of their hand and of their interiority. It allows more intimacy—*au corps à corps.* The shakings that inhabit these images are first and foremost vibrations, but they are vibrations emanating from the filmmaker's sensitivity and subconscious" (Northrop).
56. The organization works worldwide to increase access to cinema through solar power.
57. In its web page on the Sahrawi project, Solar World Cinema explains the importance of the project thus: "Cinema is still young amongst Saharaui people, although it can strengthen their voice and development. Film is a tool for self-expression and reflection: a form of cultural resistance and in this case an important part of human rights activism. In addition, film obviously has entertainment value, which is of great importance considering the harsh living conditions in this area. With Solar Cinema Western Sahara, cinema is available all year round and in the whole Saharaui area. In the area live approximately 160,000 refugees" (www.solarcinema.org/sahara/).
58. Presumably for such reasons, the Polisario plays a significant role in the low budget revolutionary feminist film, *Born in Flames* (Lizzie Borden, 1983), which has received renewed attention in recent years.
59. Matt Sienkiewicz is amongst those commentators who have noted "America's fixation on improving the lives of women in Muslim countries. In

addition to perpetuating narratives of Oriental helplessness, a focus on gender also serves as means of distracting attention from ongoing problems such as the endless wars in Afghanistan and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories" (26). As regards media policy, Sienkiewicz also addresses the desire to foster female newsreaders and "anchors"—who are indeed prominent in SADR's broadcasting system—punningly concluding that: "[t]he United States has promoted 'women of cover' who cover (the news) in order to discursively cover (up) the limitations of America's ostensibly liberalizing measures in the Middle East since 9/11" (113).

60. For a report on Haidar's condition just before this change in the Moroccan stance see Brian Eno and Stefan Simanowitz's report for *The Guardian*, "A Tragedy for Western Sahara," available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/libertycentral/2009/dec/14/hunger-strike-aminatou-haidar. Composer and musician, Brian Eno, was one of many artists to denounce Morocco's actions; others included Javier Bardem and Ken Loach.
61. For a discussion of the closing down and later reinstitution of U.S.-based Pal Talk chat rooms see Barca and Zunes, 161–162.
62. Available at medium.com/@watchingwesternsahara/human-rights-in-western-sahara-a-year-in-review-c7a6a4e02151.
63. Available for viewing at youtube.com/watch?v=z034H97gvN8.
64. Although at time of writing videos no longer seem to be being posted and the most recent twitter feed is from early 2016. Sahara Thawra's website is located at www.saharathawra.com/saharathawra.org. Its motto, prominently placed on the website and appearing at the end of some videos, is: "Denuncia y Derrechos Humanos en el Sahara Ocupado."
65. See Gdeim Izik detonante de la primavera árabe at saharathawra.org/index.php/gdeim-izik/gdeim-izik-enlaces/410-ver-el-documental (accessed 15 Feb. 2018). Also available for viewing at: www.cultureunplugged.com/storyteller/SAHARA__THAWRA#/myFilmsr.
66. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_GtVidjqnE (accessed 15 Feb. 2018).
67. This video, which I accessed on YouTube in September 2017 at watch?v = uiAZemuiCwk, was no longer accessible on February 15, 2018. In July 2016 Morocco's highest appeals court ordered a new civil trial for 24 Sahrawi activists arrested at or following the events of Gdeim Izik, after their conviction by a military court. The following year that trial resulted in sentences including life imprisonment amidst allegations that authorities obtained "confessions" through the use of torture.
68. Exploitation of coastal Western Sahara's sand made a noise too in the summer of 2017, when the *Guardian* reported on the creation of a new beach at a resort on Grand Canary. Indeed, a celebrity—Manchester City and Spain football star, David Silva—was flown in to pick up a spade

full of the new beach. Yet the sand, it seems, had been "mined" 50 kilometers across the Atlantic, south of El Ayoun, in a clear breach of international law. This is but the most recent exposé of sand being transported from the Western Sahara for the support of tourism activities in the Canary Islands. See www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/28/trouble-in-paradise-the-canary-island-beach-accused-of-illegally-importing-sand.

69. The fetishization of "developing" countries may be another factor here.
70. For examples of Sahara Surf's wordless images which portray exotic locations and exciting—or mundane but orientalized—activities set to a variety of music, traditional and rock, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=eopUeYINnvc and www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqNr68muZmk. Although both these posts mention Dakhla in their titles, it is unclear which—if any—of the images are shot there, as opposed to in the area around Taghazout, north of Agadir on the Moroccan coast, where most of the company's activities are based.
71. Here is a relatively demure example of some comments that accompany a promotional piece by American surfer Ben Skinner, entitled "Ben Skinner at Dakhla—Morocco," watchable at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pva_iTQ4lmw: "Welcome to the Moroccan Sahara desert." "Dakhla is Morocco" and "dakhla is a nice part of the world, doesnt matter if its morocco or not, when are you gonna see past nationality? small minded." The first of these, which also contains a remark on the swell and wind is posted by Abdelilah Yafi, who would appear to be part of the Sahara Surf company.
72. See "Dakhla, Morocco" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xj1pch7GArI.
73. Here is a complete list of the comments (with handles removed) attached to "Western Sahara: Hawaii of Africa" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=14CYIylmrfE) when I visited the site at the end of February 2017. "I'm from morocco nd i hope that one day i can visit Dakhla city in Moroccan sahara," "looking on video there in dakhla only Moroccan settlement and foreign enjoy on by saharawi fun," "Western SAHARA is occupied by Marocains slaves military! FREE WESTERN SAHARA! LIBRA SAHARA! LIBERTY WESTERN SAHARA!," "Only Hawaii isn't occupied by a foreign country…," "Thanks to Morocco this land has been made hospitable. WOW! Love and peace for you Morocco (Y)," "I'm sahraoui and it's moroccan Sahara you are wrong," "Who are the people from West Sahara Africa? How they look like?," "it's western sahara occupied by moroccan army 1975, last colony in africa," "this is Moroccan lands mother fuckers, if those idiots called wetern Saharans, all what you would have had in there is camels and extreme poverty," "Fucking ignorant its Morocccccccccccccccccco," "it belongs to Morocco, you fucking cunts."
74. Another, earlier, acclaimed filmmaker of Mauritanian heritage, Med Hondo, directly addressed the conflict in two feature length films shot in the Western Sahara: *We Have the Whole of Death for Sleeping* (1977)

and *Polisario, a People in Arms* (1978). The second of these was revived in a new print at the TIFF cinemateque in summer 2016. Roy Armes describes them, in terms that might also be applied to many of the more recent films discussed above, as "unashamed propaganda pieces for the Polisario Front, allowing the freedom-fighters to put their own case and celebrating their cause with songs and dance" (77). For a reconsideration of the idea that propaganda must be inherently less valid than a more balanced and thus purportedly neutral perspective, see Ginsberg (in this volume).

75. It may be hard to claim then that Sissako's film has been influenced by European funding to represent a stereotypical Africanness; still the film does fulfill the putative requirement for "patronage of artistic creation in the countries of the global south… marked by neocolonialist attitudes in which artists are required to show authenticity" (Falicov 7)—and to produce films other than those most likely to attract a domestic audience. Clearly Sissako himself is not drawn to the kind of cinema most likely to do that, and his work stands at the forefront of an engaged and potentially engaging festival-oriented world cinema. I certainly do not intend to devalue it, simply to point out how it is likely to appeal to European funders and audiences open to critiques of neoliberalism but only within specific class circumstances.
76. Biemann's emphasis on transnational mobility and practices of migration includes other works set in the Arab world, such as *X-Mission* (2008), a piece of video research on the extraterritorial status of Palestinian camps and the refugees who inhabit them, and the multichannel installation, *Egyptian Chemistry* which considers the use and nature of Nile river water. (*Sahara Chronicle* is available from Video Data Bank.)
77. On a personal level, however, the system works to discover migrants who wish for invisibility, to be left alone to attempt their journeys. One of Biemann's videos included in *Sahara Chronicle* and entitled "Desert, Radio, Drone," simulates drone images of the desert by moving a camera over high resolution satellite images that seek out migrant camps.
78. However, Barca and Zunes, citing the Spanish league for Human Rights and Sahara Press Service, note that "Moroccan authorities pressure young activists to emigrate and have even allegedly helped facilitate and force their illegal immigration to the nearby Spanish-controlled Canary Islands" (163).

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BLOC III

From Resistance to Entrenchment and Back Again

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CHAPTER 7

Amiralay and Sabbagh in the Post-cinematic Age

Samirah Alkassim

Omar Amiralay, renowned docu-auteur, died in 2011 from a heart attack one month before the uprising in Syria began. Many have marveled at the timing of his death, some suggesting that he was fortunate to have been spared the utter disappointment into which the initial *thawra* would devolve. A few years earlier in 2008, another maverick filmmaker, Randa Chahal Sabbagh, died following a battle with cancer. Soon after her death, the few films she made were seized from her estate, and all but one was made to virtually disappear. However untimely and unfortunate their deaths, both filmmakers left behind a noteworthy cinematic legacy which historians of cinema would be remiss to brush past too hastily. Their politically engaged films suggest in different ways the lineage of Third Cinema, precisely due to the determining influences of more immediate contexts: post-revolution Algerian cinema following the War of Independence from France (1954–1962), and the realist film movements that developed in Egypt and Syria after the 1967 Arab defeat (*naksa*) in the Six-Day War

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(Shafik 154–155), a date signifying a deep rupture in Arab society registered on all levels.[1] These new film movements included the 1968 New Cinema Collective emergent from the Damascus Film Festival, and the 1972 declaration of the Alternative Cinema Movement in Damascus that ushered in a wave of documentary filmmaking, feminist consciousness, and women filmmakers in the region (Van de Peer, "Selma"). The aim of this essay is to honor the legacies of Amiralay and Sabbagh within the historical and cinematic confluences mentioned above. I argue that their films blur strict distinctions between Third and Second Cinemas and suggest that they may be read as performative texts, borrowing from Stella Bruzzi's discussion of the performativity of documentary, elements of which I contend can be found at work in narrative films. Such an examination asserts definitively that cinema from the Arab world is still alive in the "post-cinematic" age.[2]

A short sketch of their backgrounds helps frame this study. Amiralay and Sabbagh both studied filmmaking in Paris. Amiralay was there at the precise moment of the May 1968 anti-capitalist student movement, studying at the *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques*, and he was among the first to film the protests (Salti 107); shortly thereafter, he dropped out of the institute and returned to Syria to participate in the briefly flourishing documentary film scene that lasted until 1974.[3] Sabbagh also studied filmmaking in Paris during the early 1970s and remained based in France throughout her career, although she made frequent trips to Lebanon during the civil war. But even prior to 1967, their formative experiences made them both keenly receptive to the radical modes of enquiry distinguishing the late 60s and early 70s. Both of them, from middle-class backgrounds, had witnessed Arab nationalism rise from the ashes of European colonialism at the center of which stood the Palestinian refugee. Amiralay, born in 1944, lived under successive military regimes and watched Baathism evolve from its early middle-class and peasant-oriented socialism to its "top-down" manifestation under Hafez Al-Assad (Hinnebusch 30–36), who would seize power in 1970 and establish the single-party state in 1973. Sabbagh, born in 1953 in Lebanon, belonged to a prominent Communist family that had participated in shaping the Lebanese political landscape since the 1950s—the subject of her 1995 personal documentary, *Our Heedless Wars*, delves into questions about the war through interviews with family members involved in it. Being from such a politically involved family in Lebanon, a close neighbor to Syria, Sabbagh was also deeply impacted by the political transformations and developments of the region in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although Amiralay and Sabbagh directed films repudiated in their native countries, their cinematic journeys were not parallel. Amiralay made his political positions public, through the content and style of his filmmaking praxis to the declarations and statements he endorsed, activities which caused him to seek exile in France during the mid-1970s. At the time of his death he was developing a script for a narrative feature film about the Lebanese Druze singer, Asmahan, and even though he collaborated on many of the narrative films by fellow Syrians Mohammad Malas and Ossama Mohamed, his own were strictly documentary. Throughout his career Amiralay was deeply committed to developing a film culture in the Arab world that was intrinsically connected to a more critical and open society, as evidenced by his participation with Malas and Mohamed in creating a cinematheque in Damascus in the 1970s (Wright), his later role in helping establish the Arab Film Institute in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2005, and his influence in shaping the Doxbox documentary festival that began in Damascus in 2008 (Van de Peer, "The Moderation"). Amiralay's public positions also extended to writing petitions: In 2000, he authored a call for the new Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to lift the Emergency Law which had been in place since 1963; in 2005, he joined the Damascus Declaration to demand reforms and the transformation of Syria from autocracy to democracy; and on January 30, 2011, just days before his death, he signed a petition praising the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

By contrast, Sabbagh's politics are not overtly pronounced in her filmmaking style but evident in the subjects, content, and characters of her films, most of which are set in Lebanon. Although signs of her political orientation shaped the narrative choices in the films, they remained in the background and rarely expressed themselves as a militancy or excessiveness in technique. Her documentaries employ normative documentary exposition techniques such as interviews, voice-over, statistics, maps, and archival footage, and use a form of reflexivity where the narrative exposition occasionally draws attention to itself. Additionally, her narrative films revolve around characters and themes, which have been defined as hallmarks of First and Second Cinemas. Yet in her youth she was involved in the Organization of Communist Action of which her sister was a leader, and in her late twenties, she helped to transport from Beirut to Rome some of the films shot by the Palestine Film Unit (PFU) after the Tel al-Zaatar massacre in 1977, as chronicled in the diary of Palestine Film Unit founder, Mustafa Abu Ali (Marks 114).

With these backgrounds and tendencies in mind, we are justified in considering the films of Amiralay and of Sabbagh in relation to Third Cinema, with all of its contradictions, heterogeneities, and the great ambivalence it holds toward the cinematic auteur. Shaped by specific and determining contexts particular to what transpired in their lifetimes in the Arab world, their films adhere to certain fundamental aspects of Third Cinema in the following ways: they challenge the "System" through subversive tactics and/or content in both documentary and narrative forms; they produce statements directed toward a transformative politics; and they aim to tell "real" stories of relevance to the lived experience of the people (Solanas and Getino). They also allow us to consider the elision of borders between Third and Second Cinemas that Anthony Guneratne suggests is shared by the post-studio Hollywood films and the *cinema d'auteur* of Yousef Chahine (20); and they switch focus from the apparatus and aftermath of colonialism to critiquing that of the state. On this last point, Syria and Lebanon had long since moved beyond the colonial stage. Although one could argue that these countries have continued to be affected by Western interventions into the Middle East, which belong to a particular order of economic colonialism, in more recent history the realities within these countries have become defined by the internal influences of radical Islam and oil wealth clashing with the forces of nationalism, authoritarianism, national liberation movements, and manufactured sectarianism (see Makdisi).

We should recall that Third Cinema emerged with the histories of Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia in the foreground, although the post-revolution Algerian cinema was within its scope. This is not to diminish the destructive consequences of the French Mandate period in Syria and Lebanon (which lasted only 23 years) following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922 (see Aljazeera). But colonialism occurred very differently in the Middle East than in Latin America and elsewhere; following the dissolution of the British and French Mandate periods, the 1950s was the decade of national independence movements from Egypt to Syria and Iraq, after which it makes more sense to refer to the ensuing new governments as post-independent, not postcolonial. The 1948 establishment of the state of Israel, and the post-World War Two bipolarization of the globe into an "open" capitalist West and a "closed" Communist East created the necessity for more indirect approaches, on the part of these

polarized powers, to maintain influence with the Arab regimes whose citizens rejected the settler-colonial project of Israel and its expansionist aspirations. These citizens of the 1950s and 1960s continued to express their own aspirations toward an often expanded concept of nationhood, which made the pan-Arabism harnessed by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Baathist project of the United Arab Republic between Egypt, Syria, and Iraq widely appealing. These factors, combined with the Egyptian victory of 1956, when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal (Dawisha 159–185), and the defeat of 1967 (ibid. 252–281)—in which the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) took the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and Sinai and the Gaza Strip from Egypt—led to the rise and popularity of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the ripple effect of this formation on the social and cultural spheres of the region.

If the aim of Third and, in certain instances, Second Cinema is emancipatory in response to hegemonic economic and cultural forces, then the films of Amiralay and Sabbagh, deeply informed by the historical developments just sketched, participate in this project: they are exemplary with respect to trying new things on the "outside limits of the familiar," working to liberate the truth and subvert the status quo in order to speak to an informed but oppressed, collective, and heterogenous Arab audience, as well as directed toward a global audience greatly in need of understanding the social complexities of Arab society and history. The decolonizing projects on which initial Third Cinema focused itself, is here joined and/or replaced by the critique of hegemonic discourses and systems of state apparati specific to the histories of Syria and Lebanon.

Against this post-independence framework, both Amiralay and Sabbagh engaged a multilayered theoretical praxis in order to challenge, however differently, the hegemonic orders. We see this most clearly in the final two films of Amiralay's Euphrates Dam trilogy,[4] which span the years 1970–2003. These films, along with his film *Chickens* (1977) (see Mookas), fit the textbook "definition" of Third Cinema, as they use a more militant style of exposition and montage, "trying to intervene in the situation as an element providing thrust," leading to "discovery through transformation" (see Solanas and Getino 6) in order to critique the underdevelopment of Syrian society with damning exposures, not only of the abject living conditions of the subaltern subjects dwelling in the Euphrates River Valley, but also of the obstructions to their advancement despite the

rhetoric of modernization and reform proclaimed by the state. The importance of water and its management as a national project is mapped in the trilogy and mirrors Amiralay's political evolution from a young idealistic filmmaker who saw the dam as a shining symbol of Syria's (Baathist) modernity to the skepticism into which he would quickly grow. *Everyday Life in a Syrian Village* (1974), made four years later, shows water to be both a scarce resource in a parched environment and a threat that has in the past flooded the villagers who were left to perish by the state. *A Flood in Baath Country*, made 30 years later, shows water to be an allegory for policies of erasure that require the people's indoctrination to ensure their compliance; here Amiralay looks to the schools where this process begins. In terms of style, *Everyday Life* confronts us through unusual cinematic punctuations such as freeze frames, repetitions of aural and visual motifs, and extreme close-ups from distorted angles to emphasize key points in a way that echoes Solanas and Getino's call for subversion; the style we find in *A Flood in Baath Country* (2003) is more contemplative, forcing visual confrontations through long takes and close-ups of faces of the protagonists in the village.

Sabbagh's films, on the other hand, correspond more to the *cinema d'auteur* theorized by Edouard de Laurot.[5] The critiques of these films, which reflect on the violent intrusion of geo-national politics and sectarianism in Lebanese society, take place through characters who are in opposition to their environments, whether they are the speaking subjects of documentaries or fictional figures in narrative films. As such they expose the complexities of the Lebanese Civil War, the rigidities of class structure, and the social inequities that disallowed true progress to take place. Transformation thus occurs through character, in the classical sense we find in narrative films, expanding from Solanas and Getino's original dismissal of Second Cinema as replicating the auteur cinema of the First World. Sabbagh's character-driven documentaries and fiction films illustrate that characters can be vehicles of change (of consciousness) for the viewers.

Drawing upon Bill Nichols' and Stella Bruzzi's formulations of performative documentary, these films can also be considered performative texts. Nichols famously discusses the way in which performativity within the documentary form shifts viewer focus away from the referential aspect, causing it to recede under the dominance of a variable mix of poetic, expressive, and rhetorical aspects. This, he argues, makes the viewer rather than her reality the primary referent of the documentary, an effect which

highlights the subjectivity of both filmmaker and viewer and subverts the relay of interpellation between viewer and text (Nichols 99–100). Nichols thus recognizes how documentary performativity disrupts the epistemology of ethnography, a tactic clearly visible in Amiralay's *Everyday Life in a Syrian Village* and its successor, *A Flood in Baath Country* (ibid. 97–102). These films are not ethnographic documentaries about peasants and villagers in Syria, but rather statements on the hypocrisy of a state apparatus too bureaucratic and more concerned with its own security than with attending to the welfare of its subjects.

Bruzzi goes much further than Nichols in arguing that all documentaries are essentially performative and turns to the linguistic model of the speech act (174). She supports this thesis by identifying three key characteristics in her study of direct cinema, cinema verité, and their descendants (e.g., films by Wiseman, Brumfield, and Moore) (120), each of which operates in the films of Amiralay and of Sabbagh. The first identifier entails the emergence of meaning via the interaction of representation and reality (e.g., dramatic lighting and *mise-en-scène*; dialectical editing; and dramatizations or reenactments). Performativity may of course obtain in narrative film as well, when the border between fiction and reality is blurred (e.g., in documentary-like realism or by intertextual reference to documentary films). The second main identifier of performative documentary is the linguistic sense of the speech act (Austin), for which a perlocutionary utterance simultaneously describes and performs an action (saying something while revealing it—which is specific to documentary). Bruzzi argues that like the perlocutionary speech act, a documentary only comes into being as it is performed, "Documentaries, like Austin's performatives, perform the actions they name" (187). That is, they are given meaning only by the interaction between performance and reality.[6] A third identifier, which may also extend to fictional cinema, is the clear existence of a dialectical (rather than synchronous) relationship between two truths that come to define the film—the truth that existed before the moment of filming and the truth that emerges through the filmmaking process, producing a transformation of both filmmaker and viewer across this negotiation. This dialectical relationship defines the nonfiction film, which is also a construction and is based to varying degrees on artifice (186).

While these identifiers clearly apply to the documentary where the filmmaker and subjects change over the course of the film, they can also describe performativity in Third and, in some instances, Second Cinema,

where dialectical processes of the film text work to expand viewer consciousness in the direction of a socially transformative praxis. Judith Butler's reimagining of Althusser's scene of interpellation as a site of failure (of the process of interpellation)—where the subject who is hailed by the police officer confronts or resists—extends to the processes by which subversive meanings may be produced through the "conventional" language of narrative cinema. This we see specifically in Sabbagh's narrative film, *The Kite* (2002), through the character of Lamia and her actions of resistance against the patriarchal order, which she is expected by her community to observe, as described below. If the scene of interpellation is intended "to indicate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in space and time," Butler argues that it both regularly misses its mark and leaves a mark that is "inaugurative," that brings something new into being, to introduce a reality rather than report on an existing one, and this is done through citing existing conventions and rules (33–34). Performativity in film works in this way: awakening the viewer (who may identify with or against characters) to the conditions exposed in the film, and in this sense enacting the disruption of narrative interpellation to highlight its failures. Put another way, this awareness moves through the performativity of film, positioning viewers to question the processes by which they are named, thus enabling critical reception of the stories mediated and realities negotiated by the filmmaker.

A scene from the end of *The Kite* demonstrates this process. The narrative is set in a Druze village in southern Lebanon, separated and connected by a barbed-wire border with Israel through which only coffins and brides pass, on both sides of which the village and its inhabitants reside, though somewhat differently from one another. These conditions are the result of Israel's 1982 annexation of southern Lebanon. On the Lebanese side, the villagers continue to wear traditional Druze clothing; on the Israeli side, girls and boys swim in co-ed swimming pools and wear Westernized clothing. Lamia is the 16-year-old protagonist, who lives on the Lebanese side of the border. Her arranged marriage, determined by the men of the village, to a cousin she has never met living on the Israeli side, is intended to preserve the family line. Her age, situated similarly on the border between childhood and adulthood, allegorizes the zone of the barbed-wire border, a dangerous place where she enjoys flying kites with her younger brother and other boys his age. It is within this border zone that her kite becomes stuck at the beginning of the film. When she crosses the forbidden barrier to retrieve it, she is noticed by a young



Fig. 7.1 *The Kite* (Randa Chahal Sabbagh, Lebanon/France, 2004)

Israeli border guard who is also Druze, becomes aware of his admiring gaze, and eventually returns it (Fig. 7.1).

It is in the concluding sequence, however—a fantasy—that the film realizes a mode of performativity which resists and problematizes the interpellative process. This happens after Lamia has returned from the border zone to the Lebanese side of her village, not without the Israeli Druze border guard impulsively descending from his tower to brush hands with her—a violation for which he will be punished—and after she has been scorned by the village men for her failure to uphold her social/biological responsibility. The pertinent scene opens in the room of her sleeping brother. She appears behind him, gives him a kiss, then vanishes as her kite appears, floating by, through the window behind him. A sudden cut puts us outside the room, as Lamia, metaphorically having become the kite—fragile, ephemeral, and transgressive—is portrayed walking into the field. She touches the barbed wire, then walks defiantly through it; in fact, it magically opens for her. She continues toward the watchtower, in the process stepping on a landmine and disappearing in a cloud of smoke. The young Israeli Druze in the watchtower observes

her annihilation with anguish, only to find her standing behind him. She slowly encircles him and interrogates his strange appearance, removing the soldier's uniform, his hat, and his boots, so as to reach that which is human beneath them, removing signs of their division, that is, before an inferred but unseen romantic kiss. The film ends with this suggestion, showing an empty watchtower and leaving the viewer to complete the fantasy. As Lina Khatib has noted, Lamia steps past the patriarchal circle, choosing—despite the taboo—to engage with the instrument of the occupier after first stripping him of his signs, rather than reinforcing the community's problematic cohesion (145–146). Her body thus acts as a bridge between self and Other, if only in fantasy, but without imposing or inferring symmetry in their experiences of oppression.

In this way, *The Kite* disallows a "feel good" message. It forces one to consider the terrible consequences not only of occupation but of the false binary structures that determine and press down on social life for all concerned, as well as enjoins us to imagine the transformation of such conditions. The final scene tackles and dismantles the metaphoric "police officer" by the very way in which Lamia undresses the Israeli border guard. It is performative in Nichols' sense, in that a mixture of rhetorical, poetic, and expressive elements dominates the referential, as they often do in a fiction film. When the setting of the fiction is based in reality, however, such as it is in this film, and when a fantasy sequence is chosen over a realist depiction of known outcomes, distinctions between reality and fiction fade under the significance of the message. Here we have De Laurot's "living metaphor" of cinema engagé that shapes history as it reflects it, where the filmmaker turns "personal anguish into history" (see Brenez). This interaction between performance and reality is one of Bruzzi's identifiers of performative documentary; it appears even more clearly in scenes of women villagers communicating/ shouting by megaphone across the border zone, covering kilometers of distance through technological means in their vain attempt to negotiate Lamia's prospective marriage and the ensuing return of the uncooperative, unwanted, and unconsummated bride. Interestingly, these scenes echo the iconography of a nearly identical scene from the ending of *Sardines* (1997), a documentary collaboration between Omar Amiralay and Mohammad Malas, where women similarly communicate by megaphone with their relatives in Israel across the zone of Quneitra in what once were the Syrian Heights. What remains unspoken but suggested on the margins of the scene in *The Kite* is the subject Amiralay and Malas explore in *Sardines*, which is the

memory of the once-sovereign land, now expropriated and occupied by Israel that has separated families and identity. *The Kite*, made 15 years after *Sardines*, sparks our memory of this scene and folds this subject into its narrative through identification with the protagonist of Lamia and the female relatives who surround her.

The Kite was Sabbagh's commercially most successful and one of the least controversial of her films. It received the Order of the Cedar Award from Lebanon in 2003, but in 2010 its screening on Lebanese television channel NTV was canceled under pressure from Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, who was concerned that it negatively portrays the Druze community (see Daou). Still available for purchase, it rests in the holdings of two handfuls of academic libraries in North America; however, the situation for the rest of Sabbagh's films is less fortunate. *Our Heedless Wars* (1995) is held by a few academic libraries including the United States Library of Congress; *The Infidels* (1997) and *Souha*: *Surviving Hell* (2000) are available at even fewer locations. *A Civilized People* (1999) can be read about but seen only with tremendous difficulty. Described as a "black comedy" surrounding the lives and loves of the servants of abandoned homes owned by rich Lebanese who fled Beirut during the civil war, it won the UNESCO Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1999 and screened once in Lebanon at the Beirut International Film Festival after 40 minutes were cut by the censors, who deemed them too vulgar for the Lebanese public.[7] It has since disappeared from distribution. This disappearance of Sabbagh's films is equal to an abduction of culture. Because they were indigestible by the "System" for their portrayal of social realities the state would rather hide, in the form of homosexual characters and religious extremists who are featured in *The Infidels* and *A Civilized People*, we cannot see them. But her real offense, as Khatib and others have noted, was to focus on the culpability of the Lebanese in their war and afflicted nation-state. As such, Sabbagh's films afford us the opportunity to examine the past in order to better understand the present, despite the fact that their limited accessibility participates in the cultural amnesia, lamented by many, of modern-day Beirut/Lebanon.

Our Heedless Wars is a personal documentary in which the construction of memory and the narrative of the civil war are explored through the lens of Sabbagh's family members. Shot over the span of several years during the war and its aftermath when Sabbagh visited her family,[8] it epitomizes Bruzzi's notion of documentary as journey film, where the filmmaker reaches a destination unforeseen at the outset. Strangely, the

destination here appears to be exactly the same location as the beginning of the film, situating us at what appears to be an unmanned checkpoint with a khaki green divider, possibly on the Green Line. In the opening of the film, in this spot, Sabbagh's voice-over asks, "When did the Lebanese lose the war?" eliciting further questions, such as "Which Lebanese?" and "Among whom?" of the many non-Lebanese parties (Syrian, Palestinian, Israeli, to name a few) involved in the war. At the closing of the film, on the other side of this khaki divider, we are no closer to reaching an answer. Lengthy and soul-searching interviews are conducted with her sister (now a sociologist, but once the head of the militant branch of the Lebanese Organization of Communist Action), brother (also in the OCA as the sister's bodyguard), and mother (who had been an active member of the Iraqi, Lebanese, and Syrian Communist Parties over the years). Sabbagh's sister Nahla's analysis provides a sober account of a war with multiple enemies including the Syrian by whom she, a fighter, would fear being captured more than by the known enemy of the IDF, who actually captures her militia and soon after sets them free. Her brother Tamimi's cryptic view that this morning's friend became the afternoon's enemy conveys the sense of war as a hopeless battle to stay afloat in a moral quicksand. These types of testimonies are mixed with archival footage and a roaming camera that drives through the destruction of Beirut: through the downtown, the bombed-out buildings along the Corniche, the bullet-riddled statues at Martyrs' Square, the Shatila refugee camp and the Sabra neighborhood, as well as other neighborhoods including the street of the apartment building where her family once lived. This camera that repeatedly travels the streets of destroyed and seemingly empty buildings along the Green Line replicates how we replay memories in order to fathom them. At other points when Sabbagh probes the reflections of family members on the war, stories of kidnapping, ransom, and debauchery at the end of a day of fighting are conveyed as ordinary events of daily life—the banality of which opposes the meaning of war constructed through media images. In the conclusion we witness another form of violence in the postwar reconstruction as we see downtown buildings imploding in plumes of smoke to make way for the new—producing a continuation of violence and the banality thereof that is grafted onto this memory of place.

Bruzzi also defines performative documentary as conveying itself through the dialectical relationship between fact, filmmaker, and apparatus. In *Our Heedless Wars*, there are several juxtapositions between personal documents and news footage, connecting through a dialectics of

graphics and connotation. For example, a sequence of happy family photographs in color (of Sabbagh's family) is followed by a black-and-white newspaper image of a man and two children emerging from a scene of bombing, looking backwards and unaware of being photographed. This suggests two different regimes of meaning and reading: one where the photograph appears saturated (not in the sense of color but rather meanings) when from a personal archive, whereupon it can be inferred that it belongs to someone and serves an intimate purpose and perspective; versus a second regime when it is a media image that is by nature fragmentary, incomplete, an excerpt of a larger off-frame action pertaining to actors who are either unnamed or unknown. Another juxtaposition is that between fiction and reality, particularly to emphasize how distinctions are easily blurred during wartime: Sabbagh's sister describes how her militia sometimes simulated fighting for purely political reasons, not to win the battle, but to make their presence felt or to achieve something in negotiations. She describes it as a simulacrum, a fake battle, and then we see a demonstration of another simulacrum when Volker Schlöndorff's film crew for his 1982 film, *Circle of Deceit*, comes to the streets of Beirut, for which a national ceasefire was declared—this preceding the Israeli invasion. The Schlöndorff scene is followed by actual video footage of a man bleeding out and dying on the street as two men struggle to fit his large body in the open trunk, of a small car before it reverses out of the scene. Juxtaposing the simulation with the documentary footage emphasizes how the obscenity of war became quotidian even to foreigners who could not stop themselves from seeing Beirut as the Paris of the Orient—in other words, they did not go beyond an image they could exploit.

Souha: *Surviving Hell* is another example where Sabbagh's political orientation is embedded in the recognizable form of expository documentary but revealed by her choice of subject, Souha Bechara, the iconic Lebanese political prisoner. The film opens on the day of Bechara's release in 1999 from the deadly Khiam prison where she spent ten years, six in solitary confinement, for her 1988 assassination attempt on the life of Antoine Lahad, general of the South Lebanon Army (SLA) from 1984 to 2000. Lahad was known for having collaborated with the Israeli army during its occupation of southern Lebanon and was despised among many different factions and activists throughout the country. Sparing in its elements, the film is structured mostly as interviews with Bechara, documenting her reunion with fellow inmates and her return to Khiam and the South following the Israeli withdrawal in 1999. In the first few seconds

of the film, Bechara is released into the custody of her father, who pulls from his pocket the Lebanese Communist flag, only to have a towering security guard block him from presenting it. Bechara's ensuing interview in the film explains how her activism with the Lebanese Communist Party was motivated by her having witnessed the plight of Palestinian refugees in her country, in particular during the 1978 Israeli invasion of the South and the 1982 massacres of Sabra and Shatila. She also states that her actions were equally motivated by fear that what Israel did to the Palestinians would be repeated on the Lebanese people; hence her celebrity status among the people of southern Lebanon who endured this reality for 22 years. In this film, Sabbagh takes the event of the recently released self-sacrificing activist, the "bride of the South," as she calls Bechara, and attempts to push her into the international discourse about the Lebanese civil war.

A scene which demonstrates the effect Bechara has on the people of the South is one in which she visits a hospital soon after the evacuation of Khiam, following the Israeli withdrawal and the accompanying withdrawal of the SLA under Lahad. She is met in a hospital room by men who, recently released from the prison, await her visit and address her deferentially as if she were a foreign dignitary. For them she is a legend, known for her refusal to collaborate despite having been badly tortured by electric shock. We cannot exactly assume how many of these men are Shi'a, because Khiam was a place for political prisoners from all over Lebanon, but Sabbagh tells us in the film that many inmates were Shi'a from the South, targeted by the predominantly Christian SLA to pressure their family members into becoming local collaborators. What we can understand from the film, of which this scene is exemplary, is that Bechara's Christianity, perhaps because of her Communist affiliation, has no negative affect on the solidarity expressed by the ex-prisoners in this scene and elsewhere in the film. Their comradery is shown as having no foundation in religious identity and everything to do with the shared struggle of resisting Israeli occupation, thus confirming that solidarity and resistance across sectarian lines grew stronger inside rather than outside of prison.

The use of black-and-white film anchors our focus on Bechara's narrative without distractions of color. In an earlier scene that exemplifies Bruzzi's notion of performative documentary, Sabbagh follows Bechara as she returns to the home of Lahad. Here Bechara recounts how she carried out the operation ten years ago, when she was his wife's aerobics instructor. Bechara describes the moment at which she shot Lahad—just

after he had changed the television channel from news coverage of the first Palestinian intifada. Intercut three times with her testimony, as she points to the place on the couch on which Lahad had been sitting when she shot him, is the image of an older Lahad sitting on the same couch, looking off-screen left—as if toward her. The scene is performative in all three of the ways identified by Bruzzi. First, it demonstrates the emergence of meaning from the interaction of representation and reality: here the performativity is achieved by editing, which in this particular case facilitates the impossible reunion of Bechara and Lahad in the same time and place. Second, it is the filmic version of the linguistic speech act, where an utterance simultaneously describes and performs an action, saying something while revealing it (Bruzzi 187). It achieves this by virtually placing them together in the same room, through the editing. Third, it is a product of a dialectical rather than synchronous relationship between two truths: the insertion of Lahad in this scene is indeed suggestive of a country haunted by a past that could repeat itself—like a monster in a horror film returning for another round, or becoming dormant until the sequel.

Another way in which these performative aspects function in the above two films is the tension between narrated enumeration and cinematographic technique, which are at counterpoint to each other. On the one hand, Sabbagh's narration is punctuated periodically with numerical data: 3700 bombs exploded and 200,000 people died during the war; 3000 were killed in the Sabra and Shatila massacres; 17,000 died from the Israeli invasion of 1982; 700 women prisoners, thousands of male prisoners, and 16 people were tortured to death in Khiam. On the other hand, this numerical data is preceded, joined, and followed by Sabbagh's roaming camera that probes the duality of the image as a surface, both dense—with signifiers—and by contrast, incomplete. On one hand we see details (furniture, photographs, and magazines in her deceased father's office in *Our Heedless Wars*; smuggled objects that enabled survival in *Souha*) and on the other hand we read the connotation of metaphorical journeys as suggested by both films—of the transformation of Beirut from during to after the war, and of the journey of Souha Bechara who did indeed survive hell.

As mentioned, in both films Sabbagh uses the language of conventional, expository documentary. In *Souha*, it effectively conveys the trauma and endurance experienced by Bechara. We see this in the scenes where she recounts (and demonstrates) how she exercised in solitary confinement, how she communicated with the other prisoners, and how she

fashioned needles out of bird bones to sew sanitary napkins for the other women. These details result in a humanization of Souha Bechara for an international audience who might only know her as a figure of controversy who attempted to assassinate a military leader, which in the Middle East is gendered as a distinctly masculine act. *Souha* focuses less on Bechara's motivation and "crime" and more on the details of her survival, the exaltation of release and her reunion with fellow prisoners of Khiam, such as the Palestinian activist Kifah whom she befriended in prison. It also exalts in the reunification of the South of Lebanon, following the SLA withdrawal, to the rest of the country, of which Bechara's release was emblematic. Lastly, the film gives Bechara a platform and dimensionality as a survivor, not only of Khiam but of history, whose political activities were a symptom of the post-independence conditions in the Middle East.

In contrast to Sabbagh's few films and their limited accessibility, Omar Amiralay made approximately 30 films, many of which are on YouTube, some of which are subtitled in English and French. Made over the span of 40 years, his films kept the bar high for documentary art films in the Arab world. His interest in the dramas of real life did not preclude seeing aesthetic forms everywhere, including in the conditions of abject poverty and underdevelopment that we see in his Euphrates Dam trilogy. Even though he worked within a verité mode of filmmaking, we find performativity in an interventionist style of cinematography and editing, and an affective deployment of sound, quite different from what we see in Sabbagh's documentaries. But the films of both echo Bruzzi's assertion that performance will always lie at the heart of the nonfiction film and that documentaries will always perform the actions they name. While Sabbagh's films appear to carry out the constative (referential) function or "factual filmmaking" tradition, this is only as Bruzzi says, a "logical extension," or rather a device used to carry subversive content and convey subversive meaning, aware of the "falsification" referentiality entails (187). It is through the insertion of a "notable performance component" (just described) that both of their films move away from the referentiality of traditional factual filmmaking documentary. As for Amiralay, his stylistic excess becomes an element of a performative documentary discourse, used to uphold the documentary project, not to shed doubt on it (194).

Everyday Life in a Syrian Village (1974), the second installment of his trilogy, was conceived in collaboration with leftist Syrian playwright Saadalah Wanous (see Houssami), with whom Amiralay also collaborated

on his 1977 film *Chickens*. Shot in the village of Muwayleh in the Deir al-Zour governorate, it engages a scathing critique of the agrarian improvements that were promised by Hafez Al-Assad's reformist regime but very unevenly implemented, depicting extremes of poverty, ignorance, and tribalism among the rural class who are shown to be at odds with the inept bureaucracy of the governing apparatus and its agents (see Hinnebusch 115–125).

The film captures a desolate landscape and a people who are kept impoverished and de-developed[9] despite the rhetoric of state officials: A doctor explains that the infant mortality rate is caused by the people's ignorance (after a sequence in which a baby is shown being fed water from a pond, followed by a scene in which a sick child with distended belly is shown screaming in an infirmary); a schoolteacher discusses the importance of education as a tool of liberation, then critiques government corruption for preventing relief aid from reaching the victims of a prior flood; and a policeman explains how the remedy for violent tribalism is the threat of punishment. In these examples the doctor, schoolteacher, and policeman are shown as simultaneous agents of the state and impotent guardians of the people. Unsurprisingly, the film was banned in Syria despite having been funded by the National Film Organization,[10] yet it enjoyed a long underground screening life, as evidenced by a touching homage in the opening sequence of Mohammad Malas' *Ladder to Damascus* (2013), whose main character lays a poster from *Everyday Life* atop Amiralay's grave, whispering, in reference to the Syrian uprising, "The flood has come, Omar."[11]

The statements of these early films by Amiralay advance through dialectical montage between images, image combinations, and soundtrack, and between sequences. This "stylistic excess" becomes part of a performative documentary discourse (Bruzzi 194), which we see in the following examples from *Everyday Life*. Halfway through the film, the village men partake in a *zikr*, chanting and singing to a rhythmic drumbeat evoking the traditional rituals in which rural and peasant communities have engaged for centuries, for the purpose of various kinds of purification, or to pray for rain or economic improvement. We see them as they begin the ritual and then find them lying on the floor quivering in delirium. This sequence is followed by two visual motifs that are repeated throughout the film—a low-angle close-up of a child's hand pouring sand over an animal's skeleton, and a medium-shot of an old man appearing to rip his *"aba."*[12] A freeze-frame of the old man in process of tearing his *"aba"* is followed

by a nocturnal screening presented by an official from the ministry of culture, who brings modernity to the villagers in the form of cinema. In this sequence, then, we go from a traditional *zikr* ritual, which demonstrates the powerful effects of belief, to an enforced communal activity by which the villagers are subjected to a display of modernity—vacationers at a beach depicted in the screened film—quite remote from their own experience. On the one hand, this sequence addresses an apparent ideological rift between tradition and modernity; but it also exposes the deeper wound that lies in the gap between villagers and a regime of rhetoric and images that makes no sustained attempt to improve the villagers' material conditions.

Elsewhere in the film, an off-frame Amiralay sits with the village *moukhtar*, or tribal leader, who cannot recall the last war in which Syria was involved. The *moukhtar* answers, "1956?" but the most recent war would have been the October War of 1973, a war of great iconic significance to the recuperation of dignity for the Syrian nation after the loss of 1967, but one which seemed not to touch or change life in this village.[13] The film ends by giving a lengthy last word to the old man in the freeze-frame motif. He completes the gesture of ripping his *"aba"* as if suffocating, to express rage about the dire situation in which his people are suspended between state authorities and rival tribes, disabling not only progress but life itself. These juxtapositions and sequences that rely on relationships of counterpoint, both visual and aural, are performative acts, undermining, as Bruzzi articulates, the conventional documentary pursuit of representing reality, producing a distancing that allows us to see the apparatus of interpellation and to read the content critically rather than merely responding to it.

Amiralay's final film of the trilogy, *A Flood in Baath Country*, released in 2003, returns to the village of El-Machi and the area around Lake Assad, formed after the construction of the dam featured in his 1970 film, *Film Essay on the Euphrates Dam*, which has since flooded. His off-screen voice is a structuring element, a sign of the interventionist auteur of performative documentary that Bruzzi writes about. The film opens with Amiralay's commentary on *Film Essay* showing us an excerpt: a close-up of a cracked heel of a human foot paralleled by an image of dry cracked earth emphasizes the human consequences of environmental disaster. Amiralay's accompanying reflections lament the folly of his first film, particularly in light of the subsequent collapsing of the dam and the circulation of an official report predicting more such collapses to come

to dams built by the Baath party. While this statement is made, we see through the window of a dark interior onto the minaret of a mosque in the distance, encircled by scaffolding. This image recurs at the end of the film when its recurrence is accompanied by the sound of the *adhan*,[14] suggesting that religion envelops these people who are caught in a hierarchical stasis that reproduces itself. Parts of the village of El-Machi are now under water, made clear directly after the film's title, as we sit on Lake Assad and hear the testimony of a man who describes how his childhood home now lies at the bottom of the lake. We see a boat in a long shot on the lake, which amplifies the temporal and geographic importance of this region where, as the man tells us, if one were to dig beneath the submerged homes, we would find the remains of the oldest known human settlement dating back 11,000 years.

From this cinematic prologue we enter the "Syria of Hafez Al-Assad," as Amiralay's voice-over describes it, the village of El-Machi. We are then introduced to the village *moukhtar*, Diab El-Machi, who, Amiralay tells us, is "representative of a country the Baath party has been building over the last 40 years without respite." We find Diab El-Machi in a wide shot, standing alone in a dark room, illuminated as if he were a museum piece. This unnaturalistic and staged setting directs our attention to its theatricality. Initially the *moukhtar*'s voice is disembodied—as a voice-over separate from his body. In answer to Amiralay's questions, his voice-over informs us that he is the longest-serving Syrian parliamentarian in history, having participated in the National Assembly for 49 years since 1954. A fade to black is followed by a close-up of the *moukhtar*'s face in the same scene, but now we see him speak. When Amiralay asks him to discuss the years he served under Hafez Al-Assad, he expresses admiration for Assad, praising the era of "real building projects and gifts" which the leader bequeathed to the Syrian people, that were unrivaled by any prior era. He stumbles for words and then describes Assad hyperbolically as "the builder of a new Arab civilization," with "the solid building blocks of democracy," who knew everyone individually, even having referred to him personally as a positive example in the National Command Council of tribal chiefs who "would realign more with Party policies." In the next scene the *moukhtar* is seated in a *majlis*[15] among other men and boys of his tribe. A succession of shots from different angles of the men sitting, holding *mas'baha* beads[16] in silent communion, is accompanied by the *moukhtar*'s voice-over boasting about having eradicated the Muslim Brotherhood (a group loathed by the elder Assad) in his district and how he refused to accept

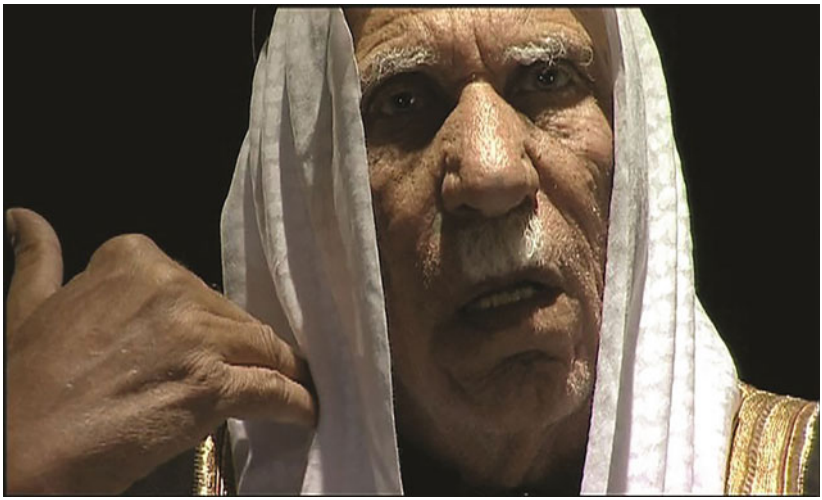


Fig. 7.2 *A Flood in Baath Country* (Omar Amiralay, Syria/France, 2003)

rewards from the Security minister for this service. This is followed by the facial close-up of the *moukhtar* in the previous setting, a solitary figure illuminated in a pool of darkness as he reacts to Amiralay's request to describe the merits of the leader. In response he calls Assad the "father of the people," standing against injustice and corruption, "a true Arab…the only one to lift the Arab nation onto his shoulders," reminding us of Lisa Wedeen's discussion of the cultivation of the leader's father persona as crucial to the nation-building project, in which "Assad's citizen-children are, like children of an actual Syrian father, extensions of himself" (see *Ambiguities* 52–54) (Fig. 7.2).

We then see the *moukhtar* sleeping in the nearly empty *majlis* as we hear the off-screen chants of schoolchildren, which signal the next direction the film will take: "Baath! The Vanguards, be ready to build the Arab socialist society!" El-Machi's disembodied voice confesses that while he never joined the party, he has always been "a patriot and companion of the Party since 1954," applying his own form of socialism to defend the poor. This sequence ends by returning to the close-up as he recounts, embodied, the story of how he was going to ask for a car from the elder Assad because his car was blown up by the Muslim Brotherhood in retaliation for cracking down on them, but Assad cut him off before he could

finish the request, by saying, "You are reputed to be one of the wealthiest men in the world, what would you have done with all your money?" The surface of the story suggests the social importance of the *moukhtar*, but the subtext suggests his criticism of a leader who demanded loyalty but had no interest in rewarding it. Raymond Hinnebusch writes about how Hafez Al-Assad attempted to placate both landlords and investors as well as peasants and *moukhtars* like Diab El-Machi who could turn to the private sector instead of the state whenever it suited their interests (see Hinnebusch 125). These hyperbolic descriptions of Assad the father, and subtextual criticisms of Assad the statesman mask a subject who knows his own power and exercises it.

The alternation between the two modes, disembodied and embodied, brings the *moukhtar* into sharper focus, particularly when he appears, rhetorically, to convey two separate meanings, to dissimulate. In the next scene he is sleeping, horizontal, on a couch in a corner of the *majlis* under a poster of Hafez Al-Assad, as we hear his disembodied voice effusively praise the late leader, "I've never seen a president as wise as Hafez Al-Assad, never seen a leader like him in all my parliamentary years." The sequence that follows relies on images alone to remind us of who pays the price while leaders come and go. Slow-motion footage shows the elder Assad's coffin bearing the Syrian flag and carried by Syrian military officers with the successor son Bashar behind wearing dark glasses. This is followed by a return to the wide shot of a boat in the middle of Lake Assad. What becomes of "Syria's land of Hafez Al-Assad" once the latter dies? It naturally becomes Syria's land of Bashar Al-Assad, as demonstrated in the remaining sequences of the film. As we hear the chants of school children reciting the Baathist call to join the Vanguards of Light in building the "Arab socialist society," we can infer that its citizens are expected to continue to reproduce the chants of the past.

The next sequence introduces us to the *moukhtar*'s nephew, Khalaf El-Machi, who is also the school principal, in a room that prominently displays four computer boxes stacked under huge photographic portraits of Hafez and Bashar Al-Assad. When he explains that these boxes contain computers donated by the President, this is supposed to be an indication of how Bashar Al-Assad, like his father, takes care of his subjects in the village. Here we are reminded of Wedeen's description of Bashar Al-Assad's reign of neoliberal autocracy that differed from that of his father by engaging new modes of ideological interpellation through access to technology. The computer boxes, ceremonially announced but

rather dwarfed by the portraits of the rulers, are emblematic of this process, "hailing citizens" into the system in ways that "did not require belief in order to be powerful" (Wedeen, "Ideology"). Similar to the portrayal of the *moukhtar*, the principal is both embodied and disembodied, alternately a voice speaking over his unmoving presence, and at other times an embodied speaking presence. On one level the repetition of this strategy of disembodying the authorial figure enacts a form of subversion that is easily understandable. It is also another element of performativity through which Amiralay negotiates multiple layers of "truth" and fiction. His rendering of the principal is not as a harsh authoritarian but as a powerless agent of a state that neglects its people, as inferred by the opening scenes of the film. When asked whether he hopes that the Baath Party will one day return to Iraq, the principal's response is surprisingly lukewarm. He replies, saying that he would of course like for the Baath Party to return to Iraq, "just as it was before the American occupation, or what we call the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, and I hope it will be able to carry out its rightful role." But both principal and *moukhtar* do not really have the choice to say anything different—they are agents of the apparatus. The failures of the Baath Party to advance the Syrian people are shown in the gap between rhetoric and reality, represented by the disembodied voice and what the camera shows us of a rather barren *majlis* and school building.

Another dimension of performance is found in the pans and shots of uniformed schoolchildren of El-Machi, the "Vanguards of the Revolution." Their earnest delivery of patriotic songs and salutes has been learned through imitation and memorization of formal modes of conduct appropriate for both school and military. Their performances are taken seriously as if the presence of the camera, Amiralay's recording device, has rendered the occasion more ceremonial. The closing scene, like that discussed in *The Kite*, summons a subversion of the interpellative process around which the film is structured. A teacher reads to the students a story entitled "Liberty." The teacher begins,

> To the meowing of my cat, who was rubbing himself against me. This intrigued me. I thought he might be hungry. So I fetched him some food. It didn't want it and left me. It started throwing me sad looks. Its deep melancholic air moved me profoundly. So I wished I could speak his language, so I would know what it wanted.

The teacher then asks the students to continue the story and calls on them to read it aloud. The children strain to be chosen, and read:

> The bedroom door was closed. I noticed it kept staring at it. And stuck close to me whenever I went near it. I realized it wanted me to open the door, which I quickly did. As soon as it saw the path was clear, it ran out gleefully.
>
> I began thinking about the cat with astonishment. Does a cat have a sense of freedom? To be sad at losing it and so happy regaining it? Yes, he understands freedom very well. If it was sad, meowing and refusing to eat or drink, it was due to the lack of freedom.

The teacher says,

> So we see that even a cat, a small domesticated animal, has a sense of freedom. What then is the path to freedom in life, according to the author?

A girl student replies:

> If you stay shut up in your house, you're not living your life. You need to be outdoors, in nature, to get to where you want to be.

The teacher then asks, "Did he open the door for the cat?" They reply in the affirmative. "Did the cat stay in the room or leave it?" A student answers, "It ran out quickly," as the camera tracks across banners strung across the ceiling that bear images of Bashar Al-Assad, waving gently in the breeze. The teacher completes the sentence, "It ran out quickly, happy to be free." The students repeat this last line as if it were a patriotic chant. The teacher continues, "So freedom is as precious as life itself," as the camera glides through the space into the corridor between classrooms. The teacher continues, "Even a small domesticated animal has a sense of freedom—so must it be true of man!" as we see the bright sandy earth outside through the window at the end of the hall. He concludes, "The proof: to be free the cat waited for an opportune moment." The teacher then repeats, "an opportune," and waits for the students to complete the sentence, "moment."

This parable of a cat longing for freedom offers an analogy between the freedom sought by the cat and the emancipation of the Syrian people which will supposedly be enabled by the Baathist regime and for which

they, the students, must be patient. But the scene and lesson contain a hidden subversive element which suggests that the desire for freedom is natural, and that the opportune moment for freedom comes to those who wait—and that element is eerily prescient for today's viewer looking back now at the events unfolding in Syria since 2011. Layered on top of the interaction of representation and reality evident in this scene, and the dialectical relationship between the truth before the film and the truth that arises from the process of filming, is an additional layer of the truth, which emerges for the contemporary viewer in the very course of watching the film in the present tense and looking back retrospectively. It was in a similar town called Dar'a in the same general area that the spark of the uprising in Syria began, among school children who were protesting the arrest of one of their teachers (Wedeen, "Ideology"). In addition to this discussion of documentary performativity and the categories of Third and Second Cinema, undoubtedly the films of Amiralay and Sabbagh narrate a past not yet over, as their dramas and subjects echo in, even haunt, the contemporary moment in the Arab world. It is thus necessary to insist on the cinematic in what some now consider the post-cinematic age, not because Arab cinema is "behind" the West, but because there is now, more than ever, a great urgency to contextualize, document, and theorize about a generation of filmmakers who are quickly passing away. It is also important to widen channels of access to film cultures in the Arab region as a means to understanding and reading its modern history. One way to view the emancipatory project of these films is their implication of the intellectual, liberal subject, whose mind may need to be, if not "decolonized," then awakened to the realities negotiated by the filmmakers. Why else would Sabbagh narrate *Souha*: *Surviving Hell* in English? Why else would Amiralay opt for a "stylistic excess" so reliant on biting irony, returning to the scene of the submerged cradle of civilization, to document a region under threat of future flooding and ignored by the government that purports to protect it, to produce a film guaranteed to be denied wide distribution in Syria? Their project was to challenge the liberal subject to resist neoliberalism, authoritarianism, class oppression, and become more radically awake.

Despite this intended effect, or perhaps because of it, their films were banned in their countries, with Sabbagh's nearly disappearing from memory, and yet they make memory the protagonist, urging us not to forget. Situating these films and their project on a continuum of Third cinema

brings them into the fold of contemporary cinematic discourse, circulating in small niches inside their countries and in larger, but still often severely restricted circles in the international arena. Rasha Salti addresses this paradox perfectly in her introduction to *Insights into Syrian Cinema* (21–44), recognizing Syrian cinema as a repository of national aspirations despite the policies of the Syrian state. Along those lines, although Amiralay and Sabbagh were in an antagonistic relationship with Syria and Lebanon, their films are part of the repositories of their national cinemas. Revisiting them now in consideration of their critical performativity allows us to situate them at the intersection of Arab cinema and revolutionary cinema, inevitably challenging the ludic postmodernism of contemporary film theory, from a region where this mode continues to matter.

Notes

1. This ushered in another stage of pan-Arab cultural resistance and political movements, one of the manifestations of which was the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. See Dawisha 252–281.
2. Steven Shaviro (*Post Cinematic*) coined the term "post-cinematic," viewing cinema as the dominant form of media and aesthetics in the twentieth century but no longer in the twenty-first.
3. Lisa Wedeen (*Ambiguities* 112–113) writes about the 1974 dismissal of the director of the National Film Organization and the banning of production of documentary films by his replacement, as indicative of the crackdown by the Hafez Al-Assad regime on critical discourse, not coincidentally following the October 1973 War, viewed by many as a defeat for Syria.
4. The trilogy begins with his 12-minute *Film Essay on the Euphrates Dam* (1970), which glorifies the construction of the Assad Dam as the proud achievement of Baathism, a message he forever regretted for its naïveté. This is followed in sequence by *Everyday Life in a Syrian Village* (1974) and *A Flood in Baath Country* (2003), these last two departing significantly from the first.
5. In 1971, Edouard de Laurot theorized engagement as the possibility of transforming one's personal anguish into history through art. See Brenez.
6. Bruzzi's discussion is informed by Judith Butler, who locates the meaning of the performative act in the apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting. See Butler 44.
7. Khatib ("The Voices") explains the censoring of this film was due to its critique of class issues that also exposed racial, ethnic, and religious divisions within Lebanese society.

8. The Lebanese civil war began in April 1975 and officially ended in 1990, although it wasn't until 1991 when the militias were ordered to disarm by the National Assembly, except for Hezbollah in the south. The Southern Lebanon Army refused to comply until Israel withdrew from the south in 1997, after which the SLA also withdrew. There was a prior civil war in 1958, a popular uprising against Maronite leader Camille Chamoun, but it lasted only a few months and was quelled with the help of U.S. marines.
9. I refer to the term *de-development* in the sense used by Sara Roy ("The Gaza Strip"), although clearly Syria has different circumstances from Gaza about which Roy has coined this term.
10. The Syrian National Film Organization is a branch of the Syrian government that has produced most of what is known as Syrian cinema, a body of some of the finest films produced in the region for their cinematic excellence, thematic depth, and critiques of Syrian society that are thinly veiled critiques of the government. Kay Dickinson has a brilliant and nuanced analysis of the benefits and obstacles the NFO posed for Syrian filmmakers in *Syrian Cinema: Out of Time?*
11. Amiralay was known for his longstanding collaborations with close friends Mohammad Malas and Oussama Mohamed, among other prominent members of Syrian film culture, which was unique for its spirit of creative collegiality among peers. See Salti.
12. An *"aba"* is a traditional cloak-like outer garment worn by Arab men and women in the Middle East.
13. The war of 1973 resulted in Syria regaining Quneitra in the Golan Heights from Israel, a symbol of recovering national dignity, although most of the village was destroyed by the IDF in their process of withdrawal. It became an uninhabited zone for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, which withdrew in late 2014 due to threats from the Syrian war. In general, however, the Syrian government was not interested in making this zone inhabitable, so as to remind the citizens of the threat that Israel poses. Thus the "victory" of 1973 has been perceived by many as hollow. See Wedeen, *Ambiguities* 53–54.
14. The *adhan* is the call to prayer in Muslim societies and occurs five times a day.
15. A *majlis* is a sitting room where people gather for official, administrative, and/or formal occasions, including in one's home. In traditional and nonurban environments this can be arranged by sitting on cushions on the floor.
16. *Mas'baha* are the Muslim and Christian prayer beads used for praying and relaxation, traditionally held by men in Muslim societies. See "Subhah."

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CHAPTER 8

Family Resemblance: An Anthropologist Looks at Moroccan Documentary

Kevin Dwyer

8.1 Introduction

I have been carrying out research on Moroccan cinema since the late 1990s, focusing exclusively on fiction film, and I was somewhat surprised when a Moroccan documentary filmmaker said to me, in 2016, "When you tell someone here [in Morocco] that you've just finished a documentary, they often respond, 'When are you going to make a real film?'" Hearing this I began to wonder why, until recently, documentary film worldwide has been a "devalued" genre in relation to fiction film. And I began to consider that perhaps I, too, in my focus on fiction films, had internalized this devaluation of documentary, despite the fact that, trained as an anthropologist, I had taught university courses on "ethnographic" films—a genre that constitutes a respected and historically deep form of documentary filmmaking. Now, as I have begun to look more closely at documentary filmmaking in Morocco, I have been struck by how the experiences and projects of documentary filmmakers strongly resemble

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the challenges anthropologists face in their own work, and it is these resemblances that I will be discussing in this paper, asking whether the parallels and differences in the two endeavors allow each to provide some insights for the other.

To help us situate documentary's position in the broader film world, here are a few of the factors that have been offered to explain why, until recently, documentary was devalued: (1) that documentary did not satisfy the dominant "escapist" motivation of filmgoers; (2) that creativity, viewed from a "romantic" perspective, lay in the area of fiction, seen as a higher calling than the supposedly less creative field of documentary; (3) that filmmaker training often involved making short films and documentaries before launching into the "mature" domain of fiction features (many widely recognized fiction filmmakers began their careers in documentary, including Michelangelo Antonioni and Alain Resnais, among many others); and (4) that fiction films were more expensive to make than documentaries and therefore constituted larger socioeconomic events. While these factors pertain not only to world cinema but also to Morocco and the broader Maghreb, another very significant factor in this region is the fact that during the colonial and postcolonial periods, documentary filmmaking was often used by the government for propaganda purposes.

Yet documentary's value has appreciated significantly over the past decades, with this change occurring at different times in different places. Starting in the late 1980s and into the 1990s and 2000s, we see significant global growth in the production, popularity, and distribution of documentary films, with television playing a major role in financing and diffusing documentaries, and advances in technology—lighter cameras and sound equipment, digitalization of both the filming and editing processes, and so on—making filmmaking both less expensive and less intrusive. Also, a number of feature-length documentaries have been commercially successful in theaters, among them the films of Michael Moore, Werner Herzog, the Maysles brothers, Errol Morris, Laura Poitras, and Frederick Wiseman. And in several major film festivals, documentaries, in competition with fiction films, have been awarded the major prize: Cannes began, in 1956, awarding the *Palme d'or* to *The Silent World* (Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Louis Malle); then a long drought ensued until 2004, when Michael Moore won it for the documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*. This was a harbinger of documentary's increasing visibility: in 2013 *La Mostra de Venise*, for the first time, gave its highest award, the Golden Lion, to a documentary, *Sacro Gra* (Gianfranco Rosi); and then in 2016 Berlin gave

its Golden Bear to *Fuocoammare* (also Gianfranco Rosi).[1] As we will be seeing later in this chapter, the relative devaluation of documentary is now being seriously challenged in Morocco and in the wider Maghreb, starting around the turn of the present century, and given great impetus as a consequence of the upheavals that started in 2010–2011.

In this essay, which focuses on Moroccan documentary (and refers on occasion to examples from Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, from elsewhere in the Arab and wider worlds), I will try to explore some of the issues that are common to the documentary filmmaker and anthropologist. Considering these issues has pushed me to reflect upon my own anthropological work, and at some points in this paper I will refer to that work—my research on Moroccan cinema but also the several years in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s when I carried out fieldwork in a rural community in the south of Morocco, and the many months during the 1980s when I interviewed Moroccans, as well as Tunisians and Egyptians, involved in the area of human rights.[2]

Among the overlapping issues I will treat are the constraints, challenges, and dilemmas arising in relationships between filmmaker/anthropologist and the human subjects being filmed/written about, questions related to freedom of expression, and problems which both filmmaker and anthropologist face regarding how to create cultural products that are "authentic" (in the sense of responding to local rather than foreign concerns) and thus seen as sincere, genuine, credible, persuasive, etcetera. While the tools of their crafts are very different—filmmakers producing ordered sequences of images and sound, anthropologists mainly producing written texts—the fundamental similarity in their projects, which involves entering into complicated human relationships and bringing relatively local aspects of the human experience to a broader public, suggests an organic kinship linking both endeavors, and it is this kinship that I will attempt to clarify here.

8.2 Moroccan Documentary

A. The Maghreb context: colonial period, independence, and into the present

Only a few years after the beginnings of documentary filmmaking with the Lumière brothers in the 1890s, the Maghreb (then partly under French rule), and the broader Middle East, were directly implicated—"…the lure of the 'Holy Land' attracted both the Lumière company and Thomas Edison to shoot footage in what was then called Palestine…Also, on

behalf of the Lumière brothers, the French Algerian cinematographer Felix Mesguich began filming *actualités* in Algeria in 1905 and a year later in Egypt, and then in 1907 he captured on film the French invasion of Morocco" (Westmoreland 955). Mesguich described filming in Casablanca during the first hours of the French invasion of Morocco in the following terms, "When we arrived the city was smoking under the shelling. A navy troop escorted us to the French consulate where we entrenched ourselves. I filmed the passing of some troops in the devastated streets filled with corpses that attracted clouds of flies and from which arose a stinking odor. I then filmed groups of Algerian riflemen and the foreign legion."[3] Overall, "documentary film…like narrative film, was introduced as part of Western modernization…. Many of the earliest documentaries from the region were produced under colonial rule and presented little more than official propaganda" (ibid.).[4]

As French colonial control of the Maghreb ends and independence is achieved (in Tunisia and Morocco in 1956, in Algeria in 1962), we see that, in Algeria, much of filmmaking focused on the independence struggle, and this was true of both fiction and documentary. Tunisia took a somewhat different path. For several decades after independence, although documentary production was, in the words of Tunisian film critic Hédi Khélil, "quantitatively limited and irregular…," it was nonetheless "qualitatively deserving of interest and improving significantly" (Khélil, *Abécédaire* 80).[5] Among the most important of the early Tunisian documentary filmmakers were H'mida Ben Ammar (1941–), Abdelhafidh Bouassida (1947–), and Taieb Louhichi (1948–2018), all of whom were making films during the 1970s. It was only starting in the 1980s, and then continuing through the 1990s and into the new century, that the Tunisian documentary began to fulfill its promise, marked by the works of Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud, who began making films during the 1980s, and then Hichem Ben Ammar, Sonia Chamkhi, Nadia ElFani, Nejib Belkadhi, and many others. This profusion of documentaries has led to what Khélil would like to call "*l'école de Tunis*" (Khélil, *Abécédaire* 81).

The first decade of the 21st century saw an increase in documentary production throughout the region, in part because of an expansion in film activity in the Gulf countries and their growing role in mounting festivals and financing co-productions. With the uprisings in the Arab world that were sparked by Muhammad Bouazizi's self-immolation in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, 17 December 2010, this trend accelerated.

As the Moroccan film critic Ahmed Boughaba remarked in a recent interview, "The development of documentary was pushed by the *Arab spring*…many directors became aware of what the documentary could do: with all that they had filmed in Tunisia, in Libya, in Egypt, in Syria, and even in Morocco, they could now make known what was happening in their countries."[6] The Tunisian critic Kamel Ben Ouanès echoes this view, saying that since the revolution, "An urgent desire to film seized the Tunisian documentary filmmaker, professional or amateur. […] The Tunisian revolution has been filmed in its small details, almost in real time, by excited and motivated filmmakers, mobilized by a rush of enthusiasm, that of a citizenship that finally encounters, after years of lead and marginalization, a field favorable to its realization" (153).[7]

In Tunisia now we find some 60 Tunisian filmmakers who are registered on the Tunisian filmmakers site, among them 16 women; and they are responsible for some 55 documentaries made since 2011, including both those of short and feature film length.[8] Just recently, in November 2016, a Tunisian documentary, *Zeineb n'aime pas la neige* (Kaouther Ben Hania, 2016, co-produced by Tunisia, France, Qatar, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates [UAE], and made by a Tunisian woman based abroad), won the coveted *Tanit d'or*—the main prize—at the *Journées cinématographiques de Carthage* (JCC); and another documentary, *The Revolution Won't Be Televised* (Rama Thiaw, Senegal, 2016), won the special jury prize—awards interpreted by one commentator as a sign that the jury, presided by the Mauritanian filmmaker Abderrahmane Sissako, was "conferring on the documentary 'its letters of nobility.'"[9] Furthermore, starting in 2017, the JCC added a main prize for documentary, so that the festival will now hold competitions in both fiction and documentary, with the prize money in each section doubling that of the 2016 festival. It thus appears that Tunisia is coming to share in the worldwide reevaluation of documentary occurring over the past decades.

B. Turning toward Morocco

1. The political and economic contexts

The years of King Hassan II's rule, from 1961 until his death in 1999, witnessed the consolidation of an independent Morocco, with the country continuing its close ties to France (which consistently has been Morocco's main trading partner) and developing an economy that owed much to the

dominant Western neoliberal economic order. King Hassan's authoritarian rule was often brutal and repressive, particularly in the 1970s (the king narrowly survived two coup attempts in 1971 and 1972) and 1980s—a period known in Moroccan history as the "years of lead." The final decade of Hassan's rule saw a relative softening of its authoritarian style, and upon the accession to the throne of the king's eldest son, who took the title of Muhammad VI and continues to rule today, there was great hope in Morocco that the softening of the authoritarian system would continue and that the years of heavy-handed monarchical rule would recede into the past.

Under King Muhammad VI the monarchy remains a compelling force in the economic sphere and retains supreme control over the political system and over the country as a whole. This control is often exercised in a repressive manner that inhibits freedom of expression, especially in matters seen as challenging the fundamentals of Moroccan society and culture that are summarized by the notorious "red lines" relating to Monarchy, Religion, and Nation, with various provisions of the Penal Code invoked to prosecute offenses presumed to cross these lines. The country also displays great economic inequality, regional disparities, and serious lacks in the areas of education, social services, and basic freedoms, which provide the foundation for significant popular discontent that occasionally leads to major unrest, as seen in Al-Hoceima and the Rif region starting in October 2016 and continuing for upwards of a year, leading to 20-year prison sentences for several of the leaders and prison terms of from one to 15 years for approximately 40 others. (These sentences were confirmed on appeal in April 2019.)

Yet, to a significant, albeit limited, extent, some hopes for improvement have been borne out. Under King Muhammad VI's rule, Moroccan economic activity and wealth have increased (benefitting especially the already well-to-do classes), civil society institutions have expanded and grown in importance, and major legal changes have been introduced, such as reforms in the Personal Status Code (*Mudawwana*) in 2004 that advanced women's rights, and the adoption of constitutional reforms in 2011 that made Amazigh an official language alongside Arabic and that gave the prime minister some rights that had formerly been the king's prerogative (such as the power to dissolve parliament). These changes were promoted by the monarchy, but only after significant civil society mobilization in the area of women's rights in the early 2000s and then, in 2011, after widespread unrest during the early months of uprisings in

the Arab world, reflected in Morocco by the 20 February movement and other civil society initiatives.

It is in this complicated context, full of struggle, tensions, and the attempts by the authorities to maintain the upper hand in a dynamic society, that documentary film has become a major element in the construction of Moroccan self-perception, addressing important social and cultural issues as well as bringing to the public's attention aspects of Moroccan society and culture that are somewhat hidden from view. To help us understand this recent emergence of documentary film in Morocco, we need to look at its historical development.

2. Historical development

With the founding of the *Centre cinématographique marocain* (CCM) in 1944 while Morocco was still under French rule, Morocco began to produce news programs, educational documentaries, and what might be called "propaganda documentaries" that rationalized and attempted to reinforce colonial rule. Following independence in 1956 these trends continued, with the Moroccan government now substituted for the French. During the first decades of independence the CCM also supported documentaries by Moroccan filmmakers that were not propagandistic, such as *6-12* (Ahmed Bouanani/Abdelmajid R'chich/Muhammad Abderrahman Tazi, 1968), which bore critical intertextual reference to the classic *Berlin, Sinfonie der Großstadt* (Walther Ruttmann, Germany, 1927), films by Brahim Sayeh in the 1950s, Ahmed Mesnaoui (1960s–1970s), and leading later to the patrimonial documentaries of Izza Genini (1970s–1990s) and to Ahmed Maanouni's classic *Transes* (1981). By the 1990s a new group of documentary filmmakers who had little or no experience of the colonial period was emerging, among them Hakim Belabbes and Ali Essafi and then, starting in the early 2000s and into the present, Dalila Ennadre, Karima Zoubir, Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Mohammed El Aboudi, Rachida El Garani, to mention just a few. In addition, a number of feature filmmakers, among them major figures like Nabil Ayouch, Farida Benlyazid, and Muhammad Abderrahman Tazi, continued to make documentaries while also making fiction features.

As we move into the present, one element in documentary's growth and expansion over the past 10 years has been the organization of several festivals where documentaries are an important component, particularly the founding of FIDADOC (*Festival international de documentaire à Agadir*) in 2008. With FIDADOC Morocco gained its first festival devoted exclusively to documentary, and this was seen, already in 2010, as an important step forward. The late Nouzha Drissi, director general of this festival during its first years, talked in 2010 of documentary production as "emergent, in the process of construction," and she saw the main functions of documentary as constituting "a true tool for people's education…a tool for civic awakening, for emancipation," with its primary mission being to "participate in the social development that Morocco is experiencing." In its early days, the main themes of the festival, and of documentaries in general in Morocco, were, in Drissi's words, "children's rights, women's emancipation, alternative economies with solidarity, environmental protection."[10]

By 2016 documentary in Morocco had expanded considerably, with some reports arguing that "Morocco seems to be an exception in the region. An almost complete ecosystem for the documentary industry is taking shape bit by bit in the heart of the kingdom, built simultaneously by directors, producers, distributors, and festival organizers." An important component of this expansion was the role played by the Moroccan television station 2M, which strengthened its support of documentary by "initiating in 2015 the first professional meeting on the documentary. It also makes the daring wager since 2012 to telecast a documentary every Sunday during prime time, despite risking being brought to court."[11]

3. Some examples of recent Moroccan documentaries

To give us some idea of the breadth of Moroccan documentary, let me mention just a few films produced over the past decade and a half, many of which show a concern with social issues, social justice, and questions of public morality. While this is a very small sample, it may also suggest some of the issues that remain systematically ignored, such as those that might challenge the "red lines" mentioned earlier.

- *Sheikhates Blues* (Ali Essafi, Morocco/Egypt, 2004, 51 min.) looks closely into the lives of three *sheikhat*, Moroccan women singers,

who discuss their introduction to and love for their craft, lament the fact that it seems to be dying, and regret that significant sections of the Moroccan population, including their own families, criticize their morality.

- *Le Danseuse* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2012, 51 min.), where the filmmaker develops a close relationship with a man earning his living dancing disguised as a woman, and a close relationship with his wife and children too (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2).
- *Dance of Outlaws* (Mohammed El Aboudi, Morocco, 2012, 82 min.), a film following the difficult path of Hind, a woman without identity papers, with a child born outside wedlock, and who is rejected by her family for reasons of "morality," as she tries to find her way in life.



Fig. 8.1 Two male dancers, dancing as women. *Le Danseuse* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2012)



Fig. 8.2 One of these dancers, filmed at home with his family. *Le Danseuse* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2012)

- *Camera Woman* [*La Femme à la caméra/Casablanca Camera-woman*] (Karima Zoubir, Morocco, 2012, 48 min.) follows a self-trained camera woman, Khadija, who is hired to film weddings and who faces hostility from her family as well as from the man who hires her and often refuses to give her credit for her filming. Khadija and her friend Bouchraa commiserate with one another over the disappointments in their lives, with regard to family and gender relations.
- *Hercule contre Hermes* [*Hercule versus Hermes*] (Mohamed Ulad, Morocco, 2013, 73 min.) recounts a dispute over land in the Tangiers area between a family long settled in the area and members of the wealthy Hermes group, and follows its main subjects over a four-year period from 2008 to 2011, as the settled family attempts to hold on to their land. The film also follows one member of the landholding family as he seeks to establish a life outside the dispute, only to eventually return to it.

- *Raja Bent el Mellah* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2016, 70 min.) follows, over a period of about eight years, the difficult life of Najat after her role in the French film *Raja* (Jacques Doillon, 2003), for which she won best-actress award at the *Festival internationale du film de Marrakech* (FIFM), yet who finds herself not only excluded from subsequent editions of the festival but also leading a life of hardship and poverty (Figs. 8.3 and 8.4).

There are also a number of documentary films that were produced as part of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER, *Instance d'équité et reconciliation*), established in early 2004 by King Muhammad VI as a way to address human rights abuses committed during the reign of King Hassan II. Among the many powerful films made under the IER's auspices are the feature-length *Our Forbidden Places* [*Nos lieux interdits*] (Leila Kilani, 2008, 105 min.), which explores the IER's effort to uncover the historical truth and treats both the difficulties some families face in trying to uncover what actually happened to politically active family members, and the consequences for some individuals of their long



Fig. 8.3 Three years after winning best actress awards at the Marrakesh and Venice film festivals in 2003, Najat is selling cigarettes in Marrakesh to earn a living. *Raja Bent el Mellah* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2016)



Fig. 8.4 Four years after winning the awards, Najat is escorted to the Marrakesh Festival by her co-star, Pascal Greggory, after being forbidden entry by guards. *Raja Bent el Mellah* (Abdelilah AlJaouhary, Morocco, 2016)

incarceration and torture; and historical films of great contemporary relevance like Tarek Idrissi's *Rif 58-59* (2014, 76 min.), which goes back more than 50 years and provides historical context for the 2016–2017 unrest in Al-Hoceima and the Rif region.[12]

And, most recently, there are also documentaries produced completely outside official structures—what has been sometimes called "guerrilla filmmaking"—two of which we will be discussing in detail later in this paper (Nadir Bouhmouch's and Hind Bensari's films on Law 475, the law that puts pressure on a raped woman to marry her rapist). While these films challenge many aspects of Moroccan society, culture, and politics, they have refrained so far from clearly crossing the "red lines."

4. The contexts of documentary film production

a. Documentary and official film institutions

Documentaries cost, on the whole, much less to produce than feature films, yet documentary filmmakers have consistently found it very difficult to secure the necessary financial support and distribution. The CCM,

which first began to provide significant film financing with the establishment of the Fonds d'Aide in the early 1980s, only in 2012 began to accept documentaries as eligible for financing and then with a limit of only two per year.[13]

In addition to financing this very limited number of documentaries, the CCM provides support in several other ways. First, a program called "Documentaries on Hassani Sahraoui: Culture, History, and Space" ("*Documentaires sur la culture, l'histoire et l'espace Sahraoui Hassani*") was announced by the Minister of Communication in October 2014, stating that "funds from the CCM amounting to 15 million dirhams will be allocated specifically to support documentary production on Hassani and Sahraoui culture,"[14] and for the year 2015, the amounts awarded to films in this program amounted to roughly 12% of all aid to production.[15] This initiative faced some criticism from, among others, Nabil Ayouch, who was reported to have reacted, "Is this a matter of funds to support the war effort? Creative artists are free and must be so."[16] Some informal comments from filmmakers suggest that the significant amounts awarded for this program, as well as the CCM's accepting applications for documentary films and 2M's heightened interest in documentaries in recent years, is related to the coming to power of the moderate Islamist party, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) in 2011, and its desire to use documentary to promote its political agenda which, while disavowing violence and adhering to democratic processes, includes support for the monarchy, for Morocco's territorial integrity (as in the case of the Western Sahara), for Morocco's Islamic nature, and also, as we shall see later, for the notion of "clean art."

Second, support is provided to a number of documentary film festivals across Morocco. In 2016 there were six such festivals supported by the CCM (the same as in 2015, but up from four supported in 2013), led by the *Festival du film documentaire sur la culture, l'histoire et l'espace Sahraoui Hassani*, which received 2 million dirhams in its first year of CCM financing, with FIDADOC (tied with Khouribga's *Festival international de documentaire* for longevity at seven years) a distant second at 300,000dh. There are also special events (*manifestations)* showing documentaries that do not receive financial support from the CCM but that nonetheless form part of official programming and are listed in the CCM's annual reports (Bilan cinématographique 2016, 65–68).[17]

And finally, the CCM provides the authorizations for filming (*autorisations de tournage*): in 2016, there were 67 such authorizations issued

for Moroccan documentaries (88 for foreign), up from 62 in 2015 (82 for foreign).[18] Even with this considerable support, there is also the widespread feeling that institutions such as the CCM should do more. In this vein Hind Saïh, now the President of FIDADOC, was certainly targeting the CCM, among other institutions, when she argued, "We see dedicated producers launching into a defense of creating Moroccan documentary. These are very positive signs, but we need a stronger involvement from other bodies, coupled with a more assertive will to support this genre."[19]

b. Documentaries and television

In general, as Ahmed Boughaba recently pointed out, "Television plays a very important role because the public makes the link between documentary and television."[20] Current figures on the popularity of documentaries on television are difficult to come by, but earlier, in 2000, Moulay Driss Jaidi showed that documentaries ranked third in television viewer preferences, with 48% (following news programs [60%] and US films [54%]). Jaidi also found a higher preference for documentary among men than among women, four times higher among urban youth than among rural youth, highest among those aged from 25 to 44, and very closely tied to educational level (Jaidi 217–218).

In a political context marked, since late 2010, by unrest throughout the Arab world, with an increase in co-productions financed in part from abroad (Europe and the Gulf countries), and with some political support for documentary following Morocco's 2011 elections, the television channel 2M has played a particularly strong role over the past few years in the diffusion of documentary. "Since 2012 it telecasts a documentary every Sunday in prime time. These are either 'in-house' productions, or co-productions, or acquisitions." According to Reda Benjelloun, 2M's director of news programs and documentaries, "We are the only channel in the southern region to have a documentary slot in prime time, except for *Al Jazeera* and *Al Arabiya*." And published figures indicate that, "Since launching this slot, one hundred documentaries have been telecast, with an average audience share of 15%, with some films reaching 25% or even 34%, as with *Qu'est-ce qui a tué Arafat* [a documentary produced by Aljazeera], for example."[21] Benjelloun gives some further and very recent audience figures, pointing to two Moroccan feature-length documentaries

(*Aji-Bi, les femmes de l'horloge* [Raja Saddiki, 2015], dealing with the daily lives of Senegalese immigrant women in Casablanca who provide hairdressing and other grooming services and who seek clients on the city's streets, and *La Route du pain* [Hicham Elladdaqi, 2015], showing the situation of day workers—men and women—in Marrakesh, who gather every morning at the foot of the city's walls, waiting to be hired for short-term jobs) that were co-produced by 2M and that "were well received by the Moroccan public, and garnered an audience of more than two million, more than a 20% share."[22]

2M, in its effort to promote documentary, also organized a conference in early 2015 among documentary professionals called "DocTalk," an event that "brought together producers, directors, distributors, and other professionals from the documentary sector in Morocco and abroad. For a full day the concerned parties, convinced of the interest and necessity of documentaries, discussed the means to promote their production and to help them reach the broader public."[23]

It is evident, then, that Morocco has come a long way in providing support for and producing documentaries. In 2015 one observer reported the documentary filmmaker Ali Essafi as saying, "a long road has been traveled in 10 years. My first two films, I had offered them for free to 2M and I didn't even get an answer"; and then quoted the Tunisian producer Habib Attia, who saw Morocco's situation with regard to documentary as an advance on Tunisia's: "I admire what's happening in Morocco. In Tunisia, on the institutional level, there's nothing."[24] Reda Benjelloun echoes this view from a broader regional perspective, noting that "If we exclude Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Morocco is the only Arab country that has set up a virtuous circle in documentary: there are directors, producers, schools, festivals, public financing and a slot on the primary national television channel […I]n Algeria and Tunisia, for example, there are excellent directors and a production structure, but no distribution, no documentary slot."[25]

c. Financing and co-production

Financing a documentary poses a number of dilemmas. On the one hand governments, industrial corporations, and other powerful sponsors have been among the primary financers of documentary films, leading to a

situation where many such films systematically reflect the narrow interests and priorities of the institutions providing the funds. On the other hand, financing from abroad brings its own problems, with Morocco finding itself in competition with other countries of the region. Also, foreign funding opens a film to the accusation that it lacks "authenticity," or, as Habib Attia suggests, "In any case funds from abroad must not be taken except as complementary. At least half must be assured locally in order to make the projects credible."[26]

Even before 2012, the number of documentaries coproduced in the southern and eastern Mediterranean region was increasing and, as the 2012 EuroMed Audiovisuel study emphasized, "the number and rate of documentaries coproduced within the region has increased over the studied period [2006–2011] and has even soared in 2011 (documentaries just completed, in post-production or in development) with the coverage of the Arab spring." The study points out that this was a consequence not only of political upheavals but also of the "the upcoming and rising influence of countries from the Gulf (UAE and Qatar mainly) […which] not only have festivals but have also launched training programs, professional meetings and networking events as well as film financing structures acting whether as grants…, as co-producers…or both…."[27] And this trend appears to be continuing.

d. Documentaries produced outside official channels

In order to make a film in Morocco, the filmmaker needs an authorization for filming (*autorisation de tournage*), accorded by the CCM, and requests for funding require the filmmaker to follow a procedure established by the CCM. In addition, only production companies are eligible to submit such requests, so the filmmaker must be part of such a company or form one. A further complication has been in effect in the past few years, with requests for an authorization to film needing the approval not only of the Ministry of Culture and Communication (the ministry that oversees the CCM) but also of the Ministry of the Interior which, with its concern for internal security, public order, and related matters, adds more time and a heightened risk of rejection to the process.[28] This additional approval particularly affects documentary and the approval process, which used to take only a few weeks, can now take several months.

There are several ways for filmmakers to skirt these requirements. With the much lighter and cheaper filmmaking equipment now available, it has become easier for filmmakers to shoot without passing through official channels and without possessing the authorization for filming, although doing so certainly involves the risk of being challenged by the police and, in some cases, having one's equipment confiscated. There is now also the possibility of finding other sources of financing, particular via the Internet, as we will see regarding several films discussed below.[29] And there is also the opportunity to distribute one's work outside of the normal film distribution networks, using social networks and online distribution mechanisms.[30]

There is also a kind of filmmaking that challenges more directly the official national institutions that oversee the film sector. We see this, for example, in the work of Nadir Bouhmouch (co-founder of a group called "Guerrilla Cinema Movement") and his colleagues, who raised money through private means and crowdsourcing to produce films such as *My Makhzen and Me* (2011, following the 20 February movement, the Moroccan protest group that came into being in February 2011 during the early popular enthusiasm of the "Arab Spring"); *475: When Marriage becomes Punishment* (2013, challenging media and public representations of the case of Amina Filali, a 16-year-old rape victim who was forced to marry her rapist and then committed suicide a year after her marriage, to be discussed later in this chapter); and *Basta* (2013, Hamza Mahfoudi and Younes Belghazi, made by a team that accompanied Bouhmouch when he was filming *475*… and recounting their unsuccessful efforts to secure authorization from the CCM while also voicing direct criticism of the CCM—the narrator remarks, roughly four minutes into the film, that the CCM and the government are against anything that is countercultural—thus directly confronting the role of the CCM as the centralized source of money and permissions to film in Morocco).[31]

e. Film culture

One of the major issues affecting the Moroccan film sector is how to construct a culture that values cinema as a special form of creative activity and that encourages its appreciation.

In this area film clubs have played an important role in Morocco since their founding in the 1940s among the French colonizers. By the late

1960s Moroccan membership and leadership had expanded, culminating with the presidency in 1973 of film critic and activist Noureddin Sail, who held the position until 1982 (and who from 2003–2014 headed the CCM). The film clubs constituted a space where discussion of cultural matters could be tied to the political situation, and the film clubs participated in the heightened political militancy of the late 1960s and through 1970s. In recent years, there has been a decline and, as Boughaba argues, there is a need for renewal on this level: "Film clubs need to work in a different manner. Today the new generations can download and television channels offer films 24 hours a day. For this reason, the film clubs have to look for another means of transmitting film culture. First, one must work with the youth in the primary and secondary schools. Then, when we show a film, we can't do it as was done in the 70s, by giving the public information on the director and on the film, introduce the film, project it, and then organize a discussion. We have to be able to analyze the film more deeply than in the past, with the technology that allows us to stop the film, to see and see again certain passages. We have to do a kind of film class with the participants."[32] Such a process, were it to take hold, would likely encourage more thoughtful popular viewership and might lead to interesting challenges to the dominant modes of cinematic engagement.

Morocco also has had for many years "*ciné-caravan*" tours, where films are brought to parts of Morocco, especially rural areas, without theaters. The CCM has organized many such tours over the years and we may recall that one of the activities associated with FIDADOC is to have "itinerant projections that take place in the outlying sections of Agadir."[33]

Another important element in the promotion of Moroccan film culture is the variety and number of film festivals taking place throughout the country. While the CCM financially supports many of these—in 2016 it gave financial support to 49 film festivals and special film events—some are carried out without CCM support, and some have received reduced CCM funding and been forced to suspend their activities for financial reasons.[34]

There is also the question of formal training in filmmaking, particularly in documentary. There is some rare training for documentary filmmakers at places like *L'École supérieure des arts visuels de Marrakech* and the *Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines* in Tétouan. In addition, there is a rather extensive training program associated with the FIDADOC festival's so-called "Ruche documentaire"[35] which, throughout the year, tries

to accompany and promote Moroccan documentary filmmakers and independent producers, with the most promising projects selected for a documentary film writing workshop in Safi, tied to the AFRICADOC network that was formed in 2002 and now has affiliates across much of Africa.[36] And there are other initiatives in the context of FIDADOC that deserve mention, in particular its project called *Documentary Souss Massa Sahara* (*Documentary SMS*), which aims to increase the impact of FIDADOC, both professionally and internationally, and to improve training and support for documentary.[37]

In general, most observers agree that there are serious lacks in training specialists in documentary in Morocco, both with regard to producers and filmmakers. As a recent article in the magazine *Tel Quel* put it, "The analysis is unanimous: there exists a real need for documentary producers, specialized in this genre. But unfortunately, there is as yet no special training. The Marrakesh School does offer a course in production, but not devoted to documentary. As regards directors, '[t]hose who enter the school have a lack in general culture, in artistic culture, in work methods…You have to go back to the upper levels of secondary school,' explains Vincent Melili, director of the *l'École supérieure des arts visuels de Marrakech.*" Similarly, the documentary filmmaker Ali Essafi makes the argument that, "[y]ou have to have an education in the image much earlier than the baccalaureate."[38]

8.3 Issues in the Creation of Cultural Products—Documentary Films and Anthropological Texts

I would now like to turn our attention to a number of issues that are common to both documentary filmmakers and anthropologists in their efforts to bring knowledge of events occurring in a limited context to a wider audience. Some of these issues arise during the process of planning and shooting the film—the corresponding stage in anthropology is called "fieldwork"—while others arrive during the post-production stage, or what anthropologists see as the writing, editing, and publishing of texts, but all have implications for how the filmmaker or anthropologist convinces the audience of the importance and credibility of the events being portrayed, and how they contribute to the work's power.

As we look more closely at several documentaries from Morocco (and for purposes of comparison I will also refer to some documentaries from elsewhere in the Maghreb and the Arab world), I want to focus on the question of anonymity versus identification as one aspect of the complex relationship between filmmaker and subject; on how a number of films have faced and worked through problems of freedom of expression; and on how the persuasiveness and credibility of the product are influenced by the manner in which filming adjusts to and reflects inevitably changing circumstances, specifically by varying narrational styles and forms of storytelling. In each of these areas I will point to some corresponding examples from anthropology.

A. Filmmakers, anthropologists, and subjects: anonymity versus identity

One of the basic ethical questions in both anthropology and documentary film has to do with the relationship between creator and subjects, involving issues such as how to establish trust, what kinds of control creator and subject should have over the product, what are the different risks each faces and how these may be approached and controlled, if not mastered.

Some sense of the similarity in relationships that filmmakers and anthropologists develop with their subjects is suggested by Hédi Khélil, when he notes that the Tunisian documentary filmmaker Hichem Ben Ammar "is so close to the people filmed that one has the impression he was incubating them for a long time and was just waiting for a lucky moment, an opportunity […] to film them" (Khélil, *Abécédaire* 107). For Khélil, Ben Ammar is "anthropologist more than sociologist, looking above all for the profound truth in the human being and the view he has of himself or that others have of him…" (123); and that therefore, "Documentary practice consequently, for him [Ben Ammar], doesn't come from a patrimonial archivism or a nostalgic exoticism, but from a philosophy of life made of friendship and sharing" (107).[39]

On the most fundamental level, participating in a film, or in an anthropological encounter, may make participants known to a public wider than simply friends and relatives, may give them a public identity that destroys their relative anonymity as private persons. However "trusting" the relationship between filmmaker/anthropologist and participating subject may

be, it therefore carries with it dangers and risks. In some extreme situations and moving beyond the Arab world for a moment, participants may face life-threatening situations and be forced to relocate their entire lives, as occurs in Joshua Oppenheimer's documentaries on the anti-communist purges in Indonesia in the 1960s.[40]

How have some Moroccan documentaries dealt with this issue of preserving anonymity or affirming identity? In some of the films mentioned earlier we see precautions taken—for example, in *Hercule contre Hermes* several minor characters have blurred heads and, in Nadir Bouhmouch's *475: When Marriage becomes Punishment*, the rapist's father, also a minor character, is treated in the same way. In other instances, the opposite approach is taken, and key individuals are shown in their true identities, even where very sensitive issues are addressed. This is the case with the main characters in *Hercule contre Hermes*, as well as those in Nadir Bouhmouch's and Hind Bensari's respective films on Law 475 of the Moroccan Penal Code, where the main protagonists are all identified and appear clearly on the screen.[41]

There has been some controversy in Anthropology over the question of whether or when it is advisable to preserve an informant's anonymity. I faced this issue in my first book, *Moroccan Dialogues*, in which I recounted a number of events taking place in a Moroccan village during the summer of 1975, with each event followed by a dialogue between me and Faqir Muhammad, a 60-year-old Moroccan farmer. Faqir Muhammad was the main character in this book and when I asked him whether he should be identified in its pages he answered, "Look—just don't touch the government and you can put my name all over it. And even pictures if you want. But not the government. It will make trouble for me, and for you too. And for me, perhaps, a lot…" (Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues* xx–xxi). So, I excluded from the book everything related to the government although, for me, these were some of the most compelling parts of our conversations. I gave the Faqir his true name—*al-Faqir Muhammad b. l'ayashi Sherardi*—but I used pseudonyms for everyone else as well as for the village they lived in.[42]

While my use of pseudonyms may seem reasonable, and it certainly did to me some 40 years ago as I was writing the book, such a strategy becomes much more problematic and potentially less successful in today's world, where texts/films move almost instantaneously across wide geographical areas and where some individuals from the Faqir's village have received higher education, are able to read English, and may find

the book on the Internet. This issue becomes even more critical when a book such as mine is translated, as in fact happened about 10 years ago, and therefore can be read by many people in the original community.

How critical this issue may become can be seen in the following situation. The Moroccan translators of *Moroccan Dialogues* raised a number of questions involving identity/anonymity, among them the fact that several women were spoken of negatively in the book. Although I had changed names and many of the people mentioned in these incidents had died, a number of their descendants and other family members were still alive, and a careful reader who knew the community first-hand could probably reconstruct the identities of the women in question. Negative statements about these women, I was told, risked harming their families' reputations. I was asked, then, whether I would be willing to amend or eliminate these problematic sections.

For anthropologists, this dilemma of deciding between anonymity and identification is something of an occupational hazard. The well-known anthropologist, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, makes a provocative suggestion, challenging the basic anthropological convention of cloaking interlocutors in anonymity or pseudonymity. She says, "Anonymity makes us unmindful that we owe our anthropological subjects the same degree of courtesy, empathy and friendship in writing as we generally extend to them face to face in the field where they are not our 'subjects' but our boon companions without whom we quite literally could not survive. Sacrificing anonymity means we may have to write less poignant, more circumspect ethnographies, a high price for any writer to pay. But our version of the Hippocratic oath—to do no harm, in so far as possible, to our informants—would seem to demand this" (Scheper-Hughes 128).

In facing the dilemma that had arisen regarding the Arabic translation of *Moroccan Dialogues*, I chose the option of eliminating the sections in question, an option similar to the one I had already adopted in acceding to the Faqir's wish that I not include our discussions of the government and that was also consistent with my view that the choices an anthropologist (or filmmaker) makes in presenting, emphasizing, and excluding material inevitably challenge any simple notion of "realism," or "objective reality."

Three films, all dealing with women in Arab countries who participate in formal politics, provide an interesting comparison here. These films are: *Militantes* (Sonia Chamkhi, Tunisia, 2012, 66 min.), dealing with the

efforts of several women from different political parties to win parliamentary seats in Tunisia's first free elections, held in October 2011; *A Revolution in Four Seasons* (Jessie Deeter, US/Tunisia, 2016, 90 min.), following two politically active women in Tunisia over the four-year period 2011–2015; and *Ladies First* (Mona El-Neggar, US, 2016, 36 min.), following three women in Saudi Arabia who participate in local elections in 2015, the first elections in Saudi Arabia open to women candidates and where women were allowed to vote. Each of these films, in following a small number of women and tracing their engagement in their countries' political processes, attempts not only to help a wider public understand these women's experiences but also understand the political, social, and cultural context in which they operate.[43]

The first two films focus on individuals who are familiar with cameras and are public figures, so the question of anonymity is not at issue. In *Ladies First* however, El-Naggar, an Egyptian, encountered a problem she describes as follows, "While I was making the film, many women were afraid to share their stories for fear of backlash from the male relatives who oversee all aspects of their lives as so-called guardians." Yet desiring to learn more about women's attitudes and experiences in this context, El-Naggar adopted another, extra-filmic technique, "We had put a call-out on our website and on Twitter in conjunction with the publication of *Ladies First*…We were overwhelmed by the outpouring."[44]

Here the filmmaker adopts a strategy to deal with the difficulties that personal identification raises and yet that will allow those who wish to express themselves anonymously to do so. Another strategy was adopted in a documentary project, *Sawt*, on Egyptian women since the uprising in 2011. Here the filmmakers, "anticipating the difficulties of convincing Egyptian women to appear on camera, […] decided to use a simple recorder and collect women's stories in their own voices as the revolution was taking place in Egypt in early 2011. For the visual dimension of their documentary, they worked with animation artists to create unique storyboards with animated characters…."[45]

Such strategies, while protecting the subjects' identities, tend to deprive the audience of some of the usual bases for testing veracity—those that enable the viewer to observe the subjects closely—but they nonetheless provide fuel for insights where none might otherwise exist.

Yet another strategy was employed by Nadia ElFani in Tunisia. In attempting to carry out her original plan for a film on atheism in Islamic societies, she quickly realized it would not be possible to get people to

speak about their own atheism on camera. So she decided to change the focus of her film to one where she explored, instead of the question of atheism, that of secularism, *laïcité*, focusing on the extent to which Ramadan rules were or were not followed in Tunisia (and the film also glanced quickly at this issue in Morocco). This film became *Laïcité Inch'Allah* (Nadia ElFani, Tunisia, 2011, 71 min.).[46]

B. Freedom of expression and censorship

The issue of freedom of expression is central to documentary film and, more broadly, to all forms of cultural expression, including fiction films. We have already seen several films where the individual's freedom of expression is challenged—in *Ladies First*, where Saudi women were unable to express themselves publicly for fear of retaliation from family members, and in *Laïcité Inch'Allah*, where the filmmaker knew that people would not freely and publicly admit to atheism. And we also have seen how anthropologists may be pushed to exclude from their texts matters that, left to themselves, they would prefer to include—exclusions perhaps related to the need to avoid putting particular individuals at risk, or to avoid identifying them when they would prefer to remain anonymous, or for other reasons.

In Morocco, as no doubt everywhere, freedom of expression and censorship have contentious histories. While most Moroccans are consciously and subconsciously very aware of the "red lines" that are dangerous to cross (challenging the monarchy, religion, or the nation's territorial integrity and most particularly Morocco's control over the Western Sahara), and while the public freedoms to discuss, criticize, and mobilize in defense of objectives that might challenge authority are sometimes curtailed, the freedom that Moroccans have come to enjoy in the public sphere, and in Moroccan cinema as one of its important sectors, has expanded significantly since the harsh "years of lead" under King Hassan II. This greater freedom in the field of cinema can be seen, for example, in the strength of the theme of political repression and political criticism that has been strongly in evidence in a number of Moroccan fiction films, referring primarily to the period of King Hassan II's rule and made since his death in 1999.[47] It can also be seen in the human rights documentaries made as part of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission program, also dealing with instances and patterns of repression in Morocco under King

Hassan II. It is arguable that one consequence of this emphasis on the past may be to somewhat deflect concerns regarding the present.

Yet in Morocco today freedom of expression remains strictly controlled, especially with regard to the "red lines." In other areas, such as those related to social justice and public morality, the limits are less clear. When we look more specifically at documentary, some sense of the ambiguity in these areas can be gleaned from various public statements, such as those of then FIDADOC director Nouzha Drissi who, in 2010, faced questions related to freedom of expression, in a context where the Moroccan writer Abdallah Taïa was being heavily criticized for his depiction of homosexuality (in his novel *L'armée du salut*, from which he later made his first film, *L'armée du salut* [2013, France/Morocco/Switzerland]), and where the cartoonist Khalid Gueddar had recently been sentenced, in 2009, to four years in prison for cartoons on the royal family and Muhammad VI.[48] In her response she argued that the State was ahead of its citizens and she put the onus on a population she saw as "not ready" to confront certain issues: "We can regret all the cases you have cited, but democracy isn't anarchy…FIDADOC hopes to create new windows, but there are subjects that neither I nor my team wish to touch, not out of fear, but documentary culture is something to be created. Bring films a bit like a stick to have yourself beaten with, I don't see the usefulness of that. There are themes for which the population is not ready, less ready than the government or the authorities…The State must push for emancipation, but the [people's] mentalities take time. FIDADOC doesn't want to create polemics. It wants to make things progress, have the citizen seize an idea to make society advance. It wants the citizen to have an active role in society and not create polemics just to create polemics."[49]

The television station 2M has also faced problems in this area with some of its documentaries, and its director general, Salim Cheikh, expressing a view quite different from that of Drissi, has argued that "It's part of documentary to shake up ideas and agitate a little."[50] One 2M documentary, *Hercule contre Hermès*, brought 2M's director general into court when members of the wealthy Hermès family accused the film of harming the family's honor and reputation. Another 2M documentary, *Tinghir-Jérusalem* (Kamal Hachkar, 2013), dealing with the emigration of Jews from Morocco following the establishment of the State of Israel, was the target of widespread criticism and demonstrations in Morocco for decontextualizing this historical experience, avoiding any mention of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, neglecting the marginalization experienced by

many Moroccan Jewish immigrants in Israel, and participating in a "normalization" of relations with Israel.[51]

There has been some recent, if limited, progress on the legal level with regard to freedom of expression. A new press code adopted in 2016 eliminated prison terms as punishment for offenses, with penalties now restricted to fines and the suspension of publications. However, as a recent Human Rights Watch report argues, there are two ways in which this progress is circumscribed: (1) "many of the offenses that the new press code punishes with fines and suspensions of publications should be decriminalized entirely in order to conform with Morocco's obligations to protect international norms with respect to freedom of expression"; (2) the new press code must be seen in conjunction with the penal code, "which continues to punish with prison a range of nonviolent speech offenses, whether committed by journalists or non-journalists. In fact, Parliament adopted, in tandem with the new press code, additions to the penal code that criminalized 'causing harm' to Islam and the monarchy, giving offense to the king or members of the royal family, and inciting against territorial integrity, to be punished by prison and/or a fine."[52]

The ongoing tension between freedom of expression and censorship is not likely to go away, although it may abate or stiffen with changing circumstances. Adding a new element to this mix, the notion of "clean art" ("*l'art propre*") has gained currency with the coming to power in 2011 of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD), a notion promoted by, among others, the Minister of Culture and Communication who oversees the film sector and the CCM and who is a PJD member. This notion has been used to apply restrictions on certain subjects that had not previously faced such scrutiny (for example, filming in bars or nightclubs).

C. Shaping a convincing cultural product

A third area where documentary filmmakers and anthropologists have similar concerns relates to the shaping of the final product—how may the creator (filmmaker or anthropologist) shape his/her creation to help persuade the expected audiences—domestic, diasporic, and/or foreign; general, festival-going, professional and/or amateur; youthful and/or mature; and so on—of the credibility of the product.

Documentary filmmakers have at their disposal options on many levels to create convincing representations. These include different kinds of

images (location shots, historical images from photographs, objects, and videos), sound (ambient sound, sound effects, dialogue, testimony, narration, and music), special effects (animation and audio), pacing (length of scenes and number of cuts), script and storytelling structure, focus on some characters rather than others, and so on.[53] Some of these have corresponding options when we think of producing anthropological texts.

I want to explore only two of the many possible issues here. First, how do documentary filmmakers deal with unpredictable human subjects and situations, an issue anthropologists often face, as Paul Silverstein, in a collective work on anthropological fieldwork in Morocco, has pointed out: "Anthropologists do not control their destinies in the field any more than they do at home; fieldwork experiences are unpredictable, challenging, and – quite frankly – usually beyond the anthropologist's control" (Silverstein 129). And second, how do different styles of narration and specific characteristics of story contribute to promoting persuasiveness.

1. Shifting situations, flexibility, and adaptability

In the field of documentary, Khélil has pointed out how tenuous the relationship between intention and execution is, saying, "[t]he documentary filmmaker is a creator who gropes for a way forward, sure of nothing at the outset, but who, little by little, realizes perfectly what kind of people he precisely needs to make his film" (*Abécédaire* 122). At the same time, he counsels against too much flexibility or spontaneity, arguing that: "[t]he worst thing in a documentary is to let oneself be tempted by spontaneity, that is, to have confidence exclusively in the camera, to let it gambol about as it wishes and to stick to wide shots that only expand the gap between those who film and those who are filmed. You must put down the tripod, cut, select, and take all the time needed to capture the quiver of a desire, a crazy laugh that is lost in nature, or the photogenics of the environment" (114).[54]

We see this delicate relationship between intention and execution work itself out in a number of films, often leading to shifts in emphasis and a reorientation of focus. I have mentioned, already, how Nadia ElFani had to change the topic of her film. In *A Revolution in 4 Seasons*, which focuses on two politically active Tunisian women in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring," the filmmakers adapted to the fortuitous developments of seeing their main subjects marry and give birth as the filming proceeded,

enabling the film to address these personal developments and thus present the viewer with an entirely new level of their experience.

There are countless examples of such shifts in anthropological fieldwork. To mention only two growing out of my own work: when I returned to a village in southern Morocco in June 1975 to spend the summer with people with whom I had already spent several years, I had no specific research project planned but, from our shared experiences and our diverse orientations and priorities, the book *Moroccan Dialogues* emerged; and in my research that led to *Beyond Casablanca*, my original intention was to explore both cinema and theater in Morocco and Egypt, but the final product concentrated on one Moroccan filmmaker, while attempting to place this one career in the broader context of the history of Moroccan cinema and Moroccan culture and society. In both instances, each book's narrative structure, rather than following a plan elaborated beforehand, grew out of the nature of the particular research experience, with its unexpected twists and turns, and my need to contextualize somehow the particular experience for a broader audience.

Closely related to this unpredictability is the question of how and to what extent the filmmaker shows, in the film itself, the process of making the film. While "showing the process" is, like any other filming strategy, a deliberate choice and does not in itself provide a more insightful presentation—it may be used to obscure and distort just as any other filming strategy might—it also has the potential of providing another layer of support to persuade and convince the viewer. For example, in Karima Zoubir's Moroccan documentary *Camera Woman*, we are shown the actual filming and we see who is the cameraperson and what is the relationship between that person and the film's subjects. In this film, we become aware of the relationship between a woman whose occupation is filming family weddings and her filmed subjects, and one of the main points of the film is that people at the weddings prefer women to men behind the cameras.[55]

In a similar vein Hédi Khélil would like to push Hichem Ben Ammar to provide more information, asking, "what capacities and subterfuges does he use to get his characters to speak with such intelligence and depth? What initiation ritual and magic does he have recourse to, to push them to give birth to what is most intimate and intense in them? The majority of his protagonists, fished out of the banality of daily life, suddenly appear on the screen as erudite, philosophers, teachers, or cinephiles. What special thing does he do to get the most reticent to put themselves at his disposal and to conform to the orientations that he

wants to give to his ways of intervening in the real?" (Khélil, *Abécédaire* 121).[56]

But this kind of representation poses problems, and Khélil suggests that, "[t]his programming of chance is seductive, but it is also problematic. It is likely that there are, during the shooting […those] who refused to be filmed…or who showed very little enthusiasm at the idea of doing so…. These rejections and qualms are an integral part of the film's subject and there is no basis, in the name of a refined and neat aesthetic, to hide them. It is becoming more and more evident that the true scenario of a documentary film is the process of making it…but also and especially the difficulties and frictions that arise. […I]t is necessary to run the risk of connecting it also to this fundamental component of the documentary material: its drafts and its impurities" (124).[57]

The questions Khélil raises are very germane to the issue of the power of the representation to persuade the viewer of its trustworthiness. Let us turn now to explore how narration and story can promote this objective.

2. Narration and story—two Moroccan films on Law 475

While two of the best-known documentary styles each promote different narration techniques—"direct cinema" where the camera is used as an invisible observer to record what is in front of it, and "cinéma vérité," where filming and filmmaker are shown as participants in the filmed events—narration itself may take many different forms, such as direct question—answer structure in interview settings, first-person testimony without the questions being heard, voice-over, omniscient narrators, and so on. Depending on the particular situation, does narration push the viewer too strongly in the direction of the filmmaker's interpretation? Is it necessary in order to move the narrative forward? How can narration be used creatively, if it is to be used at all?[58]

Obviously, not all documentary filmmakers take the same approach regarding narration. Before turning to look closely at the two Moroccan films on Law 475, we can see a variety in narration styles in evidence in the three documentaries on politically active Arab women I have discussed earlier. *Militantes* is composed mainly of talking heads; the filmmaker herself is never present (although on at least one occasion we hear, very faintly, a question being posed, most likely by the filmmaker). The main women interviewed provide us some context, not only discussing

the current and historical situations, but also their personal histories and experiences that led them into politics. They themselves provide the analysis, including why their efforts found such little success. There is no voice-over and, all elements taken into account, this leads to a fairly convincing presentation.

Ladies First, on the other hand, has a strong voice-over narration, too strong perhaps (for this viewer at least), in effect telling the viewer what to think about the women involved and about Saudi Arabia in general, rather than providing material that would allow the viewer to reflect and come up with his/her own conclusions. In ElFani's *Laïcité Inch'Allah* the filmmaker is present throughout, almost always in the frame, explicitly leading the questioning and determining the path of the film, in a first-person mode. Her position is clearly stated—that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and people should be free to practice or not to practice in the public sphere.

From the perspective of creating a convincing story, *A Revolution in 4 Seasons* has several virtues that the other two films dealing with women in politics do not have, and that give it more power and help convey veracity. First of all, it follows two women over a period of four years, from the October 2011 elections through the attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis in 2015, and we see not only a developing situation in Tunisia but significant changes in these women's personal lives—both get engaged and marry after the film has begun, both then have children, and each family responds differently to the difficulties of leading both political/public and personal lives.

The surprising turns that this entails help give this film a power that is absent in the other two films. These turns include showing the different responses of each couple to the wife's pregnancy and birthing of a child. In the Nahdha couple, the woman, rather than retreating to the home as the stereotype of Islamist life would have it, remains the family's prime force politically, and the husband is very supportive of this and performs most of the household tasks; in the other couple, where the man is involved with the liberal *Afak Tounes* party, the man remains politically active—he had already started a movement called "Reform" which focused on police misbehavior and how to enhance citizens' rights in the face of police violence—and the woman, formerly very much involved in public political life, retreats into home life for a significant period, becoming the almost exclusive caregiver for the couple's child. This latter case appears not as the woman's choice but rather as a "traditional" response

where the man remains in public life and the woman retreats into the home—reversing the expectation of many viewers that it would be in the Nahdha couple that "traditional" roles would resume and that in the more secular couple the woman would continue her public political life.

With regard to narration and storytelling, two Moroccan documentaries on Morocco's Law 475 are interesting to look at together. Law 475 of the Moroccan Penal Code, adopted in 1962, provides for a prison term of one to five years for a rapist but a second clause in the law stipulates that, if the victim marries the rapist, "he can no longer be prosecuted except by persons empowered to demand the annulment of the marriage and then only after the annulment has been proclaimed."[59] This creates a situation where great pressure can be put upon the victim to marry the offender, thus enabling him to avoid prison. The suicide in 2012 of a 16-year-old girl, Amina Filali, after she had been forced to marry the man who raped her, led to significant civil society mobilization and became the subject of the two films I will turn to now, Nadir Bouhmouch's *475: When Marriage becomes Punishment* (2013, 63 min.) and Hind Bensari's *475: trêve de silence* (2013, 43 min.).

While the basic orientations of these two films are similar—that Law 475 places a woman who has been raped in an intolerable position by pushing her toward marriage with her rapist—and they have some stylistic similarities, with voice-overs leading the viewer through the complications that this situation entails, each approaches this issue from a different perspective and they can be seen in some sense as complementary, addressing different aspects of the situation. And both these films find powerful ways to use narration to create a convincing, credible story.

Nadir Bouhmouch's *475: When Marriage becomes Punishment* is an investigative film that attempts to establish the truth of what happened prior to Amina's suicide, and the familial, personal, and societal contexts for her act. In constructing this context, the film presents a series of expert talking heads—lawyers, analysts, activists—and has a voice-over that leads us through the story. The filmmaker himself appears only rarely, but we do see him in some interview situations, as he attempts to get to the bottom of the event.

Crucial to the film's development is a moment about two-thirds of the way through, when the viewer has already sensed that the many versions of Amina's story are not leading to a simple, clear conclusion. The viewer comes to realize that, not only did Amina suffer a rape, but her father is guilty of himself having perpetrated a rape in a situation strikingly similar

to his daughter's, with the victim in this case the woman who became the father's second wife and who therefore married the father in circumstances similar to those that pushed Amina to marry. The viewer is rather shocked, after having seen a father who, during the first part of the film, appeared protective and concerned for Amina, to learn that he committed the same kind of act Amina has suffered and, in addition, so abuses his second wife that she says she hates all men and that she has considered killing herself and even her children.

Hind Bensari's *475: trêve de silence*, while taking a point of departure similar to Bouhmouch's *475*, follows a rather different path. The main trope here is also one of "investigation," but Bensari's film, rather than investigating a particular event, uses the event to investigate the broader issue of the nature of man–woman relations before marriage and her film constitutes a general inquiry into relations between the sexes in Morocco. Using statistics and expert talking heads—psychologists, journalists, and activists—the film examines not only Amina's ordeal but also goes into detail regarding a rape case involving a parliamentarian and provides insight into how political and judicial institutions systematically do not pursue justice in such cases.

Whereas the questions Bouhmouch poses in moving his story forward have largely to do with further steps in his investigation of Amina's experience and its consequences, Bensari moves her narrative forward by posing a number of general questions, such as, "Am I worth as much as my brothers?", "Shouldn't society take charge of these situations?" (here referring to situations where the woman, seen as having been dishonored, is placed in a predicament from which there is no dignified exit).

Bouhmouch's film presents several cases that are similar to Amina's, and these are treated somewhat like *des fait divers*, as other events that simply echo Amina's experience; in Bensari's film such events are presented as symptoms of societal pathology, and we see a number of short interventions where men admit committing violence against women, saying, in effect, "it's what we do," and where women say, in effect, "we have to be very careful, men are that way, and we must not provoke them."[60]

Both Bensari's and Bouhmouch's films give an important role to Houda Lamqaddam, who shared in the writing of Bouhmouch's film and who can be seen doing some of the interviewing in it. When interviewing the father's second wife in Bouhmouch's film, Lamqaddam says this isn't an interview but a dialogue, because she herself had been raped, but was fortunate to be in a family that believed, supported, and comforted

her. Lamqaddam features at the end of Bensari's film both for her role in interviewing and also for her going public about her own rape and writing about it on the Internet.[61] In Bensari's film, as Lamqaddam describes her rape on the beach, we are presented with some brief reenactments, mostly of a symbolic nature.

In this film, with its unscripted interviews with both men and women on the street, its revelation of Houda Lamqaddam's rape, its following the rape case involving a parliamentarian, we see, as in Bouhmouch's *475*, that a sensitivity to shifting situations may lead to what we might call unexpected, "unscripted" twists in narrative and these surprising turns and twists in the storyline often help to contribute to a film's power and credibility, providing new insights and often carrying with them a suggestion of greater veracity.

In the wake of the significant civil society mobilization that resulted from Amina Filali's suicide—and these two films are important symptoms of this mobilization—the Moroccan parliament amended Law 475 in early 2014, eliminating the provision that, in the case of marriage, the offender could no longer be prosecuted.

3. Financing

An important element in convincing a viewer of a film's trustworthiness has to do with how the film is financed. We have already seen some of the problems in financing documentary, and the question always arises of what possible interest might those providing financial support and/or sponsoring the film have in presenting a particular point of view. Without attempting to be comprehensive here, let me simply note that, among the films I have discussed at some length, ElFani's film was financed mostly by official institutions abroad—primarily *Fonds Francophone* and *Fonds Sud*; *A Revolution in 4 Seasons* was produced by the U.S.-based production company Tunisia 2.0, run by two women, one of whom is Tunisian-American, and was financed through crowdsourcing; *Ladies First* was produced by the *New York Times*; and both of the *475* films were financed independently, through crowdsourcing and private funds. As the credits in Hind Bensari's film indicate, her film is a "documentary produced by independent contributors to the *475: Break the Silence* fundraising campaign." Nadir Bouhmouch's film, which was funded through crowdsourcing and private contributions, is more confrontational in this aspect, and

its opening credits include the statement, "this is not a commercial film" and, at greater length, "This film was made illegally, as a form of civil disobedience to call for freedom of expression of the arts in Morocco and as a stand against the state regulation of filmmaking through the Centre Cinematographique Marocain."

8.4 Conclusion

Over the history of Moroccan filmmaking, conditions have changed in ways that now provide greater encouragement for documentary. Whereas during the colonial period and first decades of independence film production was limited, liberties were very restricted, self-censorship dominated, and documentaries promoted the government's agenda, as we move into the 1980s and 1990s, fiction film production expanded significantly, and fiction filmmakers began to take on social issues. Then, in the 2000s and 2010s, as fiction film production expanded even further, with more films having a socially critical nature and a good number criticizing the repressive political practices under King Hassan II, documentaries began to appear with greater frequency and to increase their impact on audiences.

A few significant documentaries were made in Morocco during the first decades of independence, but documentary's growing importance over the past 10–15 years, and especially since 2011, can be attributed there, as elsewhere, in part to what the Tunisian critic Kamel Ben Ouanès sees as "the consequence of a conjunction of two concomitant factors: the historical event and the democratization of the act of filming" (153).[62] To which we should add the growing role of television (both satellite and national programming), the Internet, crowdsourcing, and international coproductions and financing. As a result, in the Moroccan context we have seen excellent, gripping documentaries produced over the recent period, a few of which I have referred to directly. Many of these films highlight social injustice or call attention to aspects of Moroccan life that are largely hidden from public view or challenge systematic failings in the legal system or in public attitudes and behavior. But documentary filmmakers so far, as is true for their fiction counterparts, have largely adhered to the strict limits on critical expression with regard to the monarchy, religion, and the country's territorial integrity.

Documentary filmmaking in Morocco, while certainly now embarked on a very vigorous and productive period, also finds itself at a critical

juncture, for many reasons, and a number of questions need to be asked. Among them are:

1. What will be the role of the State and the CCM as the state institution that controls the film sector in promoting documentary and filmmaking in general? Already today we see the CCM's role and functioning being challenged on several fronts, and not only by independent filmmakers who choose to raise money independently, to film without official authorization, to distribute outside official circuits, and even to voice criticism of the CCM in their films, as in the film *Basta* discussed earlier. The CCM is also being challenged by professional organizations such as both the *Chambre marocaine des producteurs de films* (CMPF) and the *Chambre nationale des producteurs de films* (CNPF), which see the CCM as not providing the leadership necessary to reverse negative trends in film-going and the state of theaters, not sufficiently promoting national film production and the construction of national film culture via festivals and other film presentations,[63] and not working to update outdated legal and administrative procedures.[64]
2. How will television and other home-viewing systems and internet access affect documentary? While the Moroccan television station 2M has played an important role over the past decade in the promotion of documentary, both television and movie theaters are challenged by the Internet, social media, and personalized viewing. To what extent will we begin to see in Morocco, as we are seeing in some other countries, a splintering and growing division within national populations fostered by social media and individualized viewing rather than the family or group practices that are characteristic of television and theater-going?
3. Related to both of these issues are questions having to do with the role of the State in promoting—or discouraging—cultural practices and behavior that promote free expression, social cohesion, artistic creativity, and progressive attitudes.

There are no easy answers to these questions but, in the dynamic and unpredictable Moroccan political, social, and cultural context, there are good reasons to hope that, in the medium and longer term, documentary will continue to grow in importance, provide Moroccans with ways

of exploring their own as well as other societies, and help them develop creative and fruitful ways to respond to contemporary challenges. For now, exploring some of the issues that both documentary filmmakers and anthropologists confront in the areas of relations with subjects, freedom of expression, and shaping a convincing final product has helped us—or at least has helped this anthropologist—appreciate to a greater degree the sensitivity, innovative capacity, creativity, and commitment required for the documentary filmmaker to carry his or her project through to a successful conclusion, and we have seen Moroccan documentary filmmakers already providing us with a number of rich and eloquent films where such qualities have been clearly in evidence.

Notes

1. In general, since around the turn of the 21st century, documentary films have constituted an important part of commercially released films. Here are somewhat random samples: over a 17-week period from April to August 2016, of the 260 films commercially released in New York City, 67, or just over 25%, were documentaries; over the four months from September through December 2017, of the 225 films commercially released in the same city, 63, or 28%, were documentaries. And in the United States' largest documentary festival, held in NYC in November 2016 over a one-week period, more than 250 documentaries were shown.
2. Each of these experiences led to a book: *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question* (1982); *Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East* (1991); and *Beyond Casablanca: M.A. Tazi and the Adventure of Moroccan Cinema* (2004). In *Moroccan Dialogues* I challenged directly the assumptions of traditional anthropology which, with some rare exceptions, tended to treat the people being studied as objects, in line with a supposedly scientific perspective, and to deprive them of agency—an approach that had its roots in the anthropology of the colonial period. In *Moroccan Dialogues* I attempted to challenge this approach by recounting events occurring in a particular community and then presenting extended dialogues with Moroccans about those events. The aims, in part, were to restore agency by allowing individual Moroccans to explain how they viewed their lives and how they responded to the challenges they faced, as well as to produce an anthropology that was fundamentally self-critical with regard to the anthropologist, anthropology as a discipline, and the society from which the anthropologist comes.
3. Araib and Hullessen 12 (qtd. in Mesguich), cited in Dwyer, "Beyond" 122. By the time of the French invasion of Morocco in 1907, the first

film showing had already taken place, in 1897, at the Royal Palace in Fez, projecting films by the Lumière brothers.

4. Ginsberg and Lippard also provide a useful historical and geographical perspective on this.
5. "quantativement réduite et irregulière…," "qualitativement digne d'intérêt et extrêmement bonifiante."
6. "L'évolution du documentaire a été poussée par les *printemps arabes*…. [B]eaucoup de réalisateurs ont pris conscience de ce que permet le documentaire: avec tout ce qu'ils avaient filmé en Tunisie, en Lybie, en Égypte, en Syrie et même au Maroc, ils pouvaient désormais faire connaître ce qui était en train de se passer dans leurs pays." The quotation continues, "What really touches me, is that we can say we have a new generation of documentary filmmakers and, among them, many are women" ("Ce qui me touche vraiment, c'est qu'on peut dire que l'on a une nouvelle génération de réalisateurs de documentaires et que parmi eux, nombreuses sont les femmes") (ENTRETIEN avec Ahmed Boughaba par Elisabetta Ciuccarelli, www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/afkar/afkar-48/Cinema%20Maroc%20Ahmed%20Boughaba%20afkar48fr.pdf/, p. 70).
7. "Un impérieux désir de filmer s'est emparé du documentariste tunisien, professionnel ou amateur…. La révolution tunisienne a été filmée dans ses menus détails, presque en direct, par des opérateurs excités, motivés, mobilisés par un élan d'enthousiasme, celui d'une citoyenneté qui rencontre enfin, après des années de plomb et de marginalisation, le champ propice à son éclosion" (Ben Ouanès 153).

   These images—of demonstrations, sit-ins, social movements, and so on—are also furnishing material, in the Tunisian case, for constructing a history of these past few years, and recently we have seen the creation of such an historical project at *l'Institut supérieur d'histoire de la Tunisie contemporaine* (ISHTC), at Manouba, with the title, "Films et images sur la révolution tunisienne: sources futures pour l'historien?", with its centerpiece Hichem Ben Ammar's film, *La Tunisie vote. Chronique d'une journée particulière* (www.lapresse.tn/11112016/122798/films-et-images-sur-la-revolution-tunisienne-sources-futures-pour-lhistorien.html).
8. The site referred to here is: www.arf-tunisie.com.
9. "ses lettres de noblesse." See Samira Dami's article: www.lapresse.tn/10112016/122692/le-sacre-du-documentaire.html.
10. "...émergente, elle est en cours de structuration,"…"un véritable outil d'éducation populaire…un outil d'éveil civique, d'émancipation,"…"participer au développement social que connaît le Maroc."…[T]he main themes were "les droits de l'enfant, l'émancipation de la femme, les économies alternatives et solidaires, la protection de l'environnement" (www.rfi.fr/afrique/20101113-maroc-fida-doc-montre-pas-tout).

Nouzha (sometimes written Neziha) Drissi, born in Morocco in 1962, began working as a producer in France in 1996 and thereafter produced some 50 documentaries for French and European television. She died in 2011 at the age of 49, as the result of an automobile accident in Casablanca.

11. "Le Maroc semble faire figure d'exception dans la région. Un écosystème presque complet de l'industrie documentaire se dessine peu à peu au cœur du royaume, portée à la fois par des réalisateurs, des producteurs, des distributeurs et des organisateurs de festivals."…[T]he Moroccan television station 2M…"impulsant en 2015 les premières rencontres professionnelles autour du documentaire. Elle tient également le pari audacieux depuis 2012 de diffuser tous les dimanches un documentaire en prime time, en dépit des risques de procès." Le réel en images: le documentaire au Maroc en 2015 (no author indicated), 18 Feb. 2016, lioumness-magazine.com/le-documentaire-lexception-marocaine/.
12. In my second book, *Arab Voices: The Human Rights Debate in the Middle East*, I explore how Moroccans, Tunisians, and Egyptians concerned with human rights—lawyers, political militants, religious thinkers, journalists, human rights activists—articulated this notion and worked to carry out their views. In the course of this study, we begin to appreciate the complexity and diversity of thinking and acting in the area of "human rights," and we hear many challenges to the ways in which "human rights" has been used by former colonial and other Western powers as a political tool to promote particular policies that only rarely and in very limited ways aim to benefit the target country.
13. "Depuis 2012, l'avance sur recettes octroyée par le Conseil cinématographique marocain (CCM) peut être allouée à des documentaires, deux maximum chaque année" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
14. "...un fonds du CCM de 15 millions de dirhams va être alloué spécifiquement pour soutenir la production de documentaires de la culture hassanie et sahraouis" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
15. The amounts awarded for 2015 involved preproduction aid to nine films (7,550,000 dh), post-production aid to one (500,000 dh), scenario rewriting to four (300,000 dh), and scenario writing to one (60,000 dh) (Bilan cinématographique 2015, pp. 26–27).
16. "Est-ce qu'il s'agit d'un fond pour soutenir l'effort de guerre? Les créateurs sont libres et doivent l'être" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
17. Among such events receiving no CCM festival support in 2014–2016 were the *Festival international du film court et du documentaire de Casablanca*, now in its 11th edition, and *La Nuit Blanche du cinéma et droits de*

l'homme, held annually in late spring/early summer in Rabat and now in its 5th edition (Bilan cinématographique 2015, 55, idem. 2016, 65–68). The CCM publishes a summary of developments in the film sector, usually publishing this within the first few months following the year being covered. When I cite, for example, "Bilan cinématographique 2016," this refers to the summary for 2016 published in early 2017.

18. The figures for 2016 are from Bilan cinématographique 2016, 33 and for 2015 from Bilan cinématographique 2015, p. 21.
19. "On voit des producteurs convaincus, se lancer dans la défense d'une création documentaire marocaine. Il s'agit de signaux très positifs, mais il faut une implication plus forte des autres instances, doublée d' une volonté plus affirmée de soutenir ce genre," 20 Oct. 2015, 15:10, www.e-taqafa.ma/dossier/hind-sa%C3%AFh-documentaire-pour-vocation.
20. "La télévision joue un rôle très important car le public fait le lien entre le documentaire et la télévision" (ENTRETIEN avec Ahmed Boughaba par Elisabetta Ciuccarelli, Winter 2015–2016, www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/afkar/afkar-48/Cinema%20Maroc%20Ahmed%20Boughaba%20afkar48fr.pdf/, p. 71).
21. "Depuis 2012, elle diffuse tous les dimanches un documentaire en *prime time*. Il s'agit soit de films produits 'maison', soit de coproductions ou bien d'acquisitions."…Reda Benjelloun…, "Nous sommes l'unique chaîne du pourtour sud à avoir une case documentaire en prime time, hors *Al Jazeera* et *Al Arabiya*."…[P]ublished figures indicate that, "Depuis le lancement de cette case, cent documentaires ont été diffusés, avec une moyenne d'audience de 15%, certains films atteignant les 25% voire 34% comme *Qu'est-ce qui a tué Arafat* par exemple" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
22. "...ont été amplement accueillis par le public marocain, avec plus de deux millions d'audience et plus de 20% de la part d'audience," 1 June 2016 (www.fcat.es/fr/une-fenetre-ouverte-sur-le-cinema-dauteur-marocain/).
23. "…a rassemblé producteurs, réalisateurs, diffuseurs, et autres professionnels du monde du documentaire marocain et étranger. Toute la journée, les intéressés, convaincus de l'intérêt et de la nécessité des documentaires, ont débattu sur les moyens à mettre en œuvre pour favoriser sa production et sa réalisation auprès du grand public" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
24. "Ali Essafi: "…beaucoup de chemin a été parcouru en dix ans. Mes deux premiers films, je les avais proposés à 2M gratuitement et je n'ai même pas eu de réponse"; Habib Attia: "Je suis admiratif de ce qui se passe au Maroc. En Tunisie, au niveau institutionnel, il n'y a rien" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).

25. "Si on enlève le Qatar et l'Arabie Saoudite, le Maroc est le seul pays arabe ayant mis en place un cercle vertueux de documentaire: il y a des réalisateurs, des producteurs, des écoles, des festivals, un financement public et une case dans la première chaîne de télévision nationale…. [E]n Algérie et en Tunisie, par exemple, il y a d'excellents réalisateurs et une structure de production, mais pas de distribution, pas de case documentaire," 1 June 2016 (www.fcat.es/fr/une-fenetre-ouverte-sur-le-cinema-dauteur-marocain/).
26. The Attia quote is taken from an article in the Moroccan revue *Tel Quel*, which argues the following: "Go look for foreign financing or remain with the local? […] Abroad, the funds come from Europe but also from the Gulf countries. But Morocco finds itself in competition with other countries. As the Tunisian producer Habib Attia remarked, some manage to do efficient lobbying, like Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, or Egypt." ("Aller chercher des financeurs étrangers ou rester dans le local? […] A l'étranger, les fonds viennent d'Europe mais aussi des pays du Golfe. Mais le Maroc se trouve là en concurrence avec d'autres pays. Comme le fait remarquer le producteur tunisien Habib Attia, certains arrivent à faire du lobbying efficace, comme le Liban, la Palestine, la Jordanie ou l'Égypte […] De toutes manières ces fonds provenant de l'étranger ne doivent être pris qu'en complément. Au moins la moitié doit être assuré localement pour crédibiliser les projets.") (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
27. The study, *Census and analysis of film and audiovisual co-productions in the South-Mediterranean Region 2006–2011*, was published in 2012 and is available on the following website: euromedaudiovisuel.net/p.aspx?t=news&mid=21&cid=8&l=fr&did=770. The quotation is from page 42. The study, carried out by the EU-funded Euromed Audiovisual Programme, focused on the countries of Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia. The Euromed Audiovisual Programme declares its aim to be "enhancing sustainable transfer of knowledge and best practices through a wide set of trainings, capacity building of both professionals and national authorities and networking activities. Euromed Audiovisual considers the film industry not only as creative means of cultural expression and intercultural dialogue, but also of socio-economic development of the region" (www.euromedaudiovisuel.net/p.aspx?t=general&mid=85&l=en, accessed 22 September 2017).
28. After the 2011 elections which brought the PJD to power (in a coalition with several other parties), the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Communication were brought together under a Minister of Culture and Communication. However, the two functions remain distinct under the new minister and the CCM, which had been located within the Ministry

of Communication and is now located within the Department of Communication, which exists alongside the Department of Culture, both within the Ministry of Culture and Communication.

29. In particular, *A Revolution in Four Seasons* (Jessie Deeter, US/Tunisia, 2016, 90 min.), *475: When Marriage Becomes Punishment* (Nadir Bouhmouch, 2013, 63 min.), and *475: trêve de silence* (Hind Bensari, 2013, 43 min.).
30. An example of this is the filmmaker Hichem Lasri's distribution of a number of video creations on YouTube, such as "Caca Mind," "Bissara Overdose," "No Vaseline Fatwa" (www.jeuneafrique.com/384175/culture/maroc-web-series-de-hicham-lasri-dezinguent/).
31. More recently, Bouhmouch has been doing reporting and photography for Al Jazeera English (see www.aljazeera.com/profilénadir-bouhmouch.html). He has also written pieces on well-known online publications challenging establishment views and promoting social justice, such as his article on the 2016 COP22 Marrakech meeting, published on *Open Democracy* (www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/nadir-bouhmouch/morocco-green-for-rich-grey-for-poor), titled "Morocco: Green for the Rich, Grey for the Poor," which challenges Morocco's image as a promoter of "green" initiatives, arguing that there cannot be "climate justice" without social justice.
32. "Les ciné-clubs ont besoin d'une autre façon de travailler. Aujourd'hui les nouvelles générations ont le téléchargement et des chaînes de télé qui proposent 24h/24h des films. Pour cette raison, les ciné-clubs doivent rechercher un nouveau moyen de transmettre la culture cinématographique. En premier lieu, il faut travailler avec les jeunes dans les écoles et dans les lycées. De plus, quand on présente un film, nous ne pouvons pas le faire à la manière des années soixante-dix, c'est-à-dire en donnant des informations sur le réalisateur et sur le film au public, présenter le film, le projeter et après organiser un débat. Il faudrait pouvoir analyser le film en profondeur plus que par le passé, tout en sachant que la technologie nous permet d'arrêter, de voir et revoir certains passages. Il faudrait faire une sorte de classe de cinéma avec les participants" (ENTRETIEN avec Ahmed Boughaba par Elisabetta Ciuccarelli, www.iemed.org/observatori/arees-danalisi/arxius-adjunts/afkar/afkar-48/Cinema%20Maroc%20Ahmed%20Boughaba%20afkar48fr.pdf/, p. 72).
33. "...des projections ambulantes qui se tiennent dans les quartiers périphériques d'Agadir" (18 Feb. 2016, lioumness-magazine.com/le-documentaire-lexception-marocainé).
34. For the year 2016, the CCM supported 2 festivals in category A (the *Festival international du film de Marrakech* and the *Festival national du film* [Tangiers] for a total of 16.75 million dirhams), 5 in category B (including

the *Festival du film documentaire sur la culture, l'histoire et l'espace Sahraoui Hassani*, for a total of 7.4 million dirhams), 10 in category C (FIDADOC is in this category, for a total of 3.2 million dirhams), and 32 "manifestations cinématographiques" (1.97 million dirhams). There are, in addition, some 25 "manifestations cinématographiques" taking place throughout the country that received no financial support from the Fonds d'Aide (Bilan cinématographique 2016, up from 14 in 2015 [Bilan cinématographique 2015]). At least one festival, the Rabat Festival of Short Films, was canceled in 2016 after the CCM significantly reduced its contribution.

35. "ruche," meaning "beehive, hub of activity".
36. 18 Feb. 2016, lioumness-magazine.com/le-documentaire-lexception-marocainé.
37. www.3continents.com/fr/produire-au-sud/pas-a-letranger/agadir-2016/.
38. The baccalaureate is the exam at the end of secondary school.

    "Le constat est unanime: il existe un réel besoin de producteurs de documentaires, spécialisés dans ce genre. Mais malheureusement, il n'existe pas encore de formation spécifique. L'école de Marrakech propose bien une filière production, mais non consacrée au documentaire…. Et le manque de formation se ressent aussi auprès des réalisateurs. 'Ceux qui rentrent à l'école ont des manques en culture générale, en culture artistique, en méthodologie de travail…Il faudrait revenir à la classe de seconde', explique Vincent Melili, directeur de l'École supérieure des arts visuels de Marrakech."…Ali Essafi…, "Il faut une éducation à l'image beaucoup plus tôt avant le bac" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
39. "...est tellement proche des personnes filmées qu'on a l'impression qu'il les couvait depuis longtemps en lui et qu'il n'attendait qu'un hasard heureux, une opportunité…[to film them]" [107]…. Ben Ammar is "anthropologue plus que sociologue, cherchant surtout la vérité profonde de l'être humain and le regard qu'il a de lui-même ou celui qu'ont de lui les autres…" [123]…[F]or Ben Ammar, "[l]a pratique documentaire ne relève pas, par conséquent, chez lui, d'un archivisme patrimonial ou d'un éxotisme nostalgique, mais d'une philosophie de vie faite d'amitié et de partage" [107].
40. *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014).

    These risks are not restricted to documentaries: participation in fiction films can also radically alter one's life, as we see in the controversy that has followed Nabil Ayouch and Hicham Moussoune, related to the latter's role in Ayouch's *Ali Zaoua* (2000) and several subsequent roles

for Ayouch's *Ali N' Productions*; or in the widely publicized difficulties Loubna Abidar encountered after appearing in Nabyl Ayouch's *Much Loved* (2015).

41. *475: trêve de silence* (Hind Bensari, Morocco, 2013, 43 min.).
42. I remember thinking that in this way I would be shielding the community from what might become visits from tourists or even interest from the tourism industry, a fear confirmed sometime later when the book received a positive recommendation in *The Rough Guide to Morocco*, where the authors commented, "Fascinating series of recorded conversations with a farmer from a village near Taroudannt, ranging through attitudes to women, religion and village life to popular Moroccan perceptions of the Jews, the French, and even the hippies. Well worth a look" (Ellingham and McVeigh 327).
43. These films follow in the tradition of *Days of Democracy* (1996) by the Egyptian Attiyat Abnoudy and, more indirectly and more distant historically, the Algerian Assia Djebar's *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1979).
44. www.nytimes.com/2016/10/29/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-women.html?_r=0.
45. "*Sawt*, meaning 'voice' in Arabic, is an oral narrative and animation documentary project highlighting the experiences of female activists in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Rhana Natour and Tamara Shogaolu, documentary filmmakers and researchers living in New York and Los Angeles respectively are co-directing the project" (www.hollingscenter.org/bridging-the-gap-between-oral-history-and-documentary-filmmaking-in-the-middle-east/).
46. ElFani explains this in a short 14-minute documentary, *ElFani présente Laïcité*. It should be noted that ElFani's film, originally titled *Ni dieu ni maître*, was the target of demonstrations upon its initial showings in Tunis and ElFani subsequently changed the film's title to *Laïcité Inch'Allah*.
47. Among the first films to address this theme, shortly after King Hassan II's death, were: *Jawhara* (Saad Chraibi, 2003), *Mille mois* (Faouzi Bensaidi, 2003), *Face à Face* (Abdelkader Lagtaâ, 2003), *La Chambre noire* (Hassan Benjelloun, 2004). Many others have followed since.

    The institution charged with overseeing and enforcing permissible expression, The Supervisory Film Commission (*Commission de contrôle des films cinématographiques*), is composed of one representative each from the CCM, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Communication, distributors, and theater owners. Censorship is imposed infrequently on Moroccan films (although with greater frequency on foreign films—one example was the film *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (Ridley Scott, 2014), much awaited by theater owners who hoped it would revive sagging attendance, but it could not be shown because, according to the CCM, "the film…

showed god as a child in a scene where he communicates the revelation to Moses" ("le film personnifie dieu en un enfant dans une scène où il communique la révélation à Moise" (telquel.ma/2014/12/27/mustapha-el-khalfi-derriere-linterdiction-dexodus_1427935). So, censorship remains a threat and self-censorship is a widespread phenomenon.

48. In September 2016 Gueddar requested protection from the Moroccan police—he had been receiving death threats following his republication of a cartoon by the Jordanian cartoonist Nahed Hattar, that had been used as a pretext for Hattar's assassination in Jordan in the summer of 2016. See telquel.ma/2016/09/26/le-caricaturiste-khalid-gueddar-demande-une-protection-policiere-apres-des-menaces-de-mort_1516002.
49. "On peut regretter tous ces cas que vous avez cités, mais la démocratie ce n'est pas de l'anarchie…le FIDADOC souhaite créer de nouvelles fenêtres, mais il y a des sujets que moi et mon équipe nous n'avons pas envie de toucher, non pas par crainte, mais la culture documentaire est quelque chose à créer. Amener des films un peu comme le bâton pour se faire battre, je n'en vois pas l'utilité. Il y a des thématiques sur lesquelles la population n'est pas prête, plus que le gouvernement ou les autorités…L'Etat doit pousser à l'émancipation, mais les mentalités prennent du temps. Le FIDADOC n'a pas envie de créer la polémique. Il a envie de faire avancer les choses, que le citoyen s'empare d'une idée pour faire avancer la société. Il a envie que le citoyen prenne une place active au sein de la société et ne pas créer une polémique pour créer la polémique" (www.rfi.fr/afriqué20101113-maroc-fida-doc-montre-pas-tout).

    Several fiction films have been particularly controversial and have not been allowed to be shown in Morocco. In addition to Taia's *l'Armée du salut* (2013), more recently there was Nabyl Ayouch's widely publicized *Much Loved* (2015), which the Ministry of Communication ruled could not be shown in Morocco because "The film undermines the moral values, and dignity of Moroccan women, as well as all the image of Morocco" (www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/05/159322/morocco-bans-nabil-ayouchs-film-on-prostitution/). The film led to physical threats against both the filmmaker and members of the cast, particularly against Loubna Abidar who played the role of a prostitute and who, for her own safety, moved from Morocco to France.
50. "Cela fait partie du documentaire de remuer les idées et d'agiter un peu" (telquel.ma/2015/01/09/comment-defendre-documentaire-marocain_1429500).
51. next.liberation.fr/cinema/2013/02/05/manifestation-a-tanger-contre-un-documentaire-sur-les-juifs-marocains_879531. *In Tinghir-Jérusalem* the filmmaker, who was six months old when his Muslim parents took him from Tinghir, Morocco to France, returns to his natal village, meets people who talk about how Muslims and Jews lived together in harmony,

and about the efforts carried out by Israel's representatives to encourage Jewish emigration from Morocco, and goes to Israel where he meets people who emigrated from Tinghir and who talk of how much they miss Morocco.

For one example of Moroccan criticism, see Sion Assidon's "Coup de gueule" (telquel.ma/2013/03/01/tinghir-avec-ou-sans-jerusalem_560_6424). One might also argue that the film's showing Muslim–Jewish relations in Morocco as completely harmonious portrays the past in an idealized, romanticized manner. The film, coproduced by 2M with two French production companies (*Berbère Télévision* and *Les Films d'un Jour*), won prizes—perhaps in part because of its distortions—in Morocco (Best First Film at the 2013 Tanger National Film Festival, Best Film at the 2012 Rabat International Film Festival for Human Rights) and internationally (France, Israel, Switzerland, and the United States).

52. Human Rights Watch, *The Red Lines Stay Red: Morocco's Reforms of Its Speech Laws*, 2017, www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/morocco0517_web_1.pdf, p. 2.
53. This list is adapted from Aufderheide 10–11.
54. Khélil, *Abécédaire*: "Le documentariste est un créateur qui [122] avance à tatons, n'étant sûr de rien initialement, mais qui, petit à petit, saisit parfaitement de quel genre de personnes il a précisément besoin pour faire son film." At the same time, he counsels against too much flexibility, spontaneity, saying, "Le pire dans un documentaire, c'est de se laisser tenter par le spontenéisme, c'est-à-dire de se fier uniquement à la caméra, de la laisser gambader à sa guise et de s'en tenir aux plans larges qui ne font que creuser l'écart entre les filmeurs et les filmés. Il faut reposer le trépied, découper, trier et prendre tout son temps pour capter le frétillement d'un désir, un fou rire qui se perd dans la nature ou la photogénie de l'environnement [114]."
55. Hichem Ben Ammar makes a similar argument when, in discussing his use of a Belgian woman behind the camera in his documentary *Rais B'har*, he says, "…the unusual presence of this 'camera woman' led to extremely positive reactions, contrary to my fears…I feared that the difference between cultures would be an obstacle" ("…la présence insolite de cette 'camera woman' a suscité des réactions extrèmement positives, contrairement à mes appréhensions…Je craignais pourtant que la différence des cultures ne soit un obstacle," quoted in Khélil, *Abécédaire* 114).
56. "...de quels pouvoirs et subterfuges use-t-il pour faire parler ses personnages avec autant d'intelligence et de profondeur? A quel rituel d'initiation et de prestidigitation recourt-il pour les pousser à accoucher de ce qu'ils ont de plus intime et de plus intense en eux? La plupart de ses protagonistes, repêchés de la banalité de la vie quotidienne, apparaissent soudainement à l'écran comme des lettrés, des philosophes, de pédagogues ou des

cinéphiles. Que fait-il de spécial pour amener les plus réticents d'entre eux à se mettre à sa disposition et à se conformer aux orientations qu'il veut donner à ses modes d'intervention sur le réel?"

57. "Cette programmation du hasard est séduisante, mais problématique aussi. Il y a, vraisemblablement, au tournage…[ceux] qui ont refusé d'être filmés…ou qui se sont montrés très peu enthousiastes à l'idée de le faire…Ces rejets et ces réticences font partie intégrante du sujet du film et il n'y a aucune raison, au nom d'une esthétique de raffinement et du propre, de les occulter. Il s'avère de plus en plus que le véritable scénario d'un film documentaire, c'est son processus de fabrication…mais aussi et surtout des difficultés et des frictions qui surgissent…. [I]l est nécessaire de courir le risque de la brancher aussi sur cette composante fondamentale du matériau documentaire: ses brouillons et ses impuretés."
58. We might also ask what other variables might influence the viewers' perceptions—lighting, ambient noise, etcetera. Here it is useful to recall how Errol Morris, in his path-breaking *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), went to great lengths to ensure that he interviewed the prime murder suspect in exactly the same conditions as he interviewed other individuals, even though this was not the natural environment, so that the viewer would not be influenced by changes in the setting.
59. "…ne peut être poursuivi que sur la plainte des personnes ayant qualité pour demander l'annulation du mariage et ne peut être condamné qu'après que cette annulation du mariage a été prononcée" (Moroccan Penal Code 1962, www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=190447).
60. Such attitudes are not of course limited to Morocco and there are resemblances between the statements in Bensari's film and the reasoning offered by some women who voted for the successful Republican candidate in the 2016 U.S. presidential elections and who defended his sexual harassment of women and his misogynistic remarks by saying, in effect, "that's just the way men are" (see www.nytimes.com/2016/12/09/opinion/sunday/what-women-really-think-of-men.html).
61. telquel.ma/2012/04/05/Cri-du-coeur-Moi-JF-Marocaine-violee_516_1992.
62. "...la conséquence d'une jonction de deux facteurs concomitants: l'événement historique et la démocratisation de l'acte de filmer" (Ben Ouanès 153).
63. Here let us recall the canceling of the Rabat Festival of Short Films after receiving sharply reduced CCM support. Also, the fact that no Moroccan films were included in the main competition at the 2016 FIFM occasioned great criticism and disillusion among the broad Moroccan film community and, partly as a consequence of this controversy, the FIFM was not held in 2017—the first year since its inauguration in 2001 that it missed a year.

64. See quid.ma/culturéla-chambre-nationale-des-producteurs-de-films-denonce-l-incompetence-du-ccm and www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2016/10/27/cinema-maroc-sauvetage_n_12669030.html?utm_hp_ref=maghreb.

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CHAPTER 9

Affective Alternatives to Sectarianism in Maroun Baghdadi's Documentaries

Jeremy Randall

"I think it's linked to the fact that those who make films do not take the time to live. It is of course linked to the fact that cinema and life are so intertwined that we ask ourselves to what extent we make up real life and live the cinematic. The two are too strongly intertwined." So states Lebanese director Maroun Baghdadi (1950–1993) in Wim Wender's 1982 documentary *Room 666*.[1] Baghdadi asserts that cinema and reality have a symbiotic relationship and critiques directors who act as outside observers. The intertwining process he describes here is a testament to how he understands cinema as a space that is informed by and informs his political positions. For him, there is no firm distinction between the lived and filmed; therefore movies can be a strong vehicle for expressing political views (Mismar). Cinema is a particularly powerful tool for conveying political messages because it can resonate on multiple registers. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), Baghdadi's early documentaries conveyed his adherence to Marxist revolutionary politics,

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which necessarily involve violence to overturn capitalism. His later documentaries called for peaceful reforms, as he felt change via armed struggle was no longer feasible. Due to the declining safety and limited artistic possibilities within Lebanon, Baghdadi relocated to France in 1984. There, working for a Franco-Lebanese film production company subsidized by the French state which set stipulations, he produced narrative films about the war's human costs.[2] After the war, Baghdadi returned to Beirut to film *Zawiya aw dhakira lil-nisyan* [*Angles or Memory for Forgetfulness*], a retrospective on the war. This film was to be a coda to his wartime Beirut works before seeking a career in Hollywood. Baghdadi never made the film, however, as he fell to his death in his home's stairwell (al-Aris 2013, 180).

Baghdadi, French-educated and Christian by birth, remains one of Lebanon's most celebrated but little-studied directors. In his youth, he joined the Communist Action Organization in Lebanon (CAOL) and studied political science at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut (Bagdadi 82). After a stint being a reporter at *L'Orient-Le Jour*, Baghdadi pursued higher studies in Paris in 1971 but dropped out to study filmmaking at the *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques* (IDHEC).[3] He returned to Lebanon in 1973 and initially worked for state television. Baghdadi's groundbreaking *Beyrouth ya Beyrouth* (1975) was the first Lebanese film to acknowledge sectarianism's societal effects (al-Ariss, "An Attempt" 31–32). Sectarianism, in the Lebanese context, is a modern contingency assembled from a set of discourses and practices defining and guiding personal, communal, and political identities and conditions through religious sects. In this context, Baghdadi's early documentaries such as *Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt* [*Greetings to Kamal Jumblatt*], *Ajmal al-ummahat* [*The Most Beautiful of All Mothers*], and *Kulna lil-watan* [*We Are All for the Nation*] optimistically read the war as a revolutionary moment. Baghdadi's later films, however, such as *Hamasat* [*Whispers*] and *Harb 'ala al-harb* [*War on War*] lament the war's futility and advocate for peaceful reforms. In all cases, Baghdadi's documentaries, with their focus on personal and structural experiences of injustice, avoid reductionist sectarian models for Lebanese society. Instead, Baghdadi explores how injustice is a manifestation of the colonial capitalist mode of production (Soueid 11).

At the start of the Lebanese Civil War, Baghdadi left state television and produced propaganda and documentaries commissioned by Lebanese

leftist parties to support their political agenda and raise the class consciousness of the exploited classes. Many of his extant early documentaries were funded by various leftist groups such as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and the CAOL. These early documentaries focus on the inroads which the Lebanese Communist Party had made with the working class, stress the need to ally with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and argue for resisting the 1978 Israeli invasion. Baghdadi's documentaries analyze the socioeconomic and political injustices suffered by the poor and aim to galvanize the masses. Echoing Eisenstein's theory of montage as a means for shaping thought, Baghdadi uses montage to express political beliefs on multiple registers. (See Eisenstein 43–45.) His fusion of images and politically-oriented music, for example, engages audiences on multiple levels, with affective cues facilitating emotional and cognitive responses.[4]

Lebanon's cinema industry began in the early twentieth century and by the 1960s was producing a steady stream of movies. Even though Lebanon was a major cultural center of the Middle East before the war, its prewar cinema remained in Egypt's shadow. Generally, Lebanese cinema from the 1950s until the 1970s followed Egyptian trends, featured Egyptian Arabic, and used Egyptian actors.[5] During that time, mainstream Egyptian cinema was often escapist fantasy or thinly veiled propaganda (Gordon 41–42). Under President Gamal Abdel Nasser, films espousing Arab socialism were common, but under his successor, Anwar El-Sadat, the state clamped down on such political cinema (233). Having been trained in France, Baghdadi's influences and styles differed from those of sentimentalist Egyptian cinema (al-Ariss, *al-Hulm* 232). Baghdadi shared some influences with "al-sinima al-badila" [alternative cinema], an avant-garde wing comprised of leftist Arab filmmakers which arose out of the 1972 First Damascus Film Festival for Young Arab Cinema.[6] This movement's works were part of a wider leftist trend in documentary filmmaking during the 1970s that agitated for revolution and included films such as Godard's 1974 *Ici et ailleurs* [*Here and Elsewhere*], Patrico Guzman's 1975 *The Battle of Chile*, and Wakamatsu Koji and Masao Adachi's 1971 *Sekigun-PFLP sekai sensou sengen* [*Red Army-PFLP Declaration of World War*]. In Lebanese cinema, politically engaged documentaries like those of Baghdadi have been influential despite being a niche genre.

Lebanese documentary filmmaking and politically oriented films arose during the 1960s, but directors often avoided sensitive issues due to

local laws. Initially, these works were linked to the burgeoning Palestinian movement. Christian Ghazi's (1934–2013) documentaries supported Palestinian and leftist causes, but only one of Ghazi's films from the 1970–1980s escaped destruction during the civil war (Hamdar). Ghazi valorizes Palestinian resistance through an innovative usage of montage and sound, which shifted the aesthetics of Arab documentary toward the avant-garde (Marks, *Hanan* 111). Likewise, Heiny Srour documented the revolutionary uprising in early 1970s Oman as a way to assist the leftist struggle there. Srour's and Ghazi's films, alongside others, influenced Baghdadi's documentaries via their usage of embedded footage and radical messaging. Concurrent with Baghdadi were Jean Chamoun and Mai Masri, whose films are activist works focusing on Lebanese and Palestinians issues (Rastegar 161). Yet, the state persistently limits the scope of documentaries by censoring topics it deems injurious to the nation. Randa Chabal Sabbagh's satiric 1998 work *Civilisées* [*A Civilized People*], about crass Beiruti bourgeois women, faced significant cuts in order to be screened in Lebanon (Khatib 35). Lebanese directors have thus tended to avoid engaging overtly political or sectarian topics in films intended for mainstream distribution (al-Ariss 1996, 31–32). Rather, a supposedly apolitical iteration of Lebanon, centering around tropes such as mountain villages, Baalbek, and mercantile professions, have dominated, as seen in Michel Chiha's writings, Said Aql's poetry, and the state's tourism advertisements. Promulgated by a largely Maronite elite, this romanticized imagining of Lebanon focuses on Mount Lebanon, a fetishized Phoenician past, and an advanced capitalist state.[7] This idealist version of the nation is also found in aesthetic practices other than cinema, such as the Rahbani Brothers' musicals performed at the ancient ruins of Baalbek.[8]

Lebanese films have been mostly inaccessible for scholars, which has resulted in a dearth of scholarly analysis. What little scholarship there is often focuses on Palestinian revolutionary politics in Lebanon or reflections on the civil war. Lebanese right-wing cultural productions remain understudied due to a dearth of works produced by reactionary groups such as Kata'eb, with the exception of political posters and some political songs.[9] Baghdadi's films, with the notable exception of those he made in France, were not publicly available until a left-oriented film club in Beirut, *Nadi le kol el nass* [Club for All People], undertook an extensive restoration process that started in the late 1990s.[10] These restored films are part of a wider movement to refashion the leftist counterculture of the 1970s and 1980s in order to accommodate the contemporary imaginary. Insofar

as that leftist culture contested sectarian reductionism for the purpose of explicating socioeconomic injustices rampant in Lebanon, such productions provide an analysis that eludes hegemonic discourse in sociopolitical and academic circles. Baghdadi's earlier work, as I contend, showcases the ways in which socioeconomic injustices can become expressed as sectarianism while arguing for revolution to overcome such problems.

9.1 Affect's Intensities and Sectarianism's Role in Subject Formation

In cinema, affect plays an important role in generating reactions, but there is debate as to whether affect is independent of other cinematic components such as narrative and dialogue. Jörg Schweinitz argues that stereotypes delineate the possibilities for emotions and affects generated by cinema.[11] Others such as Lee Carruthers contend that temporality in film functions as a heuristic device to structure feelings generated by movies (14–17). Expanding upon and departing from Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi, Laura Marks, and Steven Shaviro, affect, as I use it, is the overdetermination of symbolic systems whether they be cinematic, discursive, or ideological.[12] Even though Baghdadi and his milieu do not engage with Deleuzian philosophy, Deleuze lays out a theoretical framework to analyze films through affect even when the films themselves are not in conversation with his ideas or politics. In this context, affect is not a purely mimetic response to visual and auditory stimuli in film but a profusion of reactions to what is on screen.[13] I argue that affect precedes cognitive processes and provides intensity for emotion and discourse, because affect exploits structures of feelings to generate responses (Mankekar 14–15; Massumi, *Parables* 30). Film scenes can make Marxist dialectics relatable, and affect provides depth to those scenes. The affective moments depict the contradictions of the state and society as relatable personal experiences and aim to direct Baghdadi's audiences toward embracing the left's platform of rejecting capitalist exploitation, the Israeli occupation, and sectarian politics. In these instances, Baghdadi uses affect to destabilize structures of feelings that quantify and relegate injustice, inequity, and inequality as part of societal formations such as sect and community. Therefore, sectarianism is positioned as a constantly rescripted contingency that must be read as part of a historical moment. An encounter and its affective potential have the possibility of being verbalized as sectarian, which Baghdadi challenges by instead portraying them as injustice.

Baghdadi's documentaries do not have a conventional narrative structure and rely upon emotion and dialogue for generating affect that resonates with audiences (92).[14] Affect, in this usage, provides a stronger resonance for the central theme of each film, which Baghdadi presents emotionally and intellectually. Less interested in a linear narrative, Maroun Baghdadi uses sound and images to trigger affective responses that project his idea of inequality as a multifaceted experience. Injustices faced by all Lebanese primarily due to their class rather than sect are presented in montage sequences combining speech, music, and imagery that impact viewers on multiple registers by their simultaneous dialectical and affective quality. Much like Eisenstein, who saw cinema as a unique tool for embedding political lessons and developed various montage techniques which would resonate affectively on different levels, Baghdadi uses a variety of cinematic techniques to overdetermine the symbolic systems of spectators (Eisenstein 72–83). Recently, Laura Marks has noted that affect captured on film is felt by audiences and makes them receptive to demagogic messages by overwhelming intellectual capacities, as seen in fascistic works (*Hanan* 145). I contend that, apropos of Baghdadi, foregrounding the affective register of cinematic experience can, by contrast, elucidate the constant critical renegotiations of subjectivity and community experienced by peoples. In Baghdadi's work, sectarianism's entrenchment is resituated as a political-ideological structure susceptible to dissolution and change, whereupon Baghdadi relies on affect to render potent his ideological messages but never subsumes the intellectual component of his argument by making it purely affective.

The historiography of Lebanon often prioritizes sectarianism as the lens to analyze the state and its peoples. Such a focus excludes inequality's pivotal role in formulating sectarianism and the left's attempt to dismantle it. Until recently, Lebanese historiography treated sectarianism as a constant rather than the result of historical forces. In the nineteenth century, capitalism and nationalism modulated power structures that fostered nascent forms of sectarianism that would later become the model for state governance (Akarli 189–192). Ussama Makdisi's seminal study, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, provides a groundbreaking framework for contextualizing how each iteration of sectarianism arises from a discrete conjuncture. Makdisi argues that Lebanese sectarianism, following the 1860 Mount Lebanon violence, arose out of the interplay between Ottoman reforms, European meddling, modernization, and regional economic changes.[15] Sectarianism's historical emergence is also analyzed in recent works such

as Max Weiss' *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, which examines how the incorporation of Ja'fari courts into the state apparatus during the French Mandate sectarianized the Lebanese Shi'i community (29). I engage with Makdisi's and Weiss' frameworks to contextualize how sectarianism in the war is the result of its political and economic determinants.

Rather than framing the war as the result of sectarianism, I argue that the conflict is better understood as the violent effect of individual and collective experiences of social, economic, and political injustices. Certain studies prioritize sectarian logics to rationalize the fractious political landscapes in Lebanon. Additionally, many studies of the civil war astutely note the rise of sectarian politics but do not account for the conditions of inequality underpinning much of the violence. For example, Michael Johnson's study of clientele relations before and during the war notes how the Sunni elite in Beirut retained power by co-opting leftist political ideas, while shifting the focus away from critiques of socioeconomic conditions (131). As the historiography now stands, inequality is an extension of sectarianism rather than a mutually constitutive formation that informs sectarianism and is in turn modulated by sectarianism.

9.2 Revolutionary Violence as Redemptive Change

Lebanon in the early 1970s was a site of contradiction, with an ever-richer bourgeoisie set against a marginalized working class, and a staid political elite vying with increasingly influential radical Palestinian movements.[16] Against this backdrop, unions organized strikes and student groups staged massive protests calling for change to a social, economic, and political system viewed as inherently unjust (Rabah 15–16). Following the April 13, 1975 'Ain al-Rummana bus massacre perpetrated by Kata'eb fighters against Palestinians, the civil war started with a fractious yet united left against a recalcitrant right (Traboulsi 183; Salibi 97–98). The left suspended its internal differences to fight for enacting economic justice and dismantling the sectarian state apparatus (Jumblatt 115). The LNM and its ally, the PLO, made gains against the right-wing Lebanese Front (Traboulsi 201–204). By early 1976, the left gained near-complete control of Lebanon, yet Syria intervened in 1976 against the PLO and the LNM. Syria and the right turned the war into a stalemate; the assassination of the LNM's leader, Kamal Jumblatt, in 1977, presumably by Syria, strained the leftist alliance (ibid. 195–204).

Despite the setback caused by Jumblatt's death, Baghdadi still believed in the LNM's revolutionary project. Baghdadi's 1977 documentary, *Tahiya li-Kamal Jumblatt*, records a rally held in memoriam for Kamal Jumblatt on the May Day following his death. The rally commemorated Jumblatt's life and asserted the need for revolution by projecting a united front of national and international leftist parties. The rally is comprised of two affectively different components: a carefully choreographed interior replete with formal memorial speeches for Jumblatt, and a kinetic youth rally outside that expresses through music and chants solidarity with Jumblatt's political project. In addition, the film includes archival footage of Jumblatt expounding upon his political theory: his speeches and funeral photos remind viewers that Jumblatt may be dead, but his ideas are alive.

Throughout the film, Jumblatt's erudite speeches on societal ills produced by capitalism are intercut with the energetic battle cries of his supporters challenging hegemonic sectarian logic. When Baghdadi filmed the rally, the Lebanese left had begun to splinter due to differing goals. These older speeches emphasized the need to challenge Lebanon's bourgeois formation. As Jumblatt's messages on the necessity of revolution appear on film, images of the dead and of Israeli tanks are inserted. In this respect, the film fosters associations between depictions of trauma and Jumblatt's description of an unjust state on a visceral level. A montage of corpses overlaid with Jumblatt's message serves to insist that the cost of war is not in vain. The ironic coupling of dissonant images and sounds renders Jumblatt's speech more effective and affective, as the image-track proffers the apparent opposite of what Jumblatt intones. The injustices and sufferings in the present affectively prepare the viewers to appreciate Jumblatt's rhetoric. By coupling these discrete components, Baghdadi seeks to transfer the affects generated by one set to the other. This dialectical technique, recurrent throughout Baghdadi's films, juxtaposes shocking images of oppression with leftist politicians publicly offering solutions to injustice. Jumblatt's warnings against sectarianism remind the viewer that the leftist cause is noble and imminently necessary. The fleeting images of Israeli tanks in Lebanese territories link affectively the LNM's struggle against the Lebanese system with the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian liberation movement, an ally of the LNM, is treated as part of the wider emancipatory project, with the film arguing that sectarianism, the capitalist state, and Zionism are an assemblage of injustice which a united Lebanese and Palestinian front needs to overcome.

Baghdadi's editing climaxes with a speech by Yasser Arafat. All of the speeches featured in the film highlight Kamal Jumblatt's anti-sectarian, nationalist, and internationalist politics, but Arafat's rhythmic vocal techniques burst with energy upon the utterance of certain words, such as *thawra* [revolution] and *'arabiyyan* [Arab], and he repeats them in varying cadences to tap into the pathos of the masses. Arafat argues that Jumblatt's anti-sectarian ideals transcend his death, and asserts that Zionism, sectarianism, and right-wing isolationism are rooted in shared, unjust conditions because each one creates materially worse conditions such as occupation, wartime destruction, and exploitation of the working class. Jumblatt discusses how Lebanon's political structure allows for a small cabal to control the country and enrichen themselves, which becomes connected to his other political messages. The film heightens Arafat's exuberance with shots of Kamal Jumblatt's son, Walid, crying and crowds cheering as Arafat's speech, along with the documentary, reach an emotional apex. The interlinked images and sounds are replete with affective, emotional, and discursive resonance and connotations that push the diegetic audience into sustained revolutionary fervor. Despite the left's setbacks, Baghdadi evidently believed in the persistence of Jumblatt's message (Fig. 9.1).

Indeed, following Arafat's speech, a distraught Walid Jumblatt asserts that the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the LNM will renounce neither the Palestinian cause nor revolution. The film avoids any critique of the PLO or the LNM's tactics, so as to maintain a united front. Walid, through an emotional appeal, calls for continuing revolution during the transitional phase which has purportedly followed his father's death. While Walid is speaking, the film cuts to exuberant crowds chanting in support of his political message. Walid's cracking voice and stuttering perform a weaker iteration of Arafat's call for unity. Even though Walid's speech was a reflexive performance, Baghdadi positions the speakers tonally within the film as being on the same level. Baghdadi does this to evade critiquing the movement even as it was starting to fracture. As the film ends, Kamal Jumblatt reiterates the continuing need for revolution. Using Jumblatt's speeches on class conflict is Baghdadi's way of articulating how sectarian discourse misleads the working class. *Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt* thus projects the political message that the capitalist state can be overthrown, while later works show actualized struggle against injustices.



Fig. 9.1 *Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt* (Maroun Baghdadi, Lebanon, 1978)

The movement against inequality was fraught, and it cost the lives of luminaries like Kamal Jumblatt alongside proletarian fighters from various leftist groups. In his 1978 documentary, *Ajmal al-ummahat*, Baghdadi focuses on militia members fighting to dismantle the sectarian system that impoverishes them and their communities. Produced with a small budget provided by the CAOL and filmed in southern Lebanon, Baghdadi pays tribute to the fallen by focusing on multifaceted resistance to inequality (92). Photographs of the fallen set to Marcel Khalife's song, also entitled *Ajmal al-ummahat*, evoke the beauty of sacrifice for a just cause. Khalife's music serves as a cue for mourning these young men, whom the film identifies solely as Lebanese. Baghdadi interviews numerous families about how they remember the fallen before the war, during the war, and after their deaths, without indicating in which battle they were killed. Interspersed with the testimonials about the dead appear clips from interviews with a small brigade of militia fighters who are preparing to attack an Israeli outpost. Here, through montage, Baghdadi explicitly

associates resistance to Israeli occupation with other leftist causes. Baghdadi has these narratives of economic injustice spurring these young men to fight take place on the eve of a fight against the occupying army. Both causes, economic and military occupation, are treated by the fighters as iterations of oppression. The father of one soldier quotes his son: "I'm ready to fight any force in the world on the condition that I and the poor live an honorable life." For the Lebanese left, then, the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon is positioned as part of the systematic oppression rooted in capitalism.

Unlike *Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt*, *Ajmal al-ummahat* concentrates on the revolutionary proletariat's fight against economic marginalization. The interviewed families, insisting on a shared Lebanese identity and the importance of the Lebanese working class, describe how they suffer from economic malaise and the Israeli occupation. Baghdadi interviews these families in their homes in order to humanize the dead—a style he will also utilize in his later works such as *Hurub saghira* and *Kharaj al-hayat*—rather than reduce them to fighters only. Each family frames its son's involvement in the resistance with the same leftist rhetoric used by the film's militia fighters, thus reinforcing the film's revolutionary message. One family recounts how its son stated that, "the situation is unbearable, and the laborers should claim their rights." Set against a stark household interior, the scene shows how socioeconomic hardships cut across religious lines. Prewar Beirut's prosperity did not extend to the rural working class who remained impoverished and many migrated to the outskirts of the capital in an attempt to ameliorate their conditions (Traboulsi 161). In this pathos-laden context, economic inequality and armed resistance resonate with the historical audience, which would have recalled the failure of peaceful attempts at reform. The revolutionary sentiments of the film climax with the families describing how their children died fighting for the nation and against inequality.

Likewise, many of the fighters self-identify as part of the proletariat resisting the Israeli occupation. Unlike the interviews with family members, these interviews with fighters are conducted in exterior settings, near the front lines. The various interviewed combatants have distinct background narratives but proclaim similar reasons for engaging in armed resistance. Baghdadi splices their interviews together in order to frame the leftist militia as united as Lebanese, regardless of sect or birth. Their stories are cut together to make discrete elements by different individuals form a singular narrative of oppression and desire to overthrow an

unjust system. One fighter explains that he joined the Lebanese Communist Party's militia because he comes from the *fellahin* [peasant] class, while another one states that his family's inability to pay for his education drives him to fight against economic injustice. Hence, the occupation becomes another facet of the capitalist system that harms already marginalized Lebanese. These militia members reflect upon how they, too, might become martyrs, and the film ends with their marching off to the sound of cocking guns, while images of the fallen flash across the screen. This final series of shots draws the spectator closer to the fight itself, enabling Baghdadi, through editing, to expound upon the need for revolution.[17] Baghdadi underscores his argument through the scenes of militias seeking to liberate Lebanese territory and of families talking about their experiences with capitalist exploitation. The recurrent theme is the cinematic visualization of a unified mass working together for revolutionary change.

With leftist unity faltering and sectarian alternatives emerging, Baghdadi links class inequality to the occupation of south Lebanon as a shared experience of injustice. In reaction to the Israeli occupation, he seeks to create an intercommunal leftist formation dedicated to preserving the nation. In the 1978 *Kulna lil-watan*, Baghdadi indicates how the people of the South remain united against the Israeli occupation. Baghdadi interviews various people and films memorials, soldiers, and sites of destruction in an effort to construct a singular point of emotional encounter for people suffering from the unjust Lebanese state and the Israeli occupying force which has marginalized them. Baghdadi's interlocutors use an array of terms such as *al-sulta* [authorities/power], *al-dawla* [state], *al-hukuma* [government], *za'im* [elite], and *mukhtar* [mayor] by which to signify those who should be held responsible for these ongoing conditions. The interviewees' diverse language expresses how oppression is experienced in varied ways.

In one interview, Baghdadi films a Shi'a cleric who argues that religious freedom has been a means by which to distract the oppressed Shi'i from revolting. The cleric understands that the state oppresses the South economically by limiting protests against the price of tobacco and neglecting needed infrastructure projects.[18] He states, "All we can do is recite the *ta'ziyya*…that is what led us to this situation. It is not about Israel. Before Israel, there was [state] oppression."[19] The cleric criticizes performative rituals such as the *ta'ziyya*, because the state fosters a sectarian identity for the Shi'i to placate the masses and hide the injustices it perpetuates

against the South. Baghdadi, through the cleric, expresses his desire for the masses to confront socioeconomic injustice rather than subscribe to facile sectarian logic. Baghdadi's sympathetic framing of the cleric reminds the viewer affectively that the religious are not the enemies of class struggle. Rather, it is the shared position of marginalization that can unite the masses.

Much as Baghdadi's *Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt* relies on Arafat's oratorical skills to emphasize the need for revolution, *Kulna lil-watan* features a speech by Arafat during which the camera pans over bombed-out ruins and scenes of people evacuating the South. "Welcome to fighting, brothers. We're celebrating… the enemy lies before you, the sea behind!" Arafat thunders. The film continues to stress the revolutionary imperative at a time when right-wing forces had aligned themselves with the Israeli invasion. Arafat's speech rallies flagging revolutionary spirit through repetition and vocal styles rooting injustice within the fight against occupation. Baghdadi splices Arafat's speech with images depicting the plight of the Lebanese under occupation, with the intention of encouraging resistance to Israel. Such resistance cuts across sectarian and national identifications and courses through the film as a relatable experience which many Lebanese feel as the dual pain of occupation and class alienation.

The injustice of occupation disrupts the already fragile economic conditions of the South, whereupon promoting revolution through arms is a logical reaction to such conditions. Thus, Baghdadi finishes *Kulna lil-watan* by depicting the deleterious effects of the Israeli occupation: the film ends with shots of children stating, "I am from the South," juxtaposed with shots of Israeli soldiers, Israeli tanks, and close-ups of Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uniforms that focus on the acronym, "*Tzahal*"—the Hebrew acronym for the IDF. The juxtaposition of the two series of actions interconnects them as affects of fearfulness, as the children state their identity while the looming threat of Israel interrupts their visibility: Israel has become a determinant of southern Lebanese subjectivity. As the film concludes, a group of children attempts to sing the Lebanese national anthem, "We Are All for the Nation," but repeatedly stumble. Each child glances at the others intuitively while they are trying to sing the anthem, an affective occasion which Baghdadi appropriates as a symbolic means by which to represent the fragility of the response to Lebanon's problems. The scene alludes to the lack of a shared revolutionary and nationalist movement in alleviating poverty and confronting the Israeli invasion.

9.3 Peaceful Resolution as Revolutionary Praxis

Kulna lil-watan was Baghdadi's final explicitly revolutionary work funded by leftist groups, as his later documentaries shifted toward less overtly political topics. His newer documentaries lamented how the Lebanese civil war impoverished the masses and worsened their conditions. Baghdadi never renounced his leftist politics, but he found ways to express them without agitating for revolutionary change. However, his work still sought to elicit affective responses. His works evoke the pain resulting from the war and his hope for a peaceful future. The 1980 documentary, *Hamasat* [*Whispers*], is a reanalysis of his former conviction in the war's revolutionary potential (Wazan 94). In this documentary funded by Bank Med, Baghdadi argues for reconciliation and peace rather than armed revolution. *Hamasat* shifts Baghdadi's focus from revolution to the shared trauma of the war and the necessity of healing the nation's wounds. Working with the poet Nadia Tueni (1935–1983), during the interlude between the Israeli and Syrian interventions and the 1982 Israeli invasion, Baghdadi interviews people across Lebanon who identify as Lebanese before identifying with regional or sectarian assignations.

For Baghdadi, Nadia Tueni, who was largely apolitical and married to the centrist newspaper editor Ghassan Tueni, provides a break from the more aggressively political figures of earlier films. Her opening monologue on the destruction of downtown Beirut situates *Hamasat* in terms which suggest that earlier revolutionary fervor no longer resonates. Before she can register the devastation in her sight, the camera captures her affective recoil from the ruins. Persistent close-ups of her face serve as an affective means by which to express her visceral reaction to the sense of loss generated by the destruction of downtown Beirut (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 106–107). Her rationalization of the devastation parallels the families in the earlier films who recount their sons' deaths, when the inescapable and unstructured intensity that is affect becomes partially transmuted into emotive expressions of grief. The camera lingers on the extensive destruction of downtown Beirut to emphasize the worsened conditions of the Lebanese, but here Baghdadi does not agitate for revolution like he did in earlier works. The montage technique used prominently in the earlier films is replaced with a series of long-shots lamenting Lebanon's predicament. Baghdadi's change of technique reflects his shifting stance toward the war and the conciliatory message he wanted in turn to circulate. Resultantly, the affects Baghdadi sought to elicit from long-takes

became a precursor to his messages focusing on the collective character of Lebanese identity and the war's deleterious economic effects (Fig. 9.2).

Early in the film, Nabil, a press photographer, accompanies Nadia Tueni as someone who articulates a distinct perspective of simultaneously suffering and benefiting from the war. Tueni muses about the destruction of downtown Beirut, and the camera shifts to focus on Nabil who discusses his sense of self as the camera pans over various Lebanese urban street scenes. His long monologue at the start of *Hamasat* cements the fact that socioeconomic conditions determine identity. Nabil describes how the war made it possible for fighters as well as himself to project particular personas utilizing fantastical displays of masculinity. Depending on the situation, Nabil is a photographer who captures the horror of the war in a role that shifts qualitatively when he leverages his income to become a "Don Juan." The former personality depends upon the market for war photos, while the latter relies upon consumption. Nabil in his narration critiques the sensationalism of the Lebanese war in international media



Fig. 9.2 *Hamasat* (Maroun Baghdadi, Lebanon, 1980)

and its fetishization of violence.[20] Men not benefitting from the war economically try to accrue social capital, according to Nabil, by hiring him to photograph them holding large weapons. In effect, the farcical qualities of the war become a performance for young men that signifies a cynical reconfiguration of the idealized fighters featured in Baghdadi's earlier documentaries.

Rather than interviewing militia members, in *Hamasat* Baghdadi focuses on civilians speaking directly about the social, economic, cultural, and political problems generated by ongoing conflicts. Playwright and musician Ziad Rahbani, however, breaks from the standard practice in *Hamasat* of downplaying the war's continual horror. Rather, Rahbani's bleak outlook personifies the left's pessimism, as its political factions became increasingly overpowered by overtly sectarian parties. Sectarian violence assisted in fracturing the left's unity and co-opted the left's anti-capitalist struggle. For Rahbani, a critic of the status quo pervading Lebanon, the war engendered a larger problem of destructive chaos misunderstood as absolute freedom. Baghdadi interviews Rahbani, who states, "Telling it like it is, is actually very difficult. There is a state of armed chaos, a state of non-democracy unlike those who think there is freedom. It is freedom due to discord rather than productive freedom." His strident attacks against capitalism in plays such as the 1974 *Nazl al-surur* [*Happiness Inn*] and the 1976 *Bi-l-nisba li-bukra shu?* [*So What about Tomorrow?*] are consigned to a past, with its revolutionary class potential (Stone 100). Like Baghdadi, Rahbani expresses disgust with the war and contends that violence is not redemptive.

The failure to change the unjust socioeconomic structure of the Lebanese state fosters Rahbani's despair. For Rahbani, the war had lost its potential for overthrowing the capitalist state. He says, "Honestly, there's a state of confusion that we're all going through. I don't exactly know how things are happening anymore. A while ago, when the war was taking place, there was more clarity than the times that we're going through now.... I see no future." During the initial stages of the war, Rahbani embraced a revolutionary, anti-sectarian platform regarding the state's socioeconomic failings. The war became an occasion by which to upend Lebanon's exploitative system. Yet the war's persistence and the left's fragmentation led a disheartened Rahbani to approach the current situation in a manner redolent of Baghdadi. In effect, the war broke the left's revolutionary position (Traboulsi 129; Scott 108–109). In place of revolutionary orientation, despair about a static present and impossible

future infused the left's engagement with the social. As a strategy for moving beyond this impasse, Baghdadi proposed peaceful solutions, as he believed that the conditions in Lebanon at the time no longer justified armed struggle.[21] This position becomes most apparent in Baghdadi's decision to use a concert he filmed at the American University of Beirut to close *Hamasat*, as this event, with its music and carefree youth, exuded hope, in contrast to the despair permeating much of the film up to that point.

Maroun Baghdadi only made one more documentary after *Hamasat*. Trying to escape political factionalism, he worked briefly for the Lebanese government during the Amin Gemayel presidency (Wazan 94). Even though Gemayel's administration was right-wing and sectarian, Baghdadi produced neither right-wing nor sectarian cinema. His 1984 *Harb 'ala al-harb* [*War on War*] was commissioned by Lebanon's Interior Ministry and dwells upon the war's material destructiveness. *Harb 'ala al-harb* avoids sectarian tropes by instead recounting how the war impoverished all Lebanese and calling for economic revitalization across the nation. The ongoing calamity and its effects on Lebanese society, infrastructure, and industry are detailed by the film's narrator. Contending that the war undermines national unity by entrenching sectarian conflict rooted in socioeconomic inequalities, Baghdadi understood the war as an ongoing calamity with repercussions even after violence ceases: "Tomorrow's Lebanon is like today's Lebanon… Half of Lebanon produces nothing today, not their food nor their living," states the film's narrator. This focus on the war's humanitarian cost reflected Baghdadi's new attitude toward conflict. His optimism regarding redemption shifted to a defeatist position due to the fragmentation of the country by sectarian warlords, the instability of the Lebanese lira, and elites extracting wealth from the masses to maintain and expand militias (Dib, *Warlords* 246). The corruption of the warlords who enriched themselves and fueled the conflict resulted in Baghdadi rejecting the war's potential to be redemptive. By 1984, Baghdadi considered the war an unmitigated disaster. Economic deprivation had ravaged the country, but Baghdadi did not seek to assign blame to any party or sect. Rather, he asserted the ecumenical view that the people, despite all their differences, are first and foremost Lebanese united by class and must move past the war.

As much of *Harb 'ala al-harb* focuses on the economic and social ramifications of the war, the human toll becomes its thoroughgoing refrain. Baghdadi's camera lingers on injured children, functioning as an affective

recoil that directs the audience toward peace. For the most part, individuals featured in the film do not have a voice and instead represent the destructive effects of the war. The narrator states, "Seventy percent of the martyrs were under twenty years." In this instance, the spectator is meant to process the way in which the war ravaged the future economic vitality of the nation, through exposure to visceral portrayals of injured children.[22] These images of children jolt the viewer in a way that destroyed buildings cannot. Their burns and infections represent the injustice of the war upon all Lebanese people. The pain cuts across religious and geographic groupings but primarily falls upon the youth, which robs the future nation of a productive population. For Baghdadi, it becomes imperative in this context to find a cinematic means by which to represent a rectification of the economic situation, as inequality generates and perpetuates war. Without doing so, the war continues to manifest through sectarian violence and further destruction of the economy.

Focus on the shared suffering of the body politic is a goal of Baghdadi in order to reject reductionist sectarian logic. Toward the end of the film, cuts occur to the Israeli occupation of the South as a means of signifying a nation united against a common threat. The narrator states, "Enemy soldiers treat us like strangers on our own lands." This statement is linked with images of Israeli soldiers and tanks at checkpoints harassing Lebanese people. Moreover, the music in this scene shifts to a heavy staccato soundtrack with a faster beat than the more languid, mournful music that otherwise dominates the film. Unlike Baghdadi's previous films, *Hamasat* does not call explicitly for armed struggle against injustice. Rather, it focuses on the deleterious effects of the occupation on Lebanon and agitates for peace. Resistance to Israel remains part of Baghdadi's call for revolutionary change, but infighting among the Lebanese is no longer stressed. Israel's occupation precedes any possibility of rebuilding and recovering. Ultimately, the Israeli occupation fell within Baghdadi's call for unity around the Lebanese state as a viable entity to protect the nation and allow it to prosper. Even though the militant call is gone, liberating Lebanese territory would be a step toward assuaging those who suffer from rampant inequality.

As the camera pans over abandoned factories, schools, and streets, a sense of loss permeates the screen. The spaces depicted in the film retain affects of their past lives and exude a melancholic energy (Navaro-Yashin 174). Yet this destruction did not need to be permanent. The film ends with a section of downtown Beirut being reconstructed, as the narrator

states that the Lebanese must work toward a hopeful future. The narrator calls for the Lebanese people to rebuild the nation, not for potential corporate profit but in order to move past the war's destruction. Baghdadi despised Solidere, the postwar reconstruction company founded by former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, as its aim was to enrich an elite while gesturing patronizingly toward national unity.[23] Rather, Baghdadi viewed rebuilding as a means for directing the populace to create a better future for all through productivity. Thus, he ceases his valorization of the militia fighter and instead honors economically productive members of society. The movie's idealized representation of reconstructing the symbolic center of the country's division is a model for ending sectarian divisions and alleviating economic crisis. By the same token, Baghdadi's vision for Lebanon's future did not fit that of the Gemayel administration, and *Harb 'ala al-harb* was banned by the state (Wazan 94). Following the film's censorship, and facing condemnation from former allies for trying to extricate himself from the overtly political, Baghdadi left for France ("Missing Link"). *Harb 'ala al-harb* was Baghdadi's final film fully made in Lebanon. Although his remaining work was produced in France, Baghdadi would revisit Lebanon cinematically, and maintained his leftist politics against the neoliberalism that came to dominate the postwar period.

9.4 Conclusion

The use of affect in Baghdadi's cinema provides an opportunity to analyze the mutability of Lebanese identity and to consider how the Lebanese left engages with people on multiple levels. By this strategy, Baghdadi's films translate abstract ideas into quotidian personal experiences, in a manner not contingent upon sectarian formations. Baghdadi uses the overarching issues of injustice and inequality to frame the war, and subsequent manifestations such as sectarianism are seen as byproducts of the war's socioeconomic roots. It was the persistence of the war and the retreat of the left from the direction of war which triggered a shift in Baghdadi's outlook and manifested in his documentary oeuvre. The left's setbacks led Baghdadi to reject violence as redemptive. Throughout his later documentaries, Baghdadi captured the affective disorientation and suffering triggered by the war and showed how it exacerbated inequality. Rather than calling for revolutionary violence, Baghdadi called for a revolutionary rebuilding and peace that could help the nation escape sectarian logics and improve living standards.

Even though Baghdadi suffered an untimely death, his filmmaking technique continues to influence Lebanese cinema. Works such as the 2006 *Under the Bombs* and the 2008 *Je veux voir* [*I Want to See*] tackle sensitive issues through their loose narrative structures and fictional personages set in real-life scenarios. Blurring boundaries between narrative fiction, documentary, and life itself, these works respond to the aftermath of the 2006 Israeli war against Lebanon and its impact on individuals and communities. These documentaries in the style of Baghdadi revisit the trauma inflicted upon the South as an experience shared locally, nationally, and internationally. Ending without concrete resolution, they disregard narrative closure and open cinema onto spaces of experiences with which to mold spectator response. With a new generation coming of age that has access to Baghdadi's works, it remains to be seen if his documentaries will become even more influential in the now burgeoning Lebanese cinema.

Notice

Maroun Baghdadi's documentaries are now available through *Nadi lekol el nas* as DVDs, as follows:

Baghdadi, Maroun, dir. *Ajmal alummahat* [*The Most Beautiful of All Mothers*]. 1978; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013. DVD.
Baghdadi, Maroun, dir. *Harb 'ala al-harb* [*War on War*]. 1984; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013. DVD.
Baghdadi, Maroun, dir. *Hamasat* [*Whispers*]. 1980; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013. DVD.
Baghdadi, Maroun, dir. *Kulna lil-watan* [*We Are All for the Nation*]. 1979; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013. DVD.
Tahiya Kamal Jumblatt, directed by Maroun Baghdadi. 1977; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013. DVD.

Notes

1. *Room 666*, directed by Wim Wenders (1982; Troy, MI: Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2006), DVD.

   Spelling used in this chapter adheres to a simplified IJMES orthography except in cases where the author uses an alternate spelling in non-Arabic sources or there is a predominant spelling in English.
2. Baghdadi's films before his time in France, with the partial exception of *Hurub Saghira*, received only local funding. Stipulations set by the French

government mandated an overwhelming percentage of dialogue in a film to be in French. Baghdadi subverted this by having his actors speak in a highly Lebanized form of French (Khatib 40–4).

3. IDHEC has since been renamed *École nationale supérieure des métiers de l'image et du son* (*La Fémis*) (Dib, *Tarikh* 403; Zaccak 124).
4. I draw upon Gilles Deleuze's contention that affect provides the "emotional fullness" and the "shock effect on thought" in cinema and especially for montage in the Eisenstein mode. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 158.
5. Muhammad Suwayd argues that the war allowed Lebanese cinema to escape its constant linkage with Egypt (Suwayd 54; also Khatib 23).
6. The Damascus Film Festival resulted in a loose network of Arab directors creating politically committed works such as Tawfik Saleh's *The Dupes* (Syria, 1972). Many of the directors trained in France created a cinema which distinguished itself from the sentimentalism predominant in mainstream Egyptian cinema. See Al-Ariss, *al-Hulm* 32; Mismar; and Shafik 154–155.
7. Although the popular Lebanese singer Fairuz would serve as the protagonist in many of the Rahbani Brothers' plays, she was also a symbol of the Palestinian resistance with her array of songs on the Palestinian cause and Jerusalem. During the war, her avoidance of public appearances limited any political party or movement from claiming her as a supporter. See Stone 23–25.
8. Baalbek and its ruins would serve as a national symbol of a distinct Lebanon separate from its Arab neighbors (Stone 14–29).
9. Kata'eb is a major Maronite-dominated right-wing party modeled after European fascist movements. Lebanese Forces, the largest of these parties in later years of the war, was a more reactionary offshoot of Kata'eb.
10. Much of the French, English, and Arabic scholarship on Baghdadi focuses on his last major film, *Kharaj al-hayat* [*Out of Life*], which gained international attention after winning the Jury Prize at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival. Founded in 1998, *Nadi le kol el nass* initially screened films but in the mid-2000s shifted toward film distribution and making previously unreleased films accessible. *Nadi le kol el nass* has sought to restore and republish the oeuvre of several leftist Lebanese directors such as Maroun Baghdadi, Jean Chamoun, Mai Masri, and Burhan Alawiyeh. Currently, the organization holds fragments of several unreleased Baghdadi films but is unable to reprint them until complete copies surface.
11. Jörg Schweinitz argues that stereotypes provide poignancy and narrative to films as sociopsychological functions and as autonomous constructs. Likewise, stereotypes precede and delineate affective responses in the viewer (Schweinitz 30, 46–49).
12. By building upon this scholarship, I am integrating critiques made by Wetherell and others who argue that Massumi and those influenced by

him have rendered affect too abstract. Therefore, like Wetherell, I treat affect as intimately connected with discourse rather than as a separate and autonomous experience. See Massumi, Notes xvi–xvii; Massumi, *Parables* 27–28; and Wetherell 55–57.

13. Ruth Leys and others have sharply critiqued the positioning of affect as an autonomous reaction to sensation. See Leys 447–449; Marks, *The Skin* 164; Shaviro 52–54.
14. Baghdadi uses affect, emotion, and speech rather than a story to heighten the feelings generated by his films even though his feature films do use plots to provide an affective experience.
15. In 1860, a brief period of pitched fighting between Druze and Maronite villagers in Mount Lebanon took place as shifting power structures saw the weakening of provincial rulers and the rise of a capitalist landowning class (Makdisi 197).
16. The major Palestinian movement is the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as members. At times, these groups differed in political outlooks but in the early years of the war, they entered into an alliance with the Lebanese National Movement. In his works Baghdadi never explores the multifaceted politics of the Palestinian movement, instead focusing on a general pro-Palestinian position. See Sayigh 362–363.
17. Marks compares two films on 'Ashura' to show how affect can be deployed to achieve differing goals politically through deft use of ideology (Marks, *Hanan* 140).
18. Tobacco strikes in south Lebanon were an ongoing issue before the war. See Abisaab and Abisaab 113–115.
19. The *ta'ziyya* is a component of the 'Ashura' commemoration of Hussein's death.
20. This is more explicit in his film *Hurub saghira* when American reporters are shown staging violence. *Hurub saghira*, directed by Maroun Baghdadi (1982; Beirut: Nadi lekol el nas, 2013), DVD.
21. Baghdadi's shift towards desiring peace remains linked to the trajectory that the Lebanese Civil War took. He views its onset as a moment replete with possibility of enacting change but from his vantage point in the early 1980s, Baghdadi looks back at the early war as one that quickly dissolved into internecine conflicts. His second feature film, *Hurub saghira*, is his attempt to revisit the early years of the war by looking at the internal conflicts people face and also his general view of the war as a futile exercise.
22. The destruction of infrastructure and commercial space ensured that any economic recovery would take longer, while also shifting trade and commerce to other places (Dib, *Warlords* 143–150).
23. Baghdadi's last meal was with the reporter Judith Miller and Rima Tarabai who was the spokesperson for Rafic Hariri. During this dinner, he clashed

with the spokesperson over his hatred of Solidere and her taunting him over the left's defeat (Miller 243–244).

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BLOC IV

Political Aesthetics of State and Revolution in Egypt

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CHAPTER 10

Terrorism and Kebab: The Administrative Grotesque and the Egyptian Chaplin—Notes on Humor, Resistance, and Biopolitics

Isabelle Freda

10.1 Introduction

Director Sherif Arafa's 1992 comedy *Terrorism and Kebab* [*Al-irhab wal Kabab*] is rich in cultural and political meaning, both as it applies to the specificity of the contemporary Egyptian history it reflects, and also as it conveys the commonality of the plight of "the everyman," across borders and regions, in the face of what we might initially describe as the Kafkaesque "governmental machine" (Agamben 4),[1] but which, eventually, we must acknowledge as the blight of global capitalism as it has intensified since the fall of the Berlin Wall.[2] The film's overdetermined articulation arises, in part, from its status as a comedy set in contemporary 1990s Cairo, and, more specifically, within what is overtly presented as a malfunctioning state; its generic frame allows it more latitude to convey the

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negative elements of a society no longer able to cohere, a society drained of the public sphere which, as Hannah Arendt has asserted, is vital for politics to survive (Hansen 121).[3] In this sense *Terrorism and Kebab* is a quintessential example of the usefulness of comedy, as it can give expression to both crisis and dissent, however inchoate, in this instance eluding President Hosni Mubarak's censors in yet another display of the fecklessness of most censorship, whether governmental or otherwise.[4] The comedic turn—notoriously elusive when subjected to the query "How does it work?"[5] or even more: "What does it mean?"—is already complex on the level of words alone, but add the layers of signification provided by the cinematic frame and it becomes capable of philosophical nuance as well. It is in this spirit that I approach the wildly popular Egyptian comedy, *Terrorism and Kebab*, by reading it "seriously"—in Arendt's sense of the term—and doing so alongside Charlie Chaplin, the great master of comedic disruption of the status quo.

Humor cushions to the degree that it enables a resistance that, like Chaplin's, can outwit and outmaneuver the blunt force wielded by the state. The film's topic, while narratively innovative (terrorism and kebab!), also maintains a conventionally star-based focus on the famous Egyptian comic Adel Imam, whose various roles in the film are mere masks: a father, yet without any but a functional role to his children; a husband, yet browbeaten and unfulfilled; a worker at the state waterworks, yet without dignity. Even as an owner of a kebab stand, his authority is barely evident. He has neither leisure nor opportunity for a broader human sociality, and certainly no time or space for politics. Imam is the "everyman,"[6] the little man whose only relationship with the government is not as a citizen but as a supplicant, if you will: he is dogged in his persistence in trying to obtain a government certificate which will allow him to move his children to a better school, but the nature of the certificate is irrelevant, as it is the impossibility of successfully navigating a permanently dis-functional administrative apparatus that is important for the film—as for this analysis (see Hamam 209n18). Lost is any semblance of the civic dimension and the rights of the individual in relation to the state; Imam's character, Ahmed, exemplifies a version of what Giorgio Agamben describes as "bare life"—here life devoid of political agency: each time he tries to get the sought-for authorization he is blocked, and his journeys, over several days, around and in the buildings of the government complex, are absurd failures. The official he needs to sign his form, the incompetent administrator he seeks, is nowhere to be found—not, for example,

in the luxury hotel bathrooms Ahmed searches (notable in their proximity to but complete separation from the "public" sphere). *Terrorism and Kebab* presents the repetitive, tedious, and demeaning status of this character's itinerary. Identification with his plight would have been easy for contemporary audiences, given the shift by the Mubarak regime from a social welfare, paternalistic model of governance to one that increasingly emphasized neoliberal policies.[7] But the Mubarak regime also looms in the militarization the film displays, without any qualms: the dominance onscreen of masses of marching soldiers is presented as defensive and therefore essentially benign. (They are there to protect the people against "terrorism.") Yet, as the film progresses, the comedic foil of the happy ending reveals something quite different which must be read, in the end, like the black humor so assiduously studied by André Breton.

The film's narration is quite restricted, and as it progresses the spectator is given greater access to the vital underlying resistance which runs beneath its normative arc: mistaken identity and justice for the little man, aided by a body which is not solely that of Imam but rather a portrait of the totality of his movement in and through the collective of people which comprises the film's true protagonist: a crowd that begins and ends the film in very different ways, an entity that experiences a change such as might occur to one individual in a classical narrative. It is this transformative reconfiguration of the body politic that I seek to delineate here in spatial-historical terms: to show how the film provides a sketch—a profile of *another kind of public*: not scattered, but coherent; not apolitical, but fully political in identity and knowledge of, and capacity to articulate, its demands. Perhaps the film offers an early glimmer of the democratic expression that would find (its anarchic, carnivalesque, joyful, celebratory forms) on this same square a decade later. Regardless of the denotative subject, and, in some ways, even its star, the film's expressive palette conveys a potent series of varying configurations of the relationship between the state and citizen, from supplicant, to armed opposition, to political performance in a new expression of the public realm.

10.2 Confronting the Bureaucratic Grotesque and Chaplin

The intersection of culturally specific and more generalizable components of what Foucault has diagnosed as the "administrative grotesque" (a *functional* component of modern bureaucracy rather than its opposite) makes

this film of broad interest, even as its very specific performative and cultural references combined to ensure its enormous popularity in Egypt. (Some have described it as one of the most popular Egyptian films of all time.[8]) The film portrays administrative confusion and governmental ineptness, yet the overall arc of the film maintains the sincerity of the chief governmental officials faced with a "terrorist" attack; while the military is essentially exempt from this critique, thus preserving the validity of the Egyptian army.[9]

Housed in the Mogamma (and related buildings) in Tahrir Square, the government is represented as both incompetent and dangerous, a pairing familiar in fascist, totalitarian, and authoritarian regimes. The film provides, then, a portrait of inept or *grotesque* sovereignty, supported by the labyrinthine bureaucracy, the "administrative grotesque." As Foucault explains:

> Political power, at least in some societies, and anyway in our society, can give itself, and has actually given itself, the possibility of conveying its effects and, even more, of finding their source, in a place that is manifestly, explicitly, and readily discredited as odious, despicable, or ridiculous. (*Abnormal* 11)

And so while a reading of this film could focus solely on Mubarak's regime and its historical-social context, we benefit from approaching the film's humor as a more universal form of resistance to the "disaster which is the status quo," a term invoked by Walter Benjamin (184–185) as the world was tilted on the precipice of fascism and World War—and a phrase which is as mournfully apt today as it was then. The depoliticization that occurs in the name of politics, such as fascist and totalitarian examples have shown us, is not a matter foreign to Western democracies or the United States, in particular.[10]

What makes this film significant, and, I would argue, lies at the heart of the reason why it is so loved by Egyptian audiences to this day is the way in which it unfolds in its second act, in which the "accidental" terrorist is manifested and, indeed, empowered by the government's false moves: first in its attempts to arrest him for merely asking for his rights, and then in the massive military response to the presumed hostage situation. Ahmed takes on the mask of the terrorist he is accused of being, and as such creates the possibility for an alternate, and empowered, relation to the state. He picks up the weapons abandoned by the guards who had originally

been sent to arrest him for losing his temper with the low-level administrators to whom he had supplicated day after day to no avail, and he takes on the identity given to him by the crowd, who believe they are being held hostage. Aided by a loveable ragtag band of supporters, made up of a "prostitute,"[11] a shoeshine "boy," and an abused Army clerk, Ahmed holds off the armed forces which have been shown, at length and in great numbers, surrounding the building. Alongside this resistance sits the powerless crowd, still passive spectators to their fate until, crucially, they finally understand themselves to be a collective, a proto-political entity born in the interstices of the feckless administrative machine and the militarized face of government, now shorn of its civic masquerade; the milling and passive supplicants find themselves, by the end of the film, transformed into a *political* crowd unified in its demands.

Terrorism and Kebab gives us, in its most normative designation, a broadly recognized universal tale of the little man, the Chaplin or, here, Imam—buffeted, in the words of film historian Charles Musser, by forces beyond his control, yet able to resist with anarchic spontaneity and humor (Sklar 36).[12] My interest is indeed in assessing the usefulness of placing Imam and *Kebab* in dialogue with the figure of Charlie Chaplin, the "Little Tramp"—thus losing cultural and local/national nuance and specificity but in exchange for accessing concrete historical and ideological elements otherwise masked. This maneuver can also provide a doubled disfiguration of Chaplin, as Imam has routinely been described as the "Egyptian Charlie Chaplin."[13] While he may or not be that, it is useful to refer to Chaplin in the interest of establishing some commonality in the broader textual strategies evidenced in Chaplin's work so as to better discern the textual complexity of *Terrorism and Kebab* and thereby provide some access to otherwise hidden genealogies, alternate modes of being, and a glimpse of empowered resistance: "the possibility, ultimately" to use Kracauer's description of Chaplin's power, "of a universal language of mimetic transformation that would make mass culture an imaginative horizon for people try[ing] to live a life in the war zones of modernization" (Hansen 41).

The film not only conveys these elements of a disintegrating civic realm but also provides a critique, a kind of power through laughter—through, I would argue, an unassimilated Chaplin-like resistance. So I'd like to displace the friendly clown Chaplin who has (always already) been transformed through a normative discourse that drains his figure of power, and give back some of the extraordinary force he wields across the cinematic

frame: indeed it is the power of his figure/ground relations that allows the *mise-en-scène* in his films to function in such an articulate way. It is this "genealogy" I would like to unearth, and to find his Egyptian counterpart as part of a continuum of power and political struggle that is otherwise obscured.

We see the confirmation of this in the government's willingness to provide the terrorists with kebab, the scene for which the film is named: the "demand" for what was, at the time—and still is—a valued traditional meat-based meal. But once even the vaguest political claims are made, the group becomes increasingly cohesive and the military increasingly aggressive, deciding to violently end the occupation. As the hostages/hostage takers (who become increasingly aware of their unity over the course of the film) act like citizens—that is as subjects with the right to make political demands—the state apparatus must show its real, violent face: the troops and the government are not here to protect you but, rather, to contain you. Critical theory and film historical analysis are enormously useful in bringing a cross-cultural analysis to bear on *Terrorism and Kebab* and the assertion, which I am proposing, that it should be engaged as part of a broader continuum of (resistance) to a global capitalist, neoliberal order which, in the words of philosopher Wendy Brown, is administered as a "managerial democracy," or as Sheldon Wolin's "inverted totalitarianism."

Terrorism and Kebab is striking for the way it centers its action within the bowels of the administrative apparatus, a regime which was greatly expanded under Mubarak but which we recognize, in any case, as a portrayal of governmental malfunction, an inherent component of any institution.[14] Foucault describes this apparatus as "Ubu the pen-pusher," linking it to the concept of "grotesque sovereignty":

> The grotesque is one of the essential processes of arbitrary sovereignty. But you know also that the grotesque is a process inherent to assiduous bureaucracy. Since the nineteenth century, an essential feature of big Western bureaucracies has been that the administrative machine, with its unavoidable effects of power, works by using the mediocre, useless, imbecilic, superficial, ridiculous, worn-out, power, and powerless functionary (not just a vision of Kafka, Dostoyevsky) […] Ubu the "pen-pusher" is a functional component of modern administration, just as being in the hands of a mad charlatan was a functional feature of Roman power. (*Abnormal* 12–13)[15]

If we return to bare life as a life without rights, without political identity and power, without any of the traditional guarantees of the democratic public sphere, it is a life stripped down to the role of pure survival. This return applies to the role of government entities (masquerading as such, or only partially so) as much as any kind of ontological status: it can refer to the absolute reduction of life to the concentration camp inmate or to the calculations of population statistics to improve hygiene or prevent disease; benevolent or no, it entails a relation that is devoid of politics. You can have a kebab, but not justice; you can be a (passive) crowd, but not a *public*: "publics" exercise political speech and action, "publics" are found on the Paris Commune barricades, or in the civil rights marches or in the Revolutionary collectivities which Tahrir Square still invokes. The memory of the public sphere stirs in *Terrorism and Kebab*, however faintly. One result of this distortion of the civic sphere is the destruction of the imagination which then in turn, for Arendt, destroys the very possibility of "politics."[16] This film provides a wonderful example of this, yet without a total foreclosure of hope—wherein lies its (latent) power and, I would suggest, what might be viewed as its overdetermined popularity.

Terrorism and Kebab offers a portrait of this lost public sphere: Tahrir Square, the site of what should be the civic realm is, instead, much more akin to Kafka's castle keep, an administrative maze. Our everyman tries to file paperwork, but this is what he encounters: packed elevators and a packed circular hallway where people shuffle around and around until they can find the door which leads, presumably, to the next step in the administrative process (but which, as we see, leads only to absent or hostile administrators who refuse to do their jobs) (Fig. 10.1).

Individuals are "together" but separate here, in a transformation of the "crowd," capable of demonstration or rebellion (the haunting shadows of the French Revolution, or the Paris Commune) into a "mass" that circles mindlessly as if caught in a circular prison or religious movement within a space of worship.[17] I am interested in staying with this image of a "public" space, symbolized by Tahrir Square,[18] bodies in a space which point back to anti-colonial revolution and gesture forward to democratic elections and an attempted renewal of Egyptian political identity: the "Arab Spring."

It is in this sense that Imam's comedic everyman meets, the broader manifestation of resistance that was bubbling below the surface of Egyptian society, which finds expression in the film's unusual texture, its confluence of universal themes and specific, historical signification. The topic



Fig. 10.1 *Terrorism and Kebab* (Sherif Arafa, Egypt, 1992)

of the film provides an occasion for the manifestation of the classic public sphere, confrontations between the human and the machine, democracy and global capital: those elements which form the core of Chaplin's work. If we return to Chaplin's 1936 masterpiece *Modern Times* to examine one discrete scene for our comparison, it becomes apparent that both films portray a civilian who unsuspectingly becomes the target of the Ubuesque governmental military/police apparatus, and who, in return, is able to rupture the status quo and destabilize official discourse and its *mise-en-scène*, if only for a moment (Figs. 10.2 and 10.3).

We see two versions of "accidental terrorists," or better, "accidental revolutionaries," if such a thing is possible. Let us note the power of Chaplin's appeal to audiences, beginning in the teens of the 20th century, and suggest that *Terrorism and Kebab* may provide a similar empowerment for its spectators, a return of some fragment of shared historical knowledge, of memory: what Foucault has described as the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges."[19]

The human aspiration for a peaceful and abundant civic society (what, in the film's conclusion, is abstractly named as "justice") is here reduced to the biological, the physical desire for a kebab, something the writer



Fig. 10.2 *Modern Times* (Charles Chaplin, US, 1936)

Wahid Hamed (Abou El-Magd)[20] explains as symbolically conveying the inability of Egyptians in this period to imagine any other existence. I am not sure this is fair to *Terrorism and Kebab*, however, and my anecdotal evidence is that kebab is actually more than a prop for those who love the film…yet we can appreciate how a kebab serves as the perfect prop to convey the (positive, not repressive) destruction of historical memory (as a kebab now becomes the memory through displacement). Foucault's "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" is the resistance to this biopolitical administration of human beings, and while the kebab is eaten in a perfect display of the evacuation of the political relation between state and subject, the eventual formation of this group into one that is able to imagine, and then demand, justice is the remarkable turn the film makes, setting it off from other comedies.

Imam's Ahmed is meant to be, throughout the film and particularly at the end, the protagonist—and his final departure from the building is striking: hidden by the bodies of the former "hostages" who have now



Fig. 10.3 *Terrorism and Kebab* (Sherif Arafa, Egypt, 1992)

chosen to shield him (a nascent or possible political figure), asserting and expanding their identity as a public now manifesting in a public sphere (the Square). As Arendt, among others, has observed, politics requires a space for its performance, a public sphere—this does not guarantee the quality of the politics but does constitute its baseline. So it is not Ahmed who is the subject of this film or this conclusion: in spite of the effort to render the ending a conventional one through a shot/reverse-shot of him with the security chief, the subject of this film is the memory of a public sphere and its furtive recollection.

10.3 Conclusion

What is remarkable about *Kebab* is that the assertion of Imam as "the Egyptian Chaplin" allows this film far more leeway than might otherwise have been given, and the focus on Ahmed as a character (an "everyman") allows the transgressive elements of the film to slip by, unnoticed—except, that is, on some level by an audience, a "crowd" (in contrast to the individual spectator), a phenomenon which can only be suggested here. This is its generic shield but also, I would argue, its political one—the harmless

comedian Chaplin, the "everyman" who has always served as a generalized frame to depoliticize the power of his performance (then and now) provides a protective cloak over a film which, in its totality (and not in its star) provides a performative act of remembrance and imagination: of a time when sovereignty and citizenship had not been displaced by a state with a dwindling, if not disappearing, interest in citizens, something not unique to Egypt and present in every neoliberal democracy to more or less a degree.

Arendt found that Chaplin "transformed a conscious lack of political sensibility into an art form […] But to Arendt the most important feature of Chaplin was precisely his ability to capture the vanguard of modernity—the state of statelessness—through such a turn" (Sjöholm 144). What she means is that Chaplin's refusal to identify with the State overtly presented the always-already broken relation between sovereignty and the state:

> Rather than protecting its citizens and bestowing upon them such rights as freedom and equality before the law, certain nation-states had deprived groups of citizenship and produced stateless people. Chaplin was the epitome of such a "refugee" in his nondescript state, forever fleeing the law. (145)[21]

Chaplin's very special performative comedy was able to show how "subjects of a sovereign state become(ing) repressive nation" face the threat of being reduced to an apolitical, biopolitical, entity (133).[22] Like Joseph K. in Kafka's *The Castle*, Chaplin's performances point to the "mismatch between individual beings and the laws that sovereignty has produced; he is always under surveillance, always fleeing, always at fault," ending up depicting a kind of refugee or stateless person (144). Miriam Hansen's analysis of Chaplin uses Kracauer's famous 1931 essay, "Chaplin's Triumph," to approach this resistance another way, identifying how Chaplin initiates a "schizophrenic" vision "in which the habitual relations among people and things are shattered and different configurations appear possible…like a flash of lighting, Chaplin's laughter wields together madness and happiness" (48).

Why do we laugh and identify with the Tramp? He always gets away. We laugh because we, like Chaplin, manage to escape the state: Chaplin highlights the "superior qualities of the little man, who manages to get away" (Sjöholm 145–148). *Terrorism and Kebab*'s little man gets



Fig. 10.4 *Terrorism and Kebab* (Sherif Arafa, Egypt, 1992)

away, too, but his is a collective narrative, on a square with a past—and a future—in the battle between sovereignty and citizenship and the state apparatus of a "governmental machine" with no interest besides perpetuating itself (Fig. 10.4).

Arendt stated, in her famous speech on Heidegger's eightieth birthday, that "[l]aughter is more powerful than truth" (Hansen 13). She invokes laughter to counter ideologies of terror in a complex argument that needs elaboration: the time of solidarity is a time of laughter (Sjöholm 147). "Tragedy deals with suffering. Comedy does too. The difference, to Arendt, is that comedy is more serious" (ibid.). These ideologies of terror, too commonplace in our contemporary global crisis, provide an invaluable opportunity, which must be taken, to use humor to describe and to deconstruct totalitarian rulers who are, in fact, consistently comical.

Notes

1. The film is part of what I characterize, borrowing from Foucault, a heretofore neglected sub-genre: "administrative grotesque" films that portray the

inescapable truth of the bureaucratic structures all around us, the crushing reality of their mechanisms, without any ideological telos. Examples would range from Frederick Wiseman's studies of endemic institutional dis-function (beginning with his 1968 classic *High School*) to dystopic thrillers such as Alan Pakula's *The Parallax View* (1974) to Ermanno Olmi's sublime portrait of the crushing dystopic boredom of the workplace, *Il Posto* (1961).

2. The deprivation of happiness is one of the essential elements of the reduction of humanity to mere survival, a process of control articulated most famously perhaps in George Orwell's *1984*, and since Foucault's elaboration, summarized, in part, as "biopolitics." As suggested below, this is evidenced in *Terrorism and Kebab* in the almost total inability of the civilian characters in the film to imagine what to demand from their government.
3. See Arendt, *Human*; also Schürmann.
4. As demonstrated, for example, in the inability of the Hayes Office (charged with Hollywood's Production Code) to screen out objectionable content through an over-reliance on script review.
5. See for example, Freud's concerted effort in *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) as well as Henri Bergson's publication that same year of *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1905), both challenged to some degree, by André Breton's *Anthology of Black Humor* (1940), which positioned humor in relation to the trauma of the First World War ("humor noir"). This latter work was translated into English only in 1997. I am grateful to Chrisoula Lionis's discussion of humor in her important book on collective trauma and humor, *Laughter in Occupied Palestine: Comedy and Identity in Art and Film*, for alerting me to this connection.
6. Iman Hamam's analysis of the continuing comic tradition in Egyptian cinema is particularly relevant to this point.
7. On the move from a socialist model to a neoliberal one during this period, see Shenker.
8. According to a 2007 poll ("The Best") of Egyptian critics in *Daily News Egypt*.
9. The grotesque military administrator is confined to one sub-plot involving a young attaché who will eventually comprise the core of the terrorists with Imam. The arrogance and abuse from his supervisor is, narratively, a classic case of the "exception" allowed by censors—allowable as long as the institution itself is left without significant scarring.
10. The cult-like following for charismatic leaders is not political, and this can be traced to the manifestation of Cold War "politics" in the United States, coupling governmental secrecy and lies with a powerful executive and a public sphere attacked on all sides: House Un-American Activities Committee, television, and suburbia. Chaplin's exile during the Cold War

illustrates the commonalities between Nazi and American Cold War rejection of his pacifist stance against nationalism. See Davies.

11. She is played by Yousra, at the time a wildly popular actor and performer, whose sexuality combined with her active role in the "terrorist" resistance gives the film a kind of energy which taps into a rich vein of popular resistance historically, beginning with the French Revolution (see, e.g., Melzer et al.) but also of course with some reference to femininity and power in an Egyptian context, however repressed. (See the important revisionist history of Cleopatra by Stacy Schiff). Yousra would adopt a pro-regime stance during the events of 2011—as would Imam, at least in the short term. The politics of his role in the 2015 television series, *Ostaz wa Ra'ees Qesm*, as a hypocritical leftist professor further muddies his star persona in this regard (see "Leftist Figures").
12. This kind of normative discourse is typical of the way Chaplin's work is (inadvertently) trivialized, drained of its power. It is critical to acknowledge the excitement Chaplin wrought on diverse, global categories of spectators although, in the past half century, it has been quite effectively denuded of his oppositional force. The characterization of the global spectator (Chaplin drew crowds of millions across Europe) is crucial here: these masses, before and after the global war and its global economic "collapse," were well-versed in the power struggle masked in official discourse.
13. For example, the American Cinematheque's publicity for their showing of the film in 2013 uses this phrase, in quotation marks: www.americancinematheque.com/content/terrorism-and-kebab-0.
14. In a U.S. context, Frederick Wiseman's groundbreaking innovation in narrative form, exposing the soul-crushing nature of institutions (*High School*; *Titicut Follies* [1967]) is relevant here, as is the more recent television example, in turn analyzing the police force, the docks, local government, the school system, and the press, of *The Wire* (2002–2009).
15. "Ubu" refers to an 1896 play by Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi*, or Ubu the King. Foucault chooses this still-popular figure of a king who is infantile, narcissistic, selfish, and unintelligent, a model of ridicule yet based on Shakespearean figures of kingship.
16. This is the red thread which runs through the best/most terrifying dystopic literature of modernity, beginning, perhaps, with Orwell's *1984*, a text we should not allow ourselves to ignore for its ubiquity. See in this regard the excellent collection, *On Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Gleason et al.).
17. The point here is not that religious "movement" is bad, but that it is not political—just as institutionally-designated prison movements are not political. Just try to imagine a political demonstration in either space. Authoritarian, military leaders like Mubarak remained hostile to religion

in part because of the threat of entering the public square as political subjects, which the Muslim Brotherhood did.

18. This square recalls that other great square which garnered such visibility in the 1990s: Tiananmen Square, in Beijing. These great squares (including of course, Red Square in Moscow) are at any moment transformed from a civic space, to a militarized space, to a space of slaughter. The place of protest and free expression easily becomes the place of violence: witness the many bloody demonstrations in New York City's Union Square during the 1930s, or the history of Mexico City's Zócalo.
19. Foucault writes: "historical contents alone allow us to see the dividing lines in the confrontation and struggles that functional arrangements or systematic organizations are designed to match. Subjugated knowledges are, then, blocks of historical knowledges that were present in the functional and systemic ensembles, but which were masked, and the critique was able to reveal their existence by using, obviously enough, the tools of scholarship" (*Society* 7).
20. This point is of further interest in that the turn is from the political to the physical, from politics to biopolitics.
21. See Arendt, *The Jewish*, 286–287.
22. Cf. Kracauer. I am taking some liberty with Arendt but keeping to the spirit.

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CHAPTER 11

Exceptions to the Rule: The Mechanics of War and the Institution in Egyptian Cinema

Iman Hamam

In 1978, Frederick Wiseman made a documentary entitled *Sinai Field Mission*. Typical of the Direct cinema approach, the film chronicles the work of employees in a Texan company named ESystems contracted by the U.S. government to monitor sensors in the field, maintain the borders, and facilitate the movement of vehicles and personnel from both sides across a buffer zone between Egypt and Israel. The fact that Wiseman's film was made in Sinai, Egypt, alongside United Nations peacekeeping forces from Finland and Ghana, is somewhat incidental to his

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portrayal of "foundational institutional sites and contemporary institutional practices" (Snyder and Mitchell 293). The unobtrusive documentation of daily operations undertaken by the personnel officers and staff in the hospital, school, police station, or prison, is motivated by the filmmaker's commitment to places "that ha[ve] certain kinds of geographical limitations" (qtd. in Grant 3). Egyptian documentary filmmakers, most notably Ateyyat El-Abnoudy, Saad Nadim, Salah El-Tohamy, Tarek El-Telmessany, Hashem El-Nahass, Ali El-Ghazouli, and Hossam Ali have, like Wiseman, focused their efforts on the everyday struggles of ordinary people, but the depiction of specific institutional sites has typically been more fraught. Thus, the institution has eluded the examination of documentary filmmakers who, motivated by a commitment to the plight of the individual or the preservation of traditions, crafts, and cultural practices, have instead sought to depict the life of working-classes, frequently turning to the countryside or urban poor for subjects and material.

And yet, five years before *Sinai Field Mission*, devices and techniques comparable to those that characterized Direct cinema—shooting outside of a studio, the use of portable sound recording equipment, the absence of an omniscient voice-over narrator—were employed by Egyptian filmmakers who were documenting the 1973 October war. Specific military operations were carefully guarded and concealed, and in their place, the role of the individual was celebrated: the heroic Egyptian soldier and the nation that he was fighting for. The appetite for celebrating the ordinary hero pushed filmmakers to travel to the countryside, to visit the homes of soldiers, and to depict everyday life in their villages. The juxtaposition of a war zone with the tranquility of rural life is prominent, for example, in Ahmed Rashid's 1974 *abtal min masr* [*Heroes from Egypt*], produced by the National Center for Documentary and Shorts, which features interviews with family members of two war heroes and scenes of everyday life in the Beni Sweif countryside. In spite of various restrictions imposed on filmmakers in terms of what they could film on the front, the weapons of war, including tanks, surface-to-air missiles and the pontoon bridges that were used to cross the Suez Canal, are prominent. The 1973 war, celebrated as a victory, set in motion the fetishization of the army and state institutions in film and popular culture through war museums, commemorative sites and monuments, and television programs. But the mechanics of war, technologies of transport and communication, and the institutions they upheld, were disseminated into everyday life, only to resurface

in Johanna Domke and Marouan Omara's 2013 "creative documentary," *Crop* (Egypt/Germany/Denmark), in which the filmmakers are granted access to the interiors of what is recognized as the "power center of the country's images and news—Egypt's oldest and arguably most influential government media mouthpiece" (ElNabawi), the *Al-Ahram* building. The film echoes Wiseman's contemplation of banal day-to-day activities and procedures as they unfold, with tasks performed by subjects who are apparently completely oblivious to the camera's presence.

In the 40-year span between the 1973 October war and the 2013 military coup, the narrative, star-driven productions that have dominated the Egyptian film industry have been bookended by two moments of exception, and two corresponding sets of what can loosely be referred to as experimental documentaries—the first made by Egyptian filmmakers including Shadi Abdel-Salam and Khairy Beshara about the 1973 October war, and the second represented by *Crop* and, more loosely, the films produced by the Mosireen collective who released a number of videos and footage collected "in factories, hospitals, unions and morgues" by those involved in the 2011 uprising (858). Out of these two moments significant features and patterns emerge: first, these documentaries inadvertently bring to the forefront the mechanized apparatus on which specific institutions depend. And, in doing so, these two sets of films allow us to revisit the mainstream commercial productions released in the interim period and extract the presence of a repressive and pervasive state via its various technologies of control. Thus, the institution is identifiable in a number of widely known feature films and in texts where documentary truth is put into question. This process of extraction offers an alternative to the story that is often told when surveying Egypt's film history and genre.

The state and media's control of image production is, on one level, the focus of *Crop*. Told from the point of view of a photojournalist, the film provides an account of the different ways in which Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak manufactured their relationship with the camera. As filmmaker Marouan Omara has explained, permission to film in the *Al-Ahram* building was very difficult to obtain. It was eventually granted by the newspaper's editor-in-chief possibly due to the lack of certainty at the time with respect to which side was going to take power in the final outcome of the 2012 elections. In the current context of state-fuelled suspicion of external foreign forces which are perceived as conspiring to bring down the

nation, documentary films such as *Sinai Field Mission* would be impossible to make today. Enhanced by war with Israel and the longstanding emergency law that dominated the second half of the 20th century, the aversion to the camera by state and army officials comes as no surprise. Cold War espionage-ridden mistrust has been nourished by the Egyptian government and military, and in Sisi's Egypt, this has been updated to reflect contemporary accounts of Islamic terrorists seeking to wreak havoc and chaos on the nation, interspersed with ominous references to foreign influences. Government institutions and military sites strictly prohibit the taking of photographs let alone the recording of film, except if it is conducted by heavily monitored or state-sponsored television or press—to the point where the news and propaganda have become almost indistinguishable entities (Afify).

The two sets of films discussed in this chapter are exceptional, or exceptions to the rule (of exception), given that Egypt has been marked by a series of states of exception since the emergency law was enacted in 1958 as Law number 162 and declared again in 1967 during the Arab–Israeli war. Construed as a victory, the 1973 war, however, was an occasion that was too momentous not to be recorded. Exceptionally, filmmakers who were affiliated with state institutions were permitted to go to the front to record footage and make documentaries about the war. As Samir Farid documents in his book *The October War in Cinema*, the footage recorded and the films that were made were checked by the army with some film destroyed for not representing the armed forces in a way that the Department of Morale Affairs deemed suitable (51); implicitly if not explicitly, the films were required to be patriotic first, indicating that their artistic quality or aesthetics were rendered irrelevant in the context of a nation at war. The October war documentaries including Beshara's *sa'ed el dababat* [*Tank Catcher* or *Tank Hunter*] and Abdel-Salam's *geyoush esshams* [*Armies of the Sun*] (1974) are framed to mark the achievement of the army, giving filmmakers and viewers access to places and military zones that are otherwise, and continually, off-limits. Unlike those affiliated with the state and military, independent filmmakers, then and now, are limited by red tape that requires that state institutions and public places cannot be filmed without a permit or license, something that is almost impossible to obtain, with censorship falling under the purview of national security (Mansour 4). Photographers and journalists are commonly arrested or attacked and accused of seeking to spoil the image of the nation. As the

voice-over in *Crop* recounts: "I was arrested every time I went outside to take a picture. I became well known in all of the police stations."

The extensive documentation of the 2011 uprising was facilitated by the fact that hundreds and thousands of people, including filmmakers and photographers, were able to use portable recording equipment: cameras and phones that enabled the filming of sites and incidents that would otherwise have been prohibited. These films were made in spite of, rather than facilitated by, the military—and for collectives such as Askar Kazeboon and Mosireen filming protests and documenting violations committed by security forces, the act of filmmaking was participatory, providing "a radical reversal of the disembodied aerial gaze and the faces of a select few" (Westmoreland 258).[1] This is something that has not, however, been possible since. Following Sadat's assassination, the emergency law lasted for three more decades until it expired in May 2012. As Ardovini and Mabon have delineated, "this condition is no longer solely the exception, but rather it has become the norm within political life" (4). The law was reinstated for a month in June 2012, and it was during this brief reprieve in July 2012 (during the second round of presidential elections between Mohamed Morsi and Ahmed Shafik) that *Crop* was made. Following the military-instigated protests against Morsi at the end of June 2013, and his subsequent toppling the next month, the efforts of such collectives, and any attempt to film or indeed participate in protests, have been brutally curbed. Control of the camera and the "aerial gaze" offered by army helicopters and the state-controlled media has meant that the military has once again resumed control of image production and what can and cannot be filmed.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian film industry has been dominated by commercial interests (see Gaffney). Thematically, the image of the nation in the history of Egyptian films is something that has been constructed through star-driven narrative fiction films generally determined to bolster patriotism and highlight the heroism of the armed forces. These have often complied with clear generic conventions, ranging from a handful of light comedies starring Ismail Yassin (*In the Army* 1955; *In the Navy*, 1957; *In the Military Police*, 1958; and *In the Air Force*, 1959, all directed by Fateen Abdel-Wahab) to the more typical classical-era melodrama adaptations of novels by Naguib Mahfouz, Latifa Al-Zayyat, and Ihsan Abdel-Quddous. The 1955 production *allah ma'ana* [*God Is on Our Side*] (screenplay by Ihsan Abdel-Quddous and directed by Ahmed Badrakhan) focuses on the weapons scandal that occurred during the

1948 Palestine war and presents the Officers' coup as a revolt against a corrupt monarchy and elite who sent Egyptian soldiers to the front with defective weapons. These films, along with other forms of popular culture such as the nationalist songs performed by Abdel-Halim Hafiz, extol the patriotic military figure from Gamal Abdel-Nasser or a high-ranking officer to the everyday common man who was "ready to sacrifice his life for the nation." In this manner, "the Free Officers' regime used cinema as a political tool to enhance its ideology and glorify the military regime in power" (Mostafa 29), thus confirming that the image of the nation was something that was mediated by the presidents who ruled it.

The voice-over narrator in *Crop* states that "Nasser knew the importance of the image. And he was concerned with transmitting the real image to everyone…He had a great presence as a leader. He did not need to pose for the camera, even if he was photographed from behind, he looked strong and confident…." The narrator goes on to explain that Sadat, too, tried to connect with the Egyptian people through the lens, "but as time passed, it became clear that he was performing the role like an actor." His image was carefully constructed, and he obsessively paid attention to the "minute details of his appearance, and always sought to present himself in a heroic pose." During the victory parade on 6 October 1981, Sadat was killed in plain sight of the rolling cameras. Perhaps for this reason, Mubarak was more averse to the camera, and kept his distance from people, "only agreeing to be photographed in safe environments." He invited over 30 photographers to the presidential palace, the voice-over explains, but their pictures were heavily monitored, and his own image was carefully controlled, with efforts made to use photoshop to conceal his aging or illness or preserve the illusion of his stature.

As *Crop* insinuates, the images propagated by the state became more and more removed from what viewers were able to see for themselves. While people were in the streets protesting in early 2011, the television channels showed images of a quiet and tranquil downtown Cairo by the Nile, betraying what had been a tradition of recording people in the street during state funerals and public ceremonies. Documentary footage of military parades and key historical events—a practice that was established by organizations such as Reuters and British Pathé, who recorded images of army camps ("Foreign Troops in Egypt") from as early as 1910, and who also documented King Farouk's abdication in 1952, and the arrival of UN troops in 1956—was also embedded in some fiction films. Notably, *God Is on Our Side* and *al-summan wal kharif* [*Autumn Quail*] (the 1967

adaptation of the Naguib Mahfouz novel) "contained documentary footage showing the soldiers on the streets of Egyptian cities [and later] of the departure of the king [Farouk] from Egypt following the Officer's coup and the 1956 Suez war" (Mostafa 28). But rather than receive them as message-driven narratives in the way that Mostafa indicates they were produced, these films can be understood in terms of their profilmic content, specifically, the technological devices and props utilized by the characters in the films at their moment of production. And the institution, insofar as it is comprised of such technological devices, can be located in these films at ruptures in the narrative space, or eruptions of the real—especially when viewed decades later. The presence of the institution is also articulated in terms of an anxiety expressed in films where the authority of a voice-over commentator is shaken if not broken—instead of the reassuring command of the newsreel presenter who makes announcements, the voice becomes distorted and unreliable; the fictional characters in the narrative films made by a generation of new realism directors since the 1970s now come to disrupt the institutional position they are granted and become riddled with a lack of certainty.

Across the Arab world, the defeat of 1967 was considered a moment of rupture, "a point of abrupt discontinuity with the past," a sentiment that was echoed by artists and intellectuals (see Bouzid; and Kassab). In a 1974 article published in the *Gomhoriyya* newspaper entitled, "From Cinema of Defeat to Cinema of Liberation," prolific film critic Samir Farid suggested that Egyptian cinema need no longer be marked by the defeat, and that filmmakers, now bolstered with a regained sense of national pride and dignity, could proceed to explore their full creative potential and bring about a transformation from "a cinema of defeat and resistance, to a cinema of liberation and victory" (8). But this moment of victory appears to have been petrified rather than transformative, with images of the 1973 war on some kind of psychic loop. Most notably, the propagandist nature of the 1973 documentaries has been inherited by promotional and commemorative videos aired on television and released on the official YouTube channel of the Egyptian Armed Forces, burgeoning since the 40th anniversary in 2013. What Gorgio Agamben examined as a "fictitious or political state of siege" is pronounced in the October war documentaries employed to remind everyone about the nation's great Victory in 1973—itself a fiction (4). Every year on the days surrounding the commemoration of the 6th of October war, television channels present talk shows and features, a medley of footage produced during the war. They celebrate generals,

military officials, and soldiers, and conduct talking head interviews with soldiers, army officers, and their families. An authoritative voice-over narrator provides an account of the dramatic events as they unfolded on the 6th of October. Propagandistic videos and clips are uploaded by fervently patriotic individuals, aficionados (such as "Group 73 Historians"), satellite channels, and the Egyptian army's Department of Morale Affairs. One such video, posted on the official YouTube channel belonging to the Ministry of Defence, entitled "*geddo battal*" ("Grandad the Hero," 1 October 2018), features a series of clips from Sadat's speeches and soldiers performing various operations and duties on the front lines. It is framed by a scene of a father sitting in a living room with his two children (a boy and a girl) as they watch a battle from the October war on their television. The son asks, "Daddy, is Grandad going to appear in the television?" to which the father/actor replies, "No darling, this is acting, so that the people who didn't live through the war can know what happened in it." In one television program (*ala mas'ouliyati* on the channel *Sada Elbalad*, posted online on 1 October 2016), the presenter hosting the show (Ahmed Mousa, a long-time pro-government mouthpiece who is conveniently distanced from it by being an independent media personality), begins by declaring, "This film is made by the Department of Morale Affairs in the days right after the war in October…they made a film about—" and then he stops mid-sentence. "These are real scenes! These are real images of our victory!" His use of the word "real" (*haqiqi*) here, as opposed to acting (*tamseel)*, ascribes to the images a truth-value that is reserved for documentary, as opposed to fiction. But it also draws attention to the presenter's need to attest to the film's documentary truth under increasingly mediated technological conditions.

In 1973, audiences were primed to see footage from the frontlines. Days after the war began, it was announced that the first documentary about the war would be aired on Egyptian television. As film critic Kamal Ramzy recounts, "audiences imagined that they would see public announcements, statements from official news agencies standing amidst the fire, tanks, artillery, incursions, and clashes." But instead, all they were given was the image of a wooden bridge and a soldier directing a few vehicles. A series of attempts were subsequently made to capture the war by showing footage recorded during field training sessions or of staged reconstructions, featuring explosions, "fires burning and plumes of smoke rising in the distance" (Ramzy 154). Although several prominent filmmakers, including Head of the short-lived Experimental Film Unit, Shadi

Abdel-Salam, had requested permission to go to the front lines to record what was happening there and in the nearby Canal cities (Suez, Ismailia, and Port Said), they were not able to do so before getting approval on their scripts from the Cinema section of the Egyptian Army's Department of Morale Affairs (Farid 51). Still, in the space of two years (between 1973 and 1975), over 30 films, five of them feature-length narratives—*al rasasa la tazal fi gaybi* [*The Bullet Is Still in My Pocket*] (Hussam Eddin Mustafa, 1974), *alwafa' el azeem* [*The Great Fulfillment*] (Helmi Rafla, 1974), *bedoor* [*Bedoor*] (Nader Galal, 1974), *abna elsamt* [*Children of Silence*] (Mohamed Rady, 1974), and *hata akher el omr* [*Until the End of Our Lives*] (Ashraf Fahmi, 1974)—were made highlighting the heroism of the Egyptian soldier. Documentaries ranging between 6 and 40 minutes in length, in black-and-white and in color, were produced by Egyptian Television, the Experimental Film Center, The National Center for Documentaries and Shorts, the General Authority for Cinema, Theater and Music, the Ministry of State Information, and the Military's Department of Morale Affairs.[2]

Nevertheless, and especially since the war's 40th anniversary in 2013 and in the days leading up to and around two national holidays in Egypt, the 6th of October and the 25th of April (Sinai Liberation Day), Egyptian journalists have lamented that there are not enough fiction films about the war (El-Shafaei). Their dissatisfaction signals a need to fictionalize the events in order to effectively convey the emotions and experience in a manner that does justice to what really happened at the time (and for the sake of future generations who have not lived through it). Why, they ask, have we not capitalized on the nation's greatest victory to make blockbusters, while Hollywood has made countless gripping and emotionally wrenching drama-action movies out of America's defeat in Vietnam? (Abdel-Salem). Films such as *Bedoor* and *The Bullet Is Still in My Pocket*, which themselves contain documentary footage, are steeped in melodramatic superficiality; the war is secondary to the dramatic events, and the films are generally lacking in the kind of action and visual effects that would depict the war as a blockbuster spectacle. On one hand, in the feature films there is a perceived inability to effectively fictionalize real events without state-of-the-art visual effects and, on the other, a set of documentary films that are not made up of "authentic" footage but instead of staged reconstructions of battles and military offensives. With the same visual content present in both modalities, however, documentary truth and the distinction between reality and fiction are put into question.

While the films documenting and fictionalizing the war are similar in their manner of depicting the events (heroic soldiers, weapons, etc.) and what they seem to be saying about it (victory, etc.), the films discussed below stand out because they deviate from the generic conventions in a number of significant ways.

In their use of sound, their fetishization of artillery, tanks, and technology more generally, the 1973 war documentaries discussed below allow us to reconsider the representation of the institution in the narrative films made in the following decades. For example, Khairy Beshara, who later became a key figure in the new realism movement, cut his teeth making a short film that was released in 1974 about a soldier named Mohamed Abdel-Aatey who was awarded a medal for bringing down 23 Israeli tanks in the first days of the October war. *Tank Catcher* alternates between two locations: Abdel-Aatey's village Shibah Qash in Shar'iyya where his family and others who knew him are interviewed (and where we see people performing daily tasks in an ordinary rural setting), and the battlefront in Suez where destroyed tanks litter the sand and soldiers are participating in training drills near their barracks. We see close-ups of Abdel-Aatey looking through an anti-tank missile launcher (a portable Malyutka, AT-3 Sagger?), emphasizing mechanized warfare, and the battalion commander who commends the Egyptian soldier's capacity to handle "complex electronic weaponry." However, as Ramzy confirms, *Tank Catcher* does not succumb to the temptation to fall into the same pattern as other documentaries and features that seek to capture the war; it does not adopt the tradition of solely highlighting an individual hero or editing to heighten dramatic effect (157). Instead, Abdel-Aatey is part of a group of soldiers, and through the editing and soundtrack, it becomes difficult for the viewer to assign the voices heard to the figures on screen with any certainty.

Another key film celebrating the Egyptian army that does not seem to match the typical structure or style of the October war documentaries is Shadi Abdel-Salam's *Armies of the Sun*, a 40-minute color documentary which features a montage of trucks and personnel carriers, soldiers building bridges across the water or in boats crossing the Canal, journalists, and later, after the war, schoolchildren visiting the army barracks, climbing and playing on army tanks that have been converted into a tourist attraction. On YouTube, this film is presented reductively, however,

simply as a "rare" documentary from the war (see Abdel-Salam). *mosafir illa alshemal, mosafir illa alganoub* [*Traveler to the North, Traveler to the South*], directed by Samir Ouf and also produced by the Experimental Film Unit, focuses on the deployment of pontoon bridges (in the north) and a project undertaken in Aswan to dismantle and reassemble Ancient Egyptian monuments on the island of Philae which was flooded by the construction of the High Dam. One critic refers to this juxtaposition as the filmmakers' linking of the nation's "rescue" of the past with the corresponding "rescue" of the future (Saad 139). The parallels are marked visually, and the figures featured in the film, both engineers and both born in 1948 and graduates in 1972, appear only rather obscurely (with text giving their names, birth dates, and respective colleges briefly superimposed onto their profiles). Seif's film is unusual in both soundtrack and structure. In conjunction with the shrill sound of war machinery and rhythmic clanking of mechanical devices, the visual emphasis is placed on the assembly of pontoon bridges and machines of war.

Because they emphasize the machinery of war, these documentaries are very much in line with Egypt's celebration of the October war as the first "electronic" war. In a speech delivered in May 1971, Anwar Sadat said: "I'm not telling the soldier to just go out and fight, with any old weapon. No! I'm giving him the latest weapons, the latest *electronic* weapons" (Abdelmoniem 7). Supplied militarily by the Soviet Union, with the training of Egyptian soldiers undertaken in the years leading up to the war, Sadat also reinstated the Ministry of Military Production in 1971. As forensic architect Eyal Weizman explains, "[f]or the US military, the battlefields of the 1973 war [constituted] one of the last 'symmetrical conflicts' pitching fully mobilized state militaries against each other…Indeed, the 1973 war coincided with major transformations worldwide—industrial production retreated in favour of an immaterial service sector that gradually shifted its production from analogue to digital technology, and [was] increasingly interested in flexible and dynamic networks" (76–77). In the years immediately following the October war, state officials made declarations of commitment to science and technology. In the inaugural meeting of an international symposium on the war organized by Cairo University in 1975, Soufy Hassan Abu Taleb, the head of the University, following an address by then Vice President Hosni Mubarak, stated that the aim of the symposium was to "study together ways of planning a comprehensive civilized strategy for the Egyptian society based on advanced science and technology," adding that the war which "has created a new

era in the life of our glorious Nation, has [thus] paved the way for genuine progress in the Arab world" (Abu Taleb).

While the October war films are framed as celebrations of victory and heroic soldiers, the profilmic content inevitably emphasizes, if not fetishizes, technology, machines, and equipment. Several of the war films feature the display of weapons captured by the Egyptian army from Israel, tanks rolling across the desert and equipment used in the assembly of pontoon bridges to cross the Canal. Mirroring the inclusion of documentary footage in fiction films, documentary filmmakers resorted to filming training drills and reconstructions of battles, a practice that recognized the power of the image at the same time as it echoed the state and army's tactic of trickery and deception. As one defence specialist explains, "[t]he Israeli intelligence services had erected listening posts all along the Suez front, and they intercepted large quantities of Egyptian military communications. But the Egyptian high command was not communicating via electronic means in the days preceding the attack on the Bar-Lev Line. Unfortunately for Israel, many of the communications intercepted during this period were part of a deception campaign to convince the IDF that an attack was not imminent, including instructions for units to renew leaves and permissions for officers to make the pilgrimage to Mecca" (Bolia 50). This strategy of deception was later matched by the Israelis, and especially on the part of then Commander Ariel Sharon, who "used open radio communications so that many of his division's soldiers could hear him, and he continued to leak secret military information to his large embedded entourage of admiring reporters…Sharon was indeed deliberately out of control—and out of communication. At times he switched off his radio altogether. When he was available on the radio, it was hard to talk to him because of his wilful misunderstanding of orders; at other times he was heard snoring into the microphone" (Weizman 73–74). Sharon's deliberate if not facetious use of the radio is counterposed by the authoritative position adopted in Sadat's speeches at the time and echoed in the voice-over narrator that accompanied conventional war documentaries and television features.

With signals and radio communication being a critical component of the war's operation, the war documentaries discussed here are unusual in that they disturb and undermine the traditionally authoritative voice-over narration or patriotic music (anthem, trumpets, humming, chanting) that characterizes more conventional documentary features or propaganda. Instead, the centrality of the role played by signals and communication

devices is to obfuscate these typical elements; the voice-over commentator is subsumed by the words spoken by soldiers themselves or by parents reading out letters written by their sons who were killed in the war. These voices disclose the roles that the soldiers played, or their own personal sentiments and expressions of duty, commitment, joy, or accomplishment. In *Heroes from Egypt*, *Tank Catcher*, and *Armies of the Sun*, these voices are also noticeably obscured or distorted by the noise of electronic devices.

Even recording devices that would ordinarily be edited out in order to retain the truth of the documentary content unfolding before the camera are included and prominent in the frame. In *Tank Catcher*, before Abdel-Aatey starts to deliver an account of his triumphs to the crew, a voice off-screen shouts "camera!" presumably marking the start of the recording—and the film. The sound recordist is included in the frame: dressed in blue, he is wearing headphones and holding a portable Nagra recording device and microphone. In the middle of a scene in which a group of soldiers stands by a tank and Abdel-Aatey explains what he did and how he shot down the first tanks, there is a brief cut to a shot of the sound recordist seen sitting by himself in the frame, adjusting the setting on his recording. In an interview with a more senior ranking officer, his attention is diverted away from the speaker as he busily adjusts the recording device. It seems deliberately distracting. The images of the sound recordist, and the attention he is paying to the sound recording equipment, particularly given the presence of the tanks that were shot down and captured, training drills and the shots focusing on Abdel-Aatey adjusting the viewfinder, bear significance in terms of the value of this equipment in facilitating the break with documentary conventions.

Following the credit sequence in *Armies of the Sun*, a black screen is punctuated by the sound of explosions and a man's voice describing his feelings of elation on the 6th of October. The soldier's voice becomes a voice-over (of sorts), especially given that this particular voice is never matched to the image of a specific speaker. Instead, the screen lights up and darkens again as the voice says, "I wish all of Egypt could see the sight of us as we were crossing." The next image tries to satisfy that desire with a convoy of trucks that roll past the camera onto an assembled bridge. Extreme close-up shots of soldiers' faces are accompanied by voices dismissing the claims made in newspapers and radio broadcasts about Egypt's inability to overpower the Israeli army. Throughout *Armies*

of the Sun, voices of soldiers in action are obscured by the noise of distorted radio signals and communication devices. We hear the wheels of a tank squeak past and the distant sound of explosions. Fifteen minutes in, after an intense night raid, a soldier in a darkened room smoking a cigarette tells of being taken to a hospital in Port Said before having to be transferred again because of an Israeli air raid on the premises. A siren carries the image away from the front line to a bridge with taxis on it and then to the hospital garden. The noise of radio jamming dominates the soundtrack, even in scenes where schoolchildren are seen playing on the tanks. The sound of radio jamming equipment is important because it was precisely this kind of electronic warfare and electronic countermeasures—the use of complete radio silence in the days leading up to the war, and an air defence umbrella in the early days of the war—that gave Egypt the upper hand (Meyer 60). These features also allude to the multiple roles adopted by Sadat himself, first as a signals operator, then as the first person to announce the 1952 Officers' takeover on state radio, then again as the minister of broadcasting and speaker of the national assembly (Pace).

The inclusion of radios and recording devices is one way in which their cultural value at the time was indicated in the profilmic content. As Roy Armes and Lizbeth Malkmus have explained, "the existence of radio broadcasting transmitters powerful enough to go beyond the physical boundaries of a single colony or state led to a new awareness between African and Arab communities" (11). They were referring specifically to official state news broadcasts and the spread of Egyptian popular music—including the song, "*Sura*," by Abdel-Halim Hafiz which is analysed by the fictitious narrator in *Crop* (more on which below). Emphasis on the contrasting images of Nasser and Sadat echo similar comparisons that were made between the two presidents in terms of how they spoke. Discourse surrounding the marked difference between Nasser's and Sadat's oratorial skills was circulated among poets and performers. For example, "as [Ahmed Fouad] Negm's poem 'Important Announcement' develops, the speaking voice moves from that of the radio announcer to the figure of Shahhata al-Mi'assal whose attempts to speak eloquently collapse into clownish fragments of nonsense. But the poem's nonsense also has sense, since it serves to skewer the discourse of official state radio in general and, in particular, to lampoon Sadat's shaky attempts to perform eloquence in the prestige register of fusḥa upon a people who speak colloquial" (Colla).

The widespread significance of radio broadcasts and the faltering of authority figures are also depicted in Mohamed Khan's 1987 *zawget ragul*

mohim [*An Important Man's Wife*], in which the young Mona is seen sneaking into a cinema with her friend to watch an Abdel-Halim Hafez movie. Later, she goes home and tapes the song "*Ahwaak*" off the television and onto her cassette recorder, first stating the date and place into the speaker so that the recording can operate as a personal account of her feelings and emotions at the time. These recordings and a series of title cards ("Winter 1962", "Spring 1975") serve as important time markers throughout the film. But *Wife* is mostly considered to be an important film because of its reference to the January 1977 bread riots, its inclusion of real footage, and its portrayal of a self-serving police officer who becomes a colonel in the Cairo branch state security and who is eventually cut loose by the system for transgressing the law in his enthusiasm to put activists and dissidents behind bars for threatening the sanctity of the state. While it was permissible to portray the corrupt official, such characters were mostly presented as misguided, high on power, or merely as frequently recurring exceptions to the norm.

Sadat's Open Door (*infitah*) policy effected economic changes that further paved the way for rampant state corruption and neoliberalism. By 1977 the October war victory, along with any hopes and dreams of prosperity, were rudely shattered by the realities of an economy based on foreign trade and luxury consumer goods. It was precisely this shift and the social inequality it aggravated which the so-called generation of new realism filmmakers, among them Mohamed Khan, Daoud Abdel-Sayed, Samir Seif, and Atef El Tayeb, portrayed in their films. These films are mostly understood by Egyptian film critics thematically, with emphasis placed on their narratives as social commentary and the directors' innovative use of light camera equipment to film on location as an ideologically motivated shift away from the perceived artificiality of the studio environment.[3]

In newsreels and documentaries made by the state institutions and private companies such as Misr Studios and Shell Oil Company in the 1940s and 1950s, the voice-over narrator was a prominent and reliable figure, providing information about the subject at hand—a ceremony or parade, a feature about Egypt's ancient history, various aspects of industry, Bedouins and peasant life, or local traditions and crafts. In later decades, the same kinds of documentaries were made to promote development programs.[4] For the new generation of filmmakers, the voice-over commentator was replaced by the voice of the subject being interviewed, as exemplified in the documentaries made with Atiyat Abnoudy and others;

sound recording devices such as the microphone were held by the subject included within the frame. According to Daoud Abdel-Sayed, who became known for his epic films featuring protagonists who are caught up in absurd situations of mistaken or lost identity, the commentator "represented the natural reflection of the hegemony of the single voice within the totalitarian system, the voice that is not questioned from any side, while it presents the information with such extraordinary certainty and so well structured, as if it revealed and knew everything [and reflected] the fascist tone prevalent in the media of the time through which Sadat was distancing himself from the preceding era" (qtd. in Shafik, "Daoud" 134). But rather than cancelling out the voice-over, Abdel-Sayed's satirical documentary *wasseyet ragul hakim fi sho'on alqariya wal ta'alim* [*The Advice of a Wise Man in Matters of Village and Education*] (1976) includes a vitriolic narrator (the voice of actor Gamil Ratib) who criticizes Nasser's socialist education program that instated mass education for all Egyptians for free. Perhaps in response to the dominant voice of figures such as Nasser and Sadat, and in aversion to the fascist propaganda that the voice-over was believed to embody, the narrator was converted from a voice of authority into an unreliable figure. In doing so, the film effectively parodies the documentaries made by government administrations.

Crop also reinstates the voice of the narrator, but he is one who is not so much duplicitous as he is multifarious. The film begins with the speaker introducing himself, "My name is Ahmed. Or it could be Amr. All I remember is that I'm a photographer. They told me that I'm in hospital, recovering from a heart attack. It's the 19th of January 2011. My name is Hossam. I'm lying in bed. I have a wife and two daughters. It's the 24th of January, 2011…It's difficult to keep my thoughts in order. Everything is floating and without direction or meaning…My name is Sherif. I'm a photographer for the *Al-Ahram* newspaper." Different voices and timbres overlap, enhancing the sense of confusion and putting the authority and authenticity of the speaker into question. It is only at the very end, in the closing credits, that we are told that the narration was in fact "composed out of 19 interviews with photographers and journalists."

While *Crop*'s voice-over narrator is constructed, assembled, or even exaggerated for satirical effect, or, literally distorted or damaged by the interference of the technologies and communication devices that mediate it, there is also a notable prominence of analogue equipment and different modes of transportation. Devices that are embedded in monumental institutional buildings like the *mogamma* and *Al-Ahram* building: x-ray

machines, metal detectors, elevators, computers, radios, telephones, time-punch machines—are further accentuated when we look at them now from the perspective of the digital age; they appear as gestures that carry temporal markers of a specific time period, identifiable by the technology used. The October war documentaries were produced when technology was seen to carry the most promise, so that the films highlight technology's greatest perceived potential—it is in these representations of war that the iconography of machines, rockets, and nostalgia for technology seem most suited.

Having made films that were easy enough to digest by an industry built on classic narrative continuity and audiences primed to engage with a star system and well-versed in the genre, the cinematic medium is rendered subordinate to its representation of pertinent social issues and concerns related to class, gender, or nation. But it is precisely in this medium that, for the new realism films that were made in the decades after the 1973 war, the military logic was maintained. The presence of signalling devices, analogue equipment, and different modes of transportation (tanks, trucks, trains, planes, and boats), and communication (telephones, cameras, computer monitors, and fax machines) in Egyptian films during these four decades, appear today as dated, obsolete, relics of analogue technologies. But these are the very devices that make up what we know to be a "system." And their profilmic presence as props, viewed through the lens of the digital age in particular, facilitate a generic shift—from melodrama and action-packed police thrillers to science fiction. We might better view Egyptian cinema in terms of these specific mobility and communication devices as they traverse official roads and invisible borders to tell a different story about genre or periodization—one where the weapons and technology of the 1970s can be considered in light of more recent machinations of surveillance technologies developed by and for the military before being disseminated more widely in the public realm. In her article "Precision Targets: GPS and the Militarization of U.S. Consumer Identity," Caren Kaplan delineates the shift from a military-industrial complex to a more sophisticated military-industrial-media-entertainment-network whereby "citizens and consumers come together as militarized subjects…Regardless of whether or not we serve in the military or have the means to afford the latest electronics…residents of the United States are *mobilized into militarized ways of being*" (Kaplan 708). Since 1975 and still in operation, the Egyptian state-run Arab Organization for Industrialization has overseen the instigation of a similar force of relations to

that described by Kaplan, one evident particularly, given the extent of the Egyptian Armed Forces' production of consumer goods and involvement in "public utilities, key infrastructure, and related works and services" including transport and communications (Sayigh; Abul-Magd).[5]

Steeped in a digital age marked by rapid turnover and modifications of mobile phones, cameras, and automobiles, the films made in previous decades betray their time by virtue of the car models and communication devices that are included in them. And yet, such seemingly outdated devices are still very much in use. We see in *Crop* that there is a telephone on every single desk and in every kitchenette and landing of the *Al-Ahram* building. In the mainstream comedy *al-irhab wal kabab* [*Terrorism and Kebab*] (Sherif Arafa, 1992), a woman is shelling peas at her desk in the *mogamma* while chatting on the phone. The look of the phone, with hand receiver and cord, is not unlike those used in households at the time. In *Crop*, filmed in 2013, the same such phones are still in operation. *Crop* shows how these state institutions are seemingly held together by the fax machines, television monitors, metal detectors, and time-punch clocks that are still in operation. It is in light of the systems and structures put in place following the war—not merely the economic policies that boosted consumption and the import of consumer goods—that the presence of a military "logic" can be identified. Although the new realism filmmakers are recognized for their social commitment and disdain for institutionalized forms of corruption, their visual language continues to underline the presence of the state's institutions as they are comprised, not only in terms of their "geographic limitations" as buildings (ministries and administrative offices), but also through instruments of surveillance and control and even in the domestic appliances manufactured by the military.

Today, the soldiers crossing the Canal, and the army tanks rolling across the desert in the October war documentaries discussed here, look like they are on another planet entirely, further enhancing the deconstruction of the real. As one author has demonstrated, science fiction is "as notable for its flexibility and genre hybridity as it is for a series of conventions around developing technology or science" (Johnston 1). In seeking to identify the construction of the nation, the documentaries produced about the October war demonstrate that the victory was actualized through specific electronic warfare—thus heightening the emphasis on technology. Over time, these documentary films align with (if not transform into) science fiction on the basis of the fact that the war that they

are depicting is one which employed technology in order to recover land that had been lost. As a genre, science fiction has been identified by several literary and film critics to be implicitly or explicitly "about" nation and empire, with space presented as a "frontier" to be conquered. According to Greg Grewell, science fiction films and literature are driven by a "fear of colonization" that is articulated in plots that are either about the fear of being overrun by malicious "alien invaders of earth" or that project "earthly desires and anxieties outward, into the universe" (27). By extension, the narrative films made by the new realism filmmakers which focused on police, state, and army corruption, as well as *Crop*, an experimental documentary produced in the post 2011 era, draw on (and feature) a range of communication devices as temporal markers or residue from a bygone era.

If technologically Egypt was on a par with Israel in 1973, in the decades that followed, the public sector and institutions such as *Al-Ahram* the outmoded devices and processes apparently fell out of step with concurrent global developments. The 1973 documentaries comprise what transpired to become the fantasy of liberating the land from the Israeli occupiers, and the delusion (which filmmakers and politicians alike were expressing) that the 1973 war would mark a transformation from an era and Cinema of Defeat to one of Liberation and that, economically and politically, Egypt was entering a new phase of scientific and technological innovation. But given their formal and stylistic features, these documentaries also allow us to think more creatively about how they might be understood in terms of genre. In fact, it is the lack of digital technology that gives the film *Crop* the same sense of nostalgia common in science fiction films (Roberts 27). Thus, the nation and the institutions of that nation are identifiable—real or imagined—through its technology, buildings, and structures.

Featuring one of the most archetypal national institutions contained in a single colossal building (besides the more widely acknowledged Tahrir *mogamma*), *Crop* exposes the *Al-Ahram* building as suffering the same limitations as the State that it bolsters and speaks on behalf of. In *Nation Estate*, an 8-minute video by Larissa Sansour which imagines the entire Palestinian state as a high-rise building, each floor comprises a specific territory or institution: "Energy and Sanitation"; "Diplomatic Missions"; "Aid and Development"; "Government Headquarters"; "Permits and Passports"; and "Vertical Urban Planning." Sansour's use of computer animation to make the film points to the artificiality of those realities constructed and visualized through film; she employs science fiction to expose

and exaggerate the limits of the realities created in documentaries (Gabsi). Also a documentary that accentuates the image that is constructed by the state, *Crop* is otherworldly—exposing the inner workings of an image-making machine, and the various contraptions that facilitate image production. The film begins with a view of the 6th of October bridge taken from the *Al-Ahram* building. Images of the entrance, x-ray machine, turnstile, and elevators take the viewer through the multiple and various spaces that this colossal building houses: offices, boardrooms, pressrooms, restaurants, a general department of medical affairs (including a dentist), a cinema, newsrooms, archives, telephone centre, and kitchenettes, until we finally reach the expansive area that houses the printing presses.

Given the impulse to periodize Egyptian cinema along the lines of concrete social political transformations, a number of films have been categorized by critic Ali Abu Shadi as "realist" in their depiction of class difference and the existential plight of the common man at the mercy of corrupt officials. The realism that characterized the classical era was taken on by the so-called new realism directors who renewed the socio-economic concerns of earlier decades, but who also operated within the star system and made commercially viable narrative feature films. In the 1980s and 1990s, new realism directors made films which explicitly showed the corruption of police and army officers. Examples include *al-baree'* [*The Innocent*] (Atef El Tayeb, 1986), *zawget ragul mohim* [*An Important Man's Wife*] (Mohamed Khan, 1987), *did el-hokooma* [*Against the Government*] (Basheer El Deek, 1992), and *ard el-khowf* [*Land of Fear*] (Daoud Abdel-Sayed, 1999). In the 2000s, Egyptian films were bolder in their depiction of corrupt officials, most notably with *heya fawda* [*This Is Chaos*] (Khaled Youssef and Youssef Chahine, 2007). *esharet moroor* [*Traffic Light*] (Khairy Beshara, 1995), *Mercedes* (Yousry Nassrallah, 1993), and *leila sakhena* [*A Hot Night*] (Atef El Tayeb, 1995), are as much about bodies that cross borders as they are about the vehicles that carry them or the mass-produced equipment used to make such vehicles and that is shipped over those very borders for that purpose. *Traffic Light* begins when a traffic light goes out of service. A businessman caught in the resulting jam uses his mobile phone to call for someone to come and sort out the problem—it's 1995, and he is the only person present who is in possession of one. Switchboards, telephones, television monitors, viewing devices (such as periscopes, binoculars), traffic lights, and automobiles are fraught with anxiety as characters attempt to communicate—and to move. Several of these fiction films are set in, or feature episodes in the

same institutions that compelled Wiseman: the school, the hospital, the courthouse, the army barracks, the mental asylum, the police station, and the prison. In these narratives, the fictional register and its linkage with documentary footage made out of staged reconstructions is accentuated by the characters who occupy such places—they are disoriented, confused, or even deranged.

In Atef El Tayeb's *The Innocent*, the main character Ahmed (Ahmed Zaki) takes a series of transportation vehicles before arriving at his post as a military conscript. A montage sequence shows him (along with several other village conscripts) being weighed, measured, and clothed (with each of these procedures punctuated by the signing and stamping of forms), before they are trained and deposited in a remote military prison compound. Just as *Crop* shows the newspaper production process from start to finish, the army conscripts are "processed" by the institution's complex apparatus. This further enhances the naïve conscript's reverence for the system he is made part of; it is further bolstered by the belief in a "fictitious state of siege" invoked by the army officials. Ahmed is told that the prisoners he is watching over with his rifle are war criminals (they are actually political dissidents) and that his role is to protect the country from being invaded. He goes back home and boasts that he has killed one such enemy himself. The other villagers at first mock him for thinking that the country is at war, before they hush their tone, convinced that there might indeed be a secret war that not everyone knows about. This delusion is enhanced by depictions of nondescript, plain interior spaces of incarceration and torture designed to disorient. Inasmuch as the future incarnations of technology of power and control mark a nostalgia for the devices of bygone eras, the institution, whether it be the hospital, the prison, or army barracks, is a nondescript space that could be anywhere, held together by a complex bureaucratic process of paperwork and stamps.

The same systematic process of control and deception is depicted in *Crop*. As the doors of the *Al-Ahram* building elevators open and close, the voice-over tells us: "I was offered the position of head of the photo department in Al-Ahram in the 90s. When my father was in charge of this office, he used to tell us at home about the fights he had with the military official who was responsible for controlling the content of the newspaper. He knew nothing about photography whatsoever, but he had an opinion and would interfere with everything…Later, this direct form of censorship disappeared. The control was now in our heads. We censored ourselves and tried as much as we could not to do anything that would upset the

government." This became the sole business of the newspaper, and, as the voice-over explains, these distorted and fake images "had captured people's minds to such an extent that they couldn't even see the truth in front of them." This blurring of the distinction between truth and delusion was internalized, so that people themselves sought to protect the nation from any pictures that would spoil the image of beauty and prosperity that the state had constructed.

Crop ends with the final stages of the newspaper production process, as printed copies are transported along a conveyor belt before they are dispatched. In Samir Seif's 2002 *His Eminence the Minister* [*ma'aali elwazeer*], the opening sequence, which carries the film's credits, features the mechanized printing of a newspaper as the headlines, "hot off the press," announce the formation of a new cabinet of Ministers. The main character, Raafat Rustom (Ahmed Zaki) is appointed by mistake, after his phone number is confused with that of a professor with the same name.[6] He clings to his position tooth and nail, though his corruption starts to wear away at him, and he reveals to his personal aide, Atiya, that he is unable to sleep because he has gruesome nightmares every time he does so. Mocked as the Homonym Minister (*wazir shebeh el asmaa*), he is obsessed with saving face. The only two places he does manage to rest are in the mosque and a prison cell. Instead of the typical "any resemblance to real-life characters is purely coincidental" the text at the end of the film reads: "any resemblance of the Eminent fictional character in this film to any Eminent personalities is not the responsibility of the film but of the Eminent himself."

This play on the factual/fictional divide is also visible in the 1999 police thriller *Land of Fear* (Daoud Abdel-Sayed), in which Ahmed Zaki takes on the role of a policeman who goes deep under cover. This film contains the voice-over of the main protagonist Yahia al-Manqabandy who becomes Yahia Abudabboura, and who uses the code name Adam in his correspondences with the General who assigns him the mission to infiltrate a drug cartel. Accompanying a montage sequence of Yahia Abudabboura running on a track, playing squash, pulling weights, we hear Adam review his lawless actions as a drug dealer that, he reflects, have left him "alone in the land of fear." He seeks to abandon his position undercover—but his requests are totally ignored. The montage sequence ends, and we see Adam reading a coded advertisement in the newspaper: "if you want any information about buying or fixing old watches, call 835180." He makes the call and speaks to someone called Moussa.

When they meet, he says that he just wants assurance that the reports that he has been sending are useful. But at the end of the film, and 15 years later, Adam discovers that Moussa was not who he said he was but actually just someone who was working in the post office. Adam's letters were never delivered. Framed by the October war documentaries *Armies of the Sun* and *Heroes from Egypt*, where we explicitly see and hear people reading out letters sent from the front by soldiers to their families and loved ones, the postal system depicted in the film, as with the printing of newspapers, discloses the nostalgia for a bygone era that these films evoke, at the same time that it puts doubt in their capacity to facilitate effective communication across space and time.[7]

Marked by the science and technology that characterized modernity—news broadcasts of launching satellites, rockets, space stations, and artificial probes—science fiction fantasizes space travel or time travel and has given filmmakers scope to renegotiate the relationship between man and machine. It is in the construction of nation, and specifically the institutions and technologies that comprise it, that this genre can best be discerned. In 1962, "Nasser attended the test launch of two rockets *al-Zafir* (the victor) and *al-Qahir* (the conqueror) and in 1963 the mock-up of a rocket called *al-Raid* (the pioneer) was displayed at a military parade" (Determann 22). In 1965, the magazine *Al Mossawir* featured an article about the launching of Egypt's first spaceship. I have been hard pressed to find any other information about this event and it has been suggested that it never actually happened and was mostly propaganda, with any money dedicated to space missions redirected in the build-up to the 1967 war. Apparently, Egypt launched its first observational satellite with Ukraine in October 2007; however, communication with the satellite was lost in 2010 (Argoun 121). The Nilesat 101 and 102 communication satellites provide over 150 television channels and radio programs across the region. But these are considered non-scientific enterprises. And so, in 2014, just months after Sisi took power as president, Egypt showed its commitment to a space vision by launching another optical imaging satellite, EgyptSat-2 (Shay). In December 2017, 60 years after the space race began, the Egyptian parliament passed a law announcing the formation of an Egyptian Space Agency, and the launching of a satellite that "aims to support Egypt's 'presence in space,' to establish the presence of Egyptian scientists and researchers in outer space and to increase new investment opportunities and enhance developmental projects" and which is designed to serve the country's "national security and development

objectives" (ibid.). The satellite will provide the government and military with "mapping abilities, environmental monitoring, disaster management and [ominously] other capabilities" (Grové). The technological endeavours undertaken by the state, irrespective of whether the nation is actually under attack, have thus been motivated by the desire to maintain a state of exception and to sustain the belief that Egypt is on course to becoming the best country in the world. Recently, films such as *asad sinaa* [*Lion of Sinai*] (*Hassan El Sayed*, 2016), *alkhaliya* [*The Cell*] (Tarek El-Aryan, 2017) and *al-mumar* [*The Passage*] (Sherif Arafa, 2019), indicate that the Egyptian film industry is now starting to enjoy more direct support from the nation's economically and politically powerful military apparatus, sensationalizing the production and control of those same technological devices that have also given the Egyptian state the capacity to put over forty thousand political activists and "new" enemies of the state behind bars—because it is threatened by forces that seek to destroy the country.

What image of the nation and the institutions does the state deem satisfactory in today's Egypt? In early 2019, a recording was posted on Facebook of a mock ceremony taking place in a state school. A life-size banner of President Sisi standing in the doorway is lifted by someone behind it and carried from inside the school building to a precarious stand in the school courtyard. Instrumental music is blaring from speakers that flank the doorway. A teacher hands the hidden figure a microphone and the device also disappears behind the banner. The music is stopped and a woman's voice begins to speak as though she were actually Sisi: "I would like to thank you for this wonderful reception." Three young pupils are brought into the performance, dressed as a peasant, the mother of a groom, and a businessman. They are invited to present their "problems" in turn: the peasant needs land to farm, the mother needs a home so her son can get married, and the businessman needs to ship his goods. The voice of the president responds to each of them: to deal with the farmer's problem, "I've turned the desert into farmland," he declares. To help the mother, "I've built and furnished residential units in new towns and developments all over the country," he announces. And to the businessman the president replies: "Yes, it's a big problem. For the boat to move, we have to build a new Suez Canal." He then addresses all of the pupils in the courtyard: "Are you going to dig it with me?" he asks. "Are you? I can't hear you?" "Yes, we will!" they answer. "But I don't have any money. Are you going to give me money? Tell me, are you going

to give me money?" he shouts. "Yes, we will!" they chant. There is certainly no place here for a Wisemanesque recording of the banal activities of school teachers, pupils, or staff. He—or she—several times makes the pupils repeat the name of the different programs he has implemented to solve their (the nation's) problems. What have become widely known as Sisi's catchphrases, "Don't you know you are the light of my eyes?" and "Egypt's going to be the best place in the whole world" are also repeated. The statements made by the costumed children are delivered emphatically and with conviction. The problems they are voicing are real. But what's going through the mind of the children standing behind the banner is anyone's guess. One young girl is sitting on a bench by the doorway. Her left arm is in a sling. In this short recording we have each of the elements that comprise the ultimate image of the nation as it stands today: the school as its core institution, the future generation of farmers, family makers, and businessmen, and two speakers, a microphone, and a camera, nourishing the delusion, participants in the fiction, performing as though it were real.

Notes

1. Askar Kazeboon (Military Liars) was set up in 2011 in the period following Mubarak's ouster when the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took power in order to expose violations by security forces using "grassroots media tools…to inform the public of alleged crimes committed by the military… It [Kazeboon] specifically targeted the unaware and the usually uninterested, who might be easier subjects to government and military-controlled media, which routinely attributed violence to foreign third parties seeking to destabilise the nation" (Taha). See also Lane.
2. In Arabic, two terms are used to refer to documentary film: *film watha'iki* فيلم وثائقي and *film tasjeeli* فيلم تسجيلي.وثائقي. *watha'iki* relates more to footage or archival material, while *tasjeeli* تسجيلي entered into usage by film critics and producers in the 1960s as a translation of the word documentary in English. Distinctions are made between different kinds of documentaries, which might indeed not be considered documentaries at all on the basis of their purpose and audience, such as political propaganda, *da'aya sinima'iya* دعاية سياسية, instructional or educational films, *film ta'aleemi* فيلم تعليمي, and newsreels, *gareeda sinima'iya* جريدة سينمائية..
3. This shift has also brought their films closer to the "real" in that they are used as historical sources. In a walking tour of Cairo conducted by Aida El Kashef on 31 October 2015 as part of the Creative Cities Conference (organized by CLUSTER and AUC), clips were shown to participants as

they visited the places used in the films of Mohamed Khan, Salah Abu Seif, Atef El Tayeb, and others in the 1970s and later years. Films from the classical era are often cited as evidence of Egypt's "clean and urban centers," promoting what Ifdal Elsaket refers to as "colonial nostalgia." The same performers who became associated with the new realism directors, most notably Nour El-Sherif and Mahmoud Yassin, were also central characters in the handful of narrative films made about the 1973 war. In an attempt to distance the Sadat leadership from Nasser's ideologies, a number of films released in the 1970s levelled their criticism against Nasser by depicting torture under detention, as in *Al-Karnak* (Ali Badrakhan, 1975); *ah ya leil ya zaman* (Ali Reza, 1977), the depiction of political prisoners in fiction films such as *wara el-shams* [*Behind the Sun*] (Mohamed Rady, 1978), or even two ordinary citizens who are mistaken for political protestors and accidentally detained by authorities in *ahna betoa' el-otobees* [*We Are the Bus People*] (Hussein Kamal, 1979).

4. In 1952, the oil company Shell set up a film section and trained local filmmakers such as Saad Nadim and Hassan El-Telmessany to make educational and instructional films for workers, as well as documentaries.
5. Elsewhere, this militarized way of being has been identified with the camera itself, described as a tool of surveillance and control using electronic devices and signals to make the invisible visible (see Virilio).
6. Further enhancing the blurring of reality and fiction, I have been told that following the release of Mohamed Khan's biopic *ayyam el-sadat* [*Days of Sadat*] (2001), starring Ahmed Zaki as Sadat, impersonations of the president performed by younger generations have been based on Zaki's performance rather than directly pulling from footage of Sadat himself (Omara).
7. More recently, an 8-minute long video published on YouTube in 2016, entitled *al-tareeq illa octobar* ("The Road to October") supplements the account of the war by referencing both Tahrir and Sisi, ending with garish red text that reads: "Best Regards Department of Morale Affairs," as though the whole film were in fact a letter or postcard. This linguistic component is also reiterated in some film credits: *Armies of the Sun* begins by acknowledging the Armed Forces and the Egyptian army, which is more than 7000 years old. In *Tank Catcher*, credits are chalked onto tanks and village walls. In the hundreds of videos and television features uploaded on YouTube that use footage from the time to commemorate the war, both graphics and voice-over are designed to exalt the armed forces.

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CHAPTER 12

Teaching Egypt Cinematically

Terri Ginsberg

When film and media are subjected to scholarly analysis, the term "propaganda" is used frequently to denote techniques of political persuasion. Although historically, "propaganda" was accepted as a legitimate means of recruitment to political causes (Bernays), in the West, where cinema studies finds its origins, it fell into disfavor under Cold War political conditions in which persuasion was believed necessarily to entail dishonesty or prejudicial bias (Herman and Chomsky). Indeed "bias" itself became, under these conditions, relatively synonymous with "prejudice," whereupon any films or media which did not stand to represent so-called "neutrality" were received with suspicion as tools of politics, rather than politics being understood as integral to cinematic art and to the apparatus which frames it. Artwork, in general, was in turn equated with a mode of expression

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disassociated fundamentally from the political, and political persuasion came to be seen as running contrary to artistic creativity. In the liberal academy, this paradigm was extended to pedagogy, the integrity of which was considered compromised by the politically positioned pedagogue (see Ulmer), especially when her position was Marxist or otherwise left of center (see Ginsberg, "Cold War").

In the contemporary, neoliberal academy, however, the separation of art, including pedagogical art, from politics has typically been understood as arbitrary. At least since the postmodern turn of the 1980s, debate over the matter has been considered transcended by and within longstanding traditions of critical theory and ideology critique. We may, however, have become too complacent; for the terms of the old debates have not only resurfaced but are also once again being manipulated in a reactionary effort, overdetermined by nonacademic interests bent on privatizing higher education entirely, to delegitimize and discount politically persuasive art and pedagogy, not to mention pedagogical art. Liberal doctrines of "fairness" may once have held sway to moderate any such manipulation under the rubric of "balance," for which the capitalist mandate not to offend the customer was taken almost as a given (McChesney 257–280), yet the contemporary rejection of political pedagogy and pedagogical art entails an extreme polarization of these integral components, to the extent that the fundamental relationship between politics, pedagogy, and art is dissimulated. Now so-called neutral work has become, actually and despite apolitical appearances, interpretable as propaganda in that term's negative sense, while explicitly political speech is under no obligation to profess honesty or eschew prejudicial bias; indeed these latter practices are commonly touted as propagandistic—the stuff of "fake news"—rather than unethical by those corporate and political entities which control the means of disseminating public discourse, many of which stand to profit from the spectacularization of controversy (Hendershot; also Foster).

Middle Eastern film and media studies are not immune to this disingenuous pressure to sustain a neutral composure, notwithstanding—often because of—the area's irrevocably political enabling conditions and the unprecedented fraught situationality of the region in which films produced and directed by Arabs and Muslims proliferate. As the example of Palestinian film teaches saliently, even some of the politically least oppositional films emerging from the region[1] are overdetermined by,

and manifest at multiple hermeneutic registers, the underlying conditions of their production, distribution, circulation, and exhibition (Massad). Because this fact cannot easily be denied, millions of petrodollars have been pumped into commercial efforts, largely in the Gulf states, to produce, distribute, and exhibit films which—not unlike Israeli *hasbara* cinema—pay lip service to political problems and concerns while mystifying their causes and solutions with aesthetic-effects that function to contain ongoing resistance to the capitalist status quo (Dickinson, "Travel," 119–162; Mirgani [in this volume]; also Della Ratta et al., *Arab Media*), sometimes by denying that any such resistance exists. Romantic, often escapist films such as *Barakah Meets Barakah* [*Barakah Yoqabil Barakah*] (Mahmoud Sabbagh, Saudi Arabia, 2016) and *Waves '98* (Ely Dagher, Lebanon/Qatar, 2015), for example, are publicized as innovative or taboo-breaking for their liberal treatments of gender, sexuality, and social mobility, and thus for the challenges they seem to pose to the strict censorship codes imposed by their producer states' religiously conservative regimes; but as the neoliberal conditions of those states' enduring power structures are left unremarked, the films are hailed by, and welcomed into, the "world cinema" circuit, a network for transnational cinema the primary purpose of which is commercial, and the primary significance of which is the (re)positioning of regional ideology along neoliberal capitalist lines and their neo-nationalist and neo-patriarchal entailments (Broe and Ginsberg).[2] Hence the irony—disingenuousness—of the lukewarm reception, if not complete marginalization, by many critics and audiences of popular world cinema fare to other films from the region (such as those discussed later in this chapter) which have been screened in academic and art-world contexts and do, by contrast, make political pedagogy—the art of positioned persuasion—central to their visions, and which as such challenge the hegemonic tendency toward commercialism within the global Arab cinemascape.

In contrast to this reactionary tendency, a small but growing wave of independent films has emerged within the Arab and Muslim world over at least the past fifteen years, which stands to counter the promotion of *hasbara*-like films from the Gulf states within the world cinema enterprise, and largely for reason of its challenge to the neoliberal developments conditioning that enterprise has received scant scholarly attention.[3] This wave may be located to the post-9/11 period, during which heightened discrimination and violence against international Arab and Muslim communities has occurred in reaction to ongoing resistance

by those communities to the super-exploitative effects of U.S.-led post-Soviet economic triumphalism. New questions have arisen, for example, within American Arab communities about the meaning and significance of Arab and Muslim identities under the exponentially racist and Islamophobic conditions fostered by the heightened neoliberalism of this recent period (Bayoumi; Sheehi). As U.S.-led military incursions throughout the Middle East region, especially those carried out by Israel and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, have increased in breadth, ferocity, and intensity, these questions, which take the form of cultural interventions and protests as well as constructive self-criticism and doubt, have begun to follow paths more overt and radical than in prior decades, with the widespread availability of digital technologies contributing not only to the destructive military-industrial advance but also to the capacity for anti-racist, anti-Islamophobic, anti-colonial efforts to consolidate against it on an unprecedented scale.

In this contestational context, this chapter will analyze two recent Egyptian independent productions, the personal feminist documentary, *Cairo Chronicles* (Tania Kamal-Eldin, 2004), a film ignored by international networks and hence never positioned as an instance of world cinema; and the experimental film, *Out on the Street* [*Barra fil Shara'*] (Jasmina Metwaly/Philip Rizk, 2015), an innovative instance of filmed theater of the oppressed as such largely unassimilable into world cinema circuits for its radical challenge to the latter's dominant, neo-conventional aesthetics. The aim of this chapter will be to reveal, through critique, the superficiality and in some instances irrelevance of these films' ideological receptions, which function to elide their political depth and have thus restricted their potential and opportunities to circulate as works of pedagogical art. *Cairo Chronicles*, for example, has been misrecognized, reductively, as no more than a personal work of diasporic nostalgia, when in fact it would appear equally, if not centrally, concerned with the political question of how to convey, cinematically, the meaning and significance of modern "Egypt." Similarly, *Out on the Street* has been misunderstood as a phenomenological engagement with the inaccessibility of facts, to the exclusion of critically recognizing its performative analysis of the predicament of labor in Egypt. My account seeks to transcend these limited, if not entirely unfavorable, understandings in the better interests of explaining the films' profound pedagogical import as a core element of their aesthetic structuring and thus of the centrality—and legitimacy—of their political engagement. By extension the essay will draw critical comparisons

between the political positionings of the two films with respect to the socio-economic conditions in 21st-century Egypt with which they are centrally concerned, and which they problematize so compellingly.

* * *

In 2003, American Egyptian filmmaker and educator Tania Kamal-Eldin returned to Cairo in an attempt to (re)connect with the city of her birth following the untimely death of her father, who in 1963, for political reasons, had been compelled into exile along with his three daughters and his American wife of Norwegian descent. Raised largely in the United States, Kamal-Eldin would return to Egypt occasionally throughout her adult years. *Cairo Chronicles* begins and ends, in this context, with the line, narrated by Kamal-Eldin, "With my father's death, my strongest tie to Egypt diminishes." Between these spoken lines as they bookend the film, *Cairo Chronicles* portrays Kamal-Eldin visiting various locations throughout metropolitan Cairo, in ostensible search for a means by which to compensate for this sense of diminished connection. These visits include the City of the Dead, a cemetery where her father is buried; the home of her affluent first cousin, whose family was granted a large share of Kamal-Eldin's inheritance under an Egyptian law derived from selective, colonial-era appropriation of Islamic law; the working-class neighborhood of her family's former cook; the Great Pyramids of Giza; and the stately mansion of an Egyptian friend, Adel Mahmoud Sabet, also formerly exiled and now living once again in his Cairo home, to which he was able to return and thereby save from demolition by real estate developers eager to modernize the Cairo cityscape with the help of Saudi and Emirati investment.[4] Punctuating this travelogue are archival photographs from Kamal-Eldin's and, later, Sabet's family albums, interviews with family friends from Kamal-Eldin's parents' generation and class, and quotidian scenes from contemporary Cairo. Kamal-Eldin's spoken recitation serves as the voice-over to the image-track, explicating and analyzing the various scenes and encounters with respect to their historical contexts and ideological significance, except, as I shall indicate, when such scenes and encounters are audible via direct diegetic sound. The tone of *Cairo Chronicles*, even at its conclusion, projects a mixture of anger, sadness, indignation, regret, resistance, resignation, persistence, and exhaustion. It is this general tone, combined with the film's manifest content, which led audiences and amateur critics—of which a few are actually documented—to describe it, mistakenly,

as effectively exclusively a creative expression of bourgeois, diasporic nostalgia.[5] That the film may, in addition, be seen as a pedagogical occasion by which an elegy to one's father becomes a counter-hegemonic critique of the greater social ties binding one to him, is entirely overlooked by such superficial commentary.

Films engaging the experience of exile are typically framed in this limited way. Nostalgia means literally longing for home, but in modern parlance, it has accrued a more commonsensical meaning that references desire based in false consciousness of one's history, identity, and practical ideals (see Routledge). Nostalgia in this context connotes the pain and resentment associated with irreparable loss—and the potential social dangers of attempting nonetheless to redeem it. Most salient among these is the cultivation of a fascist aesthetics. For film theorists, cinema embodies this dangerous potential: cinema, the desiring machine, an ideological apparatus interpellating social subjects vulnerable to manipulation by the state in the service of its capital interests; cinema, that is, as purveyor of the spectacular collapse of experience into myth, a phenomenon understood by Marxists as latent within capitalism (Baudry; Comolli; Heath). If applied to *Cairo Chronicles*, this typified meaning of nostalgia would characterize Kamal-Eldin's returns to Egypt, and her pursuit of (re)connection to it, as mythological. This is in fact how Egyptian and Arab audiences, both in the United States and in Egypt, among them scholars at the 2005 Middle East Studies Association (MESA) annual conference, have interpreted the film (Kamal-Eldin).[6] Its cinematic structuration, however, in conjunction with its manifest content, stands to challenge the record.

Cairo Chronicles' narrative of return fully understood may be contrasted with the understanding of return outlined by film scholar Will Higbee (*Post-beur*), who, writing about North African filmmakers in France, charts a dialectic of exile–return that stands to resolve the underlying problematic along existentialist lines. For Higbee, echoing the prevailing academic discourse on the subject (Armes; Dönmez-Colin; Fowler and Helfied; Spass; Tarr), the Maghrebi cinematic exile narrative, to which *Cairo Chronicles* may be analogized, thematizes the exilic/diasporic experience as irremediable, and exilic/diasporic subjectivity as that of the social misfit. The exile finds herself without a sense of belonging; for the post-Hegelian Higbee, however, there is no redress for such alienation other than psychological acceptance and social complacency, a phenomenological perspective that backgrounds the material conditions of exile simply

as the context for a journey of perpetually deferred return. The impossibility, ensuing from Higbee's perspective, of ever overcoming the contradictions underlying exile is accounted for ideally, as a private matter notwithstanding its social determination with respect either to the diasporic or home country, which—apropos of Hegel, and of the Marx who turns him upright—insofar as these are historical are also changeable. Higbee's truncated dialectic, impervious to such changeability, universalizes the experience of exile and thus projects a mythological perspective onto return that, as applied to the modern, Middle Eastern arena, easily references a Zionist and/or Christian apocalyptic intertext.

Cairo Chronicles irrupts any such propagandistic idealization and dissolution of "return." Instead it projects a ***historically positioned*** nostalgia that stands to lend material fullness to Higbee's incomplete dialectic. Kamal-Eldin's passage is no Zionist "journey" to mythical utopia, nor are locations in *Cairo Chronicles* mere "background" to subjective transcendence by Kamal-Eldin and her film's audiences. Postcolonial Egypt does not exist in *Cairo Chronicles* only as Kamal-Eldin's actual place of birth. Consistently referred to both verbally and visually as a site of political corruption and economic instability, this particular Egypt, enthralled problematically to the U.S. hegemon, overdetermines Kamal-Eldin's displacement and her cinematic engagement with it. Archival images from the colonial period, deliberately juxtaposed with contemporary footage of Cairo and its inhabitants and framed by Kamal-Eldin's voice-over as it narrativizes Egypt's gradual maldevelopment (Amin) from that period to the present, demonstrate, among other things, that the larger conditions of Kamal-Eldin's exile—the global contradictions of Nasserism—predate her own experience of them, and at the same time they, in their neoliberal transfiguration, are what have enabled her very return to Egypt to examine them cinematically in what becomes, through the film's narrative-composition, the mirror of their internal otherness. Rather than depicting return as a reactionary desire for ontological being, that is, *Cairo Chronicles* performs Kamal-Eldin's alienation as a *cinematic* effect, a condition of industrial capitalism in which reality is experienced as a simulated projection of fetishistic dis/connection (Beller), hence restoring the phenomenon of alienation to its ideological base in a postcolonial world for which the dis/connection endemic to cinematic (and commodity) fetishism is a normative feature of everyday neocolonial reality; and repositioning the common attempt to overcome it nostalgically as a socially

symbolic act. To borrow, selectively, from Jacques Derrida ("That Dangerous"), *Cairo Chronicles*' narrativization of return is one of supplementarity: any potential idealization of return is transposed onto a pervasively reflexive narratology that, as I shall explicate, pre-empts the mystification of enabling conditions by relocating Kamal-Eldin's alienation, both from Egypt and the diasporic United States, as well as her resistance to it, to the film's problematic center. There, the coordinates of dis/connection form an aesthetic-discursive matrix that grounds *inequality* as Kamal-Eldin's foundational experience and figures *marginality* as both its nexus and critical praxis. This transposition of ontos into praxis, and in turn of the ideological into a call for a just restitution, marks the film's self-reflexive demand and establishes its modality as that of *critical allegory*. It is this rhetorical resituation which in turn directs the film's inscription of alienation into a performative critique of mythological nostalgia, for which the "otherness" of patriarchal absence becomes the contemporaneity of a destabilized, dislocated, dis-identified, feminist self-same, rendering *Cairo Chronicles* an unsettling, disturbing, provocative—pedagogical—instantiation of Egypt, of father, of home.

Cairo Chronicles' allegoricality—its performative critique of patriarchal postcolonial absence–presence—operates at several hermeneutic registers to produce a meta-reflexive occasion that is easily overlooked by those critics and viewers who have simply read the film without regard to its cinematic structuring. In the first instance, *Cairo Chronicles*' depiction of its titular city, of which Egyptian audiences have been exceptionally critical for its so-called airing of dirty laundry (Kamal-Eldin), is decidedly non-romantic, whether in the film's diegetic present or past. The Kamal-Eldin family is portrayed as historically uprooted: by European colonialism, by anti-colonial revolution, by postcolonial failures, and by neocolonial corruption. Always, the film's many insert shots of scenes from the Cairo cityscape—a shop window displaying women's fashions, including lingerie, that most Egyptian women will never themselves wear; dilapidated buildings and roadways; exceedingly poor neighborhoods; a billboard at once lampooning and celebrating American cultural "liberty"; a group of Western tourists taking photographs of one another posing in front of the Egyptian Museum; and Kamal-Eldin herself standing prominently before the Great Pyramids—demonstrate that this familial dislocation is overdetermined by and within the contradictions of the neoliberal world order as it has encroached upon and further dislocated Kamal-Eldin's, and her film's, birthplace. *Cairo Chronicles*' refusal to present a sanitized or

alluring picture of Cairo or to apologize for Egypt's checkered history, even during its periods of modern glory,[7] and the film's ensuing practice of laying bare the enabling conditions of Kamal-Eldin's own position within that maldeveloped dialectic, undergirds a film-length resistance to the mythological and underscores its central concern with marginality—its aim to reposition peripheral situatedness at the praxeological center of the Egyptian experience.

Cairo Chronicles' proclivity to depict Cairo in its historical and social fullness extends from the film's *mise-en-scène* to its cinematographic insistence on the polysemy of cliché scenarios and kitsch objects, that is, its camp sensibility. Take, for example, a lone cat portrayed in long-shot seated on the sill of an opaque window in Sabet's stately mansion which has seen better days; or the majestic Pyramids of Giza, now notoriously "invaded," according to Kamal-Eldin's narration over a billboard advertising the "ancient feeling" of Coca-Cola, by "tourists in air-conditioned buses," in front of which Kamal-Eldin herself, in a quick series of medium shots, wearing sunglasses, khaki slacks, and a men's polo shirt, poses confidently, but without discernible expression, sometimes in profile, sometimes in direct address, for the camera.[8] In both instances, the self-reflexive predominance of Kamal-Eldin's figure at or near the center of the frame, coupled with her wry deportment and the obscuring of her visage, infuses the virtual space between the shots' background and foreground with a rhetorical impenetrability that bespeaks the power of resistance to its colonial "excavation," a sense classically emblematized throughout the film by cats, icon of ancient Egyptian religion and art and beacon of independence and impregnability (Malek), and a non-anthropocentric metaphor by which to visualize social decay (Eisenstein 40 qtd. in Hamblin). (Over the earlier image of one cat's tail disappearing beyond the margins of the mentioned window frame Kamal-Eldin in fact utters the word "nostalgia.") The cat's disposition is adopted, deliberately, by Kamal-Eldin during the pyramid scene, as her voice-over characterizes her relationship to Egypt, itself synechdochized by the Pyramids, as that of a *khawaga*: a stranger. At the same time, decentered and profile shots frame her unassailable, Sphinx-like look as one of a carnivalized Pharaonism which, in its characteristic one-dimensionality, at once problematizes Western quattrocento's imperialist clamoring for monocular depth (Comolli) and demarcates the oblique three-dimensionality signified by Kamal-Eldin's stalwart posing, as metonymic. Here a medium close-up of Kamal-Eldin is intercut, at the very utterance of the word,



Fig. 12.1 *Cairo Chronicles* (Tania Kamal-Eldin, Egypt/US, 2004)

khawaga, with an insert-shot of a kitsch rendering of King Tutankhamun. Three screen minutes later, she will turn her back to the spectator and walk at an angle away from the camera toward the Pyramids, her figure receding into the sandy background (Figs. 12.1, 12.2, and 12.3).

The scene positions the exilic stranger, analogized in an earlier series of interview commentaries as an "alien group" readily assimilable—subsumed—into the historical "Egyptian melting pot," as potentially more Egyptian—a more faithful embodiment of the multitudinous origins and casts of the people residing within the nation's borders—than are indigenous Egyptians themselves. As Kamal-Eldin states sardonically over a shot of a cat sprawled on the floor of a coffee shop in which stands a cooler bearing the name Coca-Cola: "Egypt or America?" Now identifiable as the cinematic spectator as much as Tania Kamal-Eldin, the *khawaga* becomes coterminous with "Egyptian"—but, recalling Georg Simmel's definition of the *stranger* as "that individual who becomes part of a social grouping by being physically present within the group while remaining, nonetheless, distant" (Anderson 56), an Egyptian who signifies the non-self-identity of the Derridean supplement and, as such, not a



Fig. 12.2 *Cairo Chronicles* (Tania Kamal-Eldin, Egypt/US, 2004)



Fig. 12.3 *Cairo Chronicles* (Tania Kamal-Eldin, Egypt/US, 2004)

(neo)nationalist atavism but a concerted *inter*nationalist refusal to acquiesce to the global hegemony responsible for the country's—and Kamal-Eldin's—unsettled state.[9]

The height of this refusal is not, for all that, Kamal-Eldin's campy deportment but its *mise-en-abyme*: the point at which the film erupts its bookends, demonstrating the critical importance of this metonymic "strangeness" and its absent–present perspective, to its political pedagogy of Egypt. The eruption occurs gradually and is borne by a pervasive ironization that stands as the aesthetic core of the film's meta-reflexivity. At the register of sound, a lighthearted, quasi-oriental musical theme by Russian-Egyptian composer Khaled Hammad, played on a synthesizer, seems on one hand to trivialize the seriousness of the image-track and its narrative explication, but on the other hand, by its lithe matter-of-factness evoking Michel Chion's concept of *anempathetic* or "indifferent" sound (Chion 8–9), comes to serve as yet another instance—and another order—of campiness, extending the film's quotidian content into allegorical significance—a significance which, however, reaches its apex when the music stops.[10]

The key moment at which this happens takes place in Sabet's stately yet dilapidated mansion. In contrast to the cinematography elsewhere in the film, this scene is shot with a handheld camera that invites the spectator to investigate the space as it opens onto a long corridor, on the floor of which lies the infant child of a household servant wrapped in a blanket, the sibling of a little girl whom the camera has followed along the corridor at her invitation. Throughout the scene, direct sound in the form of live dialogue takes over from Kamal-Eldin's voice-over and the intermittent musical theme: her nonsynchronous narration suddenly becomes diegetic and synchronous; the first person becomes the third person—or so it seems. Upon making the uncertain and therefore anti-climactic, while nonetheless disturbing discovery of the swaddled baby at the end of the corridor, the camera halts, and the scene shifts to a room in the house where Kamal-Eldin is portrayed, as she will be again during the pyramid scene, walking into the background, away from the camera, where she sits in a chair set against a wall, just as the little girl, and then again Sabet, had earlier been seated in another, similarly positioned chair. Kamal-Eldin's dialogue here with Sabet indicates that she has given the camera, over which she/her cinematographer formerly had control, to him, whom she proceeds to instruct on how to focus the lens. As he takes her direction, the shot, previously blurred, achieves clarity, as the camera zooms in on

Kamal-Eldin, portraying her momentarily in extreme close-up, fully visible, albeit fleetingly, for the first time in the film, and looking silently into the camera, before the image blurs once again, and the scene cuts to a foray into Sabet's family photograph album.

The moment is paradigmatic in several respects. While the play of aurality "vectorizes" time (Chion 18–20), the fleeting quality of the close-up creates an almost thanatographic moment (Michelson 38–39), for which the shift from non-diegetic to diegetic sound supplies a hint of authenticity, the dangerous potential for which metaphysical positioning, however, is pre-empted by a cinematographic preclusion of visual clarity, most importantly of the authorial figure of Kamal-Eldin herself. Recalling her earlier voice-over commentary, "I am wary of being voyeuristic," the camera here disrupts spectatorial complacency and pleasure, first by making it difficult for the spectator actually to see the profilmic event, then by redirecting any ensuing desire—indeed the film does not reject the desiring gaze per se—for reclarification back onto the spectator herself: one look at Kamal-Eldin's face in silent close-up, and the ideal spectator's expectation that Kamal-Eldin at least visually fits the stereotype of an Egyptian/woman/bourgeoise is wholeheartedly thwarted. Here, as aurality enters liminality, and third person becomes second person, what has been prefigured materializes. The camera, divested of phallic power in the unpracticed hands of Sabet,[11] and vis-à-vis the uncertain objective of its passage through the servants corridor, becomes an index of Kamal-Eldin's determined gender-bending and class problematization, which themselves now double ("*khawaga*" literally means "sir" [Golia 112]), through Sabet's surrogate adoption of both her gaze and her look, as national-political non-identity, regarding both Kamal-Eldin as a child of an Egyptian father and an American mother, and Sabet as a veritable anachronism with respect to his elite, colonial-era class positioning in the diegetic present tense. Allegorically speaking, it is not that neither Kamal-Eldin nor Sabet (nor the film's other, former elite-class interviewees) can return to and thus regain a lost era. Kamal-Eldin and Sabet, whom the voice-over reminds us hails not coincidentally from Kamal-Eldin's father's generation, and whose own gender and class positioning are at once destabilized by his inadequate handling of Kamal-Eldin's camera and enforced by the instructive authority given in this scene to women and girls, some of them working class, both figure as performative matrices of the grand dialectic of exile–return, in which cinematic spectatorship itself, and in

turn the spectator herself, are also implicated. These two figures demonstrate, against the sort of mythological nostalgia which Higbee reads onto Maghrebi films of return (and which Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp's more recent discussion of cinematic representations of first-generation Muslim women from the Maghreb in France challenges ["Muslim Women"]), that, much as gender and class positioning are determined less by design than by circumstance, Egyptian political history as well is a site of contestation; whether under Farouk or Nasser or Sadat or Mubarak, "Egyptianness" is a struggle traversed by the pain and contradictions of colonialism and its patriarchal capitalist entailments, which may force a child into premature adulthood and infantilize an adult—and which at the same time cannot expunge the kernel of its overcoming.[12]

The key to this overcoming—the utopic coincidence of meta-positioned gender, class, and national identities—is reinforced by its contextualization within the narrative trajectory, the apparent circularity of which—beginning and ending with Mubarak-era Egypt and punctuated by backward, often photographic glances to the postcolonial past[13]—is not, for that, strictly Oedipal but, by some contrast, Abrahamic. As mentioned, *Cairo Chronicles* is bookended by a narrational claim concerning the relationship between Kamal-Eldin's loss of her father and her ability to stay connected with Egypt: "I return to Egypt as I had many times before, to reconnect and disconnect." If read psychoanalytically, this stated yearning for re/disconnection might be interpreted as a neurotic rehearsal of lifelong dispossession and displacement—a perpetual reliving of the trauma of exile/return: *Cairo Chronicles* does in fact open with Kamal-Eldin describing the sudden, untimely death of her father during a return visit, as if literally to underscore the gravity of that trauma and its psychological effects, and—echoing the ideological nostalgia for pre-socialist Cairo expressed by more than one of the elite-class interviewees from his generation—she does later lament the sense of lost protection she has felt since his passing. By the same token, and on the other hand, Kamal-Eldin's back-and-forth is no Freudian *fort–da*, with Egypt as the phallus and Kamal-Eldin the praxis of its *object petit a*. Kamal-Eldin's unabashed gender-bending stands to demystify and complicate any such rendering. Rather than simply playing out a desire to retrieve the phallus from the father who, within the Oedipal scenario would have either to be abandoned or be killed, actually or metaphorically, in order for the mother either to be possessed or replaced; that is, rather than attempting to represent the patriarchal homeland in an effort to attain subjective balance,

insofar as the film's authorial voice largely identifies, historically, with a different, mother country (the United States), *Cairo Chronicles*' narratology grapples with the politics of dis/loyalty to the historical homeland, and to the actual father who is its metonym. In the process, the film not only dis-covers Egypt's patriarchal capitalist *cruelty*—an ensuing scene portrays Kamal-Eldin confronting, in a monologue projected abstractly over a series of shots of working-class slums, her cousin who has benefited financially by the Egyptian patriarchal law—but also unveils the *foreignness* of such cruelty to the essential humanness epitomized by the tightly framed, momentary close-up of Kamal-Eldin herself seated in the chair, in place of the servant girl child and of Sabet, the uncanny irruption by which of the narrative discourse of "return" compels the realization that even patriarchy in contemporary Egypt—Kamal-Eldin's voice-over states previously that "[w]omen hadn't veiled for decades, and now they were doing it all over again"—is strange, having as much to do with the destructive neocolonialist "advance" of her adoptive, diasporic country as it does with the reactionary dysfunction of her historic land of birth.[14]

Insofar as Abrahamic narratology posits a father who dies not on account of his sins (for example King Laius, Jesus Christ) but on account of complications arising from an incomplete revolution (as with Moses and the Prophet Mohammed), *Cairo Chronicles* exposes and, by its uncanny carnivalism, which continues from the mansion scene through the stolen inheritance scene to film's end, redeems the resilience and perseverance of the multitude, members of which, much like Kamal-Eldin earlier, are depicted toward films' end in a series of Pasolinian close-ups, looking directly into the camera, at once bearers and projectors of the Egyptian legacy, gazing not at what has been lost but at what might yet be found in the interstices of Kamal-Eldin's cinematic pedagogy.

* * *

Its political aesthetics notwithstanding, *Cairo Chronicles* is a film made during a period in Egyptian history when cultural production was not so regulated that filmmakers were typically denied permission to shoot in public. Kamal-Eldin was questioned several times in the Egyptian street, once by security police, during the shooting of *Cairo Chronicles*, but she was able to complete the shooting of her film in Cairo. On the other hand, Philip Rizk, while a Masters student participating in a much earlier,

2009 demonstration on the outskirts of Cairo protesting Egypt's role in the Israeli siege of Gaza known as Operation Cast Lead, was kidnaped by Egyptian security police and interrogated, in part over a documentary he had just completed entitled *This Palestinian Life* (see Ajl), concerning resistance by Palestinian farmers to the ongoing Israeli occupation, which was shot in the West Bank and Gaza and raised false suspicion that his direct interaction with Palestinians carried "terrorist" implications. During the 2011 Egyptian uprising, Rizk became active with Mosireen,[15] an independent Egyptian video collective which used new media platforms as "a form of counter-propaganda […] to subvert the rhetoric of the authorities" (Rizk qtd. in Pârvan 148). By the time that Rizk and Jasmina Metwaly made their 2015 film, *Out on the Street* [*Barra fil Shara'*], however, the potentially revolutionary events in Egypt of 2011–2013 had been reversed by the installation of a new military regime led by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, for which overt cinematic representation of the public sphere is viewed as a threat to national security, and both censorship and its enforcement have reached draconian heights. Filmmakers, especially journalists among them, could be—and are—arrested and their equipment and footage confiscated, while cinematic audiences may be interrogated. Such has in fact already been the partial fate of some members of Mosireen (Hafez).

Out on the Street picks up on these draconian circumstances, now the default in Egyptian media culture, by projecting them and their relationship to labor in the form of filmed theater. The approximately 70-minute film centers around an ad hoc grouping of skilled Egyptian workers from a wide array of industries who have found themselves jobless after the state-owned factories in which they were formerly employed were closed due to the implementation and after-effects of neoliberal policies that, extending back to the Sadat years and heightened under Mubarak, mandated the gradual privatization of government-run industry (see De Smet 237–239; Mitchell, *Carbon* 228). Rather than document the workers' respective stories through a generic talking-heads confessional while contextualizing any such testimony with archival and direct footage of the factory closures and of public resistance to them, *Out on the Street* portrays the workers acting out the general history of the Egyptian labor predicament, in the process of scripting, through improvization, a theatrical performance about a single accountant in a textile factory, reminiscent of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahalla al-Kubra (see Shenker 156–168), whose demotion sparks a protest among his

colleagues, in which the workers play all of the various roles, including the factory supervisor, informants, and police. The workers hence serve as non-professional actors in a play, the form, structure, and creative development of which are reminiscent of Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, a presentational modality inspired by Paolo Freire's renowned *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in which the people themselves take control of the means of theatrical production, becoming actors as well as spectators—"*spect-actors*"—who educate themselves and develop stronger solidarity ties through oppositional role-play and collective direction; and of the German *Theaterpädagogik* (theater pedagogy) movement, which also influenced Boal and which, recalling Brecht, aims for social change by combining the development of linguistic and performance skills with training in collective action (Bidlo). The immediate effect of this cinematic choice to facilitate the production of a people's play rather than to categorize and document a series of conventional interviews is to permit a cinematic performance of capitalist social relations and their recent historical structuring within Egypt, that as such serves not only to describe conditions of worker exploitation but also to allegorize the censorial conditions which artists, including filmmakers, face under the Sisi regime when representing such conditions. *Out on the Street* depicts the revolutionary "street" by repositioning it as the interior space of an abandoned factory, in turn transforming the act of documentation into a second-order, rather than primary empirical, praxis—and shifting the coordinates of verisimilitude from those of either representational correspondence or ideational correlation to those of ideological contestation. For these reasons, the film has been referred to by critics as a re-envisioning of the problematical "pursuit of 'the facts'" (Cavoulacos) and as a "hybrid of fact and fiction" (ibid.; also "Art Alert"; "Egyptian Film"; "Masāfāt Screening"). I argue by contrast that such a (neo)phenomenological evaluation is limited, that its insufficient attention to the film's *epistemological* register serves to quell its potentially more radical significance through an exercise in formalist containment.

In fact, *Out on the Street* is a film committed to the performance of facts elicited and evinced by the workers and conveyed as *socialized*—rather than dramatized—acts. Such facts become comprehensible, that is, less as impenetrable, if complex, essences than as material sites of struggle over their social conditions of possibility, emergence, and interpretability. Facts about Egyptian worker exploitation, harassment, intimidation,

and firings neither represent nor simulate but *resituate* worker experiences, whereupon the film's manifest content is less a revelation of hidden truths—for example those which, as New York Museum of Modern Art curator Sophie Cavoulacus reminds us, the mainstream media hides or distorts—much less a rumination on their phenomenal banality—to which Cavoulacus avers in reference to everyday modes of documentation such as the cellular phone (itself manufactured in neoliberal industrial settings)—than it is a synthetic analysis of the historical processes by which the truth-claims articulated by the worker/actors are enabled and subjected to critical interrogation. In effect, *Out on the Street* represents an act of cinematic *solidarity* (see De Smet 282–285) that enables its worker subjects on one level to critique the dire circumstances wrought by neoliberal policy, while appearing literally, through keenly performed spect-actorship, to embrace them, in turn passing the Egyptian censors with a minimum of compromise in terms of both intellectual substance and communicative clarity.

The film's achievement in this respect is attributable to a rhetorical structure which differs from that of *Cairo Chronicles*, and from much traditional and hybrid documentary, due to *Out on the Street*'s commitment to collectivism. Although it emphasizes the political transformation of one particular worker, Ahmed El-Roba', *Out on the Street* presents the figure of El-Roba' as an allegory of a larger, revolutionary transformation that had been initiated and quashed by the time of the film's release, and which entails not simply a projection of changed consciousness on the part of himself and his fellow workers but an ongoing, post-cinematic struggle between and among several positions within the Egyptian capitalist dialectic: workers and bosses; workers and workers; bosses and police; workers and police; and all parties and the law. This dialectical allegoricality plays out as a differential passage from historico-experiential through dramatological through interpellative to transformative praxis, largely in the context of an overdetermined *mise-en-scène* in which the enabling conditions of the collectivization process are performed as an edited series of hermeneutic shifts played out as a montage between externally visible and clandestine, interior settings. Whereas *Cairo Chronicles* portrays the dialectics of Kamal-Eldin's (re)insertion into Egypt by exposing her ongoing relationship to the country in the course of its historical maldevelopment, that is, and whereas observational and hybrid documentaries might depict the dialectics of Egyptian maldevelopment by explicitly exposing or reenacting, respectively, its various aspects (for example, *The*

Square [*al-Midan*], [Jehane Noujaim, Egypt/U.K./US, 2013] and *Crop* [Johanna Domke/Marouan Omara, Egypt/Germany/Denmark, 2013], both distributed widely on the transnational festival and art film circuits), *Out on the Streets* confronts such conditions by transposing them into narrative-compositional nodes of radical irruption that serve in turn as multifaceted entry points into an unprecedented cinematic pedagogy of contemporary revolutionary Egypt. In this particular respect, *Cairo Chronicles* and *Out on the Street* taken together may be seen to represent complementary, albeit differently positioned, entry points into that pedagogy.

Indeed it must be conceded here that it is surely the personal-subjective register of *Cairo Chronicles*' aesthetic structure which renders that film particularly vulnerable to the one-dimensional responses it received of its projections of nostalgia. The film's deconstructive bent is ostensibly contradicted, for example, by the choice to give explicit voice strictly to old family friends, all of whom may be read as fair-skinned Wafd stereotypes,[16] while, with the exception of the servant girl, the film's working-class subjects, most of them of color, are never interviewed or otherwise given agency, and thus come to appear objectified. Likewise does Kamal-Eldin's voice-over explicitly blame Islamic law rather than its tactical, albeit never rescinded, colonial-era adaptation, when describing her loss of inheritance in the context of arguing over it with her cousin, thus rehearsing a certain Eurocentrism that appears to ignore the historical class collaboration of Islamic factions within Egyptian society with the country's various movements for independence and national sovereignty (see McMahon 117, 141–142). The contradictoriness of these moments is in fact underscored by the voice-over's attribution of Nasser-era failures to "corruption," a controversial claim redolent of revisionist historiography for which Nasserism is placed into a gradualist continuum with Sadat's "opening" (*infitah*) onto Western neoliberalism. According to this narrative, the material changes that were in fact implemented during Nasser's presidency—redistribution of wealth, expansion of education and health care, and promotion of pan-Arab solidarity and, ultimately, Third World nonalignment—are at once overlooked and implicitly blamed for the turn to *infitah* and Sadat's concomitant "Egypt-first" policy (which are even further to the right than the Wafd).[17] *Out on the Street*, by contrast, is firmly situated within the realm of the *sha'b*—the Egyptian people—whereupon its albeit equally thoughtful and sophisticated aesthetic structure is far more resistant to misrecognition as an elitist lament.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of *Out on the Street*'s political aesthetic in this regard is its implicit critique of Noël Carroll's film-philosophical claim (*Theorizing*) that cinema is not a performative occasion. For Carroll, cinema, a time-bound technology, lacks the element of spontaneity which characterizes the live performance. On this view, film cannot "perform," because cinematic technology, in contrast to a live theater, comprises dead labor, which cannot by its nature transcend the conditions of its making. *Out on the Street* disproves Carroll's assumptions about cinema, first and foremost by portraying workers who develop a theatrical production which has no diegetic audience other than the workers themselves. *Out on the Street* is essentially a theatricalized film for which the ideal spectator is *cinematic*, in relation to whom a transcendence of the apparatus does in fact manifest—as a conceptually mediated occasion for which the foundations of performance are ideational before they are technological, theoretical before methodological, even as the former helps shape the latter. The strategy recalls Brecht de Smet's discussion of the relevance for contemporary Egypt of the dialectical pedagogy associated with Lev Vygotsky and Antonio Gramsci: "Proletarian subjectivity is the interior form of the external struggle against capitalism and the state" (de Smet 383). It is this epistemological core of *Out on the Street*'s diegesis—the fact that its performativity is the provenance of spectators, including but not limited to the workers, whereupon a key element of the film's significance is extra-diegetic—which becomes a locus of "spontaneity" and, in turn, transformative potentiality, reminding one both of the anarchist moment in social transformation and of the post-structuralist position, apropos of Metz reading Jurij Lotman (*Semiotics*), that cinematic signification is not limited to New Critical "textuality," that the spectatorial encounter is crucial to meaning-making and that, therefore, any such meaning is at least subject to debate, albeit framed by the temporal directionality and discursive-compositional tenor of the cinematic text, which in any case exceeds its technological form, much as industrial workers do the means of production. It is to this, the film's radical excess, which we now turn.

Like *Cairo Chronicles*, *Out on the Street* traces a dialectical narratology characterized by repetition and nonlinearity. The film opens with a very long take of an abandoned Cairo factory strewn with debris and remnants of industrial machinery—a milieu which recalls the 2010–2011 struggle at the Torah Starch and Glucose Manufacturing Company in Helwan, "where management planned to dismantle the machinery and



Fig. 12.4 *Out on the Street* (Jasmina Metwaly/Philip Rizk, Egypt, 2015)

turn the site into a shopping mall" (Shenker 311). The footage, shot surreptitiously by a worker, Essam, with his cellular phone, is blurred, while the camera movement itself investigates the space, if at times erratically (Fig. 12.4).

After a short while, the shot is qualified by a diegetic voice-over, that of the worker describing, lyrically, the scene before him. These images recur twice during the film, at a crucial moment I shall describe below, and toward film's end, just before the workers, recollective of actual events in 2004–2008 (see Prashad 33), call for a militant response to their disenfranchisement in the form of a strike and/or demonstration, in effect serving to bookend the narrative with actuality footage that is visually obscure and aesthetically unstable, neither because the worker/cameraman is metaphysically distant from the profilmic (cf. Della Ratta, *Shooting* 158–159), nor insofar as he happens to be uninterested in aesthetic finesse,[18] but because the profilmic content is prohibited.

Directors Metwaly and Rizk, apparently corroborating critical commentary referring to their film as a problematization of factuality, were misinterpreted as affirming a reading of this footage as a testament to the ephemerality of the factory and, in turn, of the existential impermanence of its productivity and output. At a 2016 screening of *Out on the Street* at The American University in Cairo (AUC) (see "The Social"),

for example, a lively debate ensued with respect to questions posed by student audience members concerning the directors' relationship to the workers who appear in the film. Metwaly and Rizk attempted to explain their commitment not to interfere with the workers' collective sensibility as it informed the development and transpiring of the filmed performance, even as they themselves described the cinematic capture of that live, unfolding performance as somewhat analogous to the shooting of fleeting images of street protest. Furthering this general line, the directors insisted that their cinematic approach is partly akin to that of observational cinema, an anthropological modality which attributes degrees of truthfulness to corresponding degrees of directorial noninvolvement (see Grimshaw and Ravetz; Rony; also Dwyer [in this volume]). Observational filmmakers purport to enable the projection of ontological authenticity by refraining as much as possible from the arrangement and choreographing of *mise-en-scène* and from the prompting of interviewees. Such predominantly ethnographic filmmakers wish to foster a spontaneous emergence of the actual, in a context which seeks to place the inevitable directorial mediation of the profilmic under permanent erasure.

Metwaly and Rizk's claim to engage with aspects of cinematic observationalism was not, however, meant to convey naïve expressionism, as AUC audience members presumed. During a March 2015 public interview conducted with them by anthropologist Mark R. Westmoreland at the *Beirut* art initiative and exhibition space in Cairo, they made key intertextual reference to the cinematic works of Peter Watkins and of Andres Veiel, both of whom are independent filmmakers known for their unabashed, if differently positioned, critiques of cinematic empiricism, Watkins as a proto-mockumentarian (Gomez) and Veiel as an occasional hyperrealist (Ginsberg, *Holocaust Film* 176–202). In this epistemological context, it would have been contradictory to maintain a pure observationalist ethic, much less to advocate for cinematic noninterference in the profilmic, not least given that the numerous improvizational scenes in *Out on the Street* were clearly and intentionally set up by the directors. In fact, Metwaly and Rizk are not empiricists in the anthropological sense. More accurate is their belief, surely nurtured by the film's editor, Louly Seif, in the radical compatibility of Theater of the Oppressed with a cinematic praxis redolent of montage theory and its legacy: on the one hand, apropos of Brecht, a directorial nurturing of an actor's coming to consciousness in the course of his carnivalized role-playing (see Willett), and, on the other hand, a reflexive cinematographic and editorial rendering of that critical

play, reminiscent of Eisenstein (*Film Form*)—and, in the Egyptian context, the multifaceted entry points of the Arabesque. This strategy thus makes clear (1) that the cinematic apparatus may itself be an occasion for oppression (via surveillance and interpellation), and (2) that an ideological transformation vis-à-vis the cinema is nonetheless possible on account of the dialectic which a film may trace between director, editor, and spect-actor—by the particular conditionality, that is, of the artistic-pedagogical encounter utilizing montage.

One sees such a dialectic mapped out during *Out on the Street*'s first portrayal of human subjects, a slow and deliberate alternation between the workers seated in conversation on the roof of the building in which the performance takes place, speaking about their travails in police custody, and shots of the same workers performing early scenes of the play in which those very travails are acted out. Sound bridges connect the two locations, in effect foregrounding an implied interrelationship between memory and projection, experience and rehearsal, testimony and enactment. This tactic is repeated at key moments throughout the film, as if to suggest its constative significance with respect to the intellectual transformations which occur along the way. Importantly, this highlighted dialectic includes not only human subjects but also the place(s) in which they have worked and interacted with both other humans and industrial machinery. The blurred, investigative yet erratic first shot of the abandoned factory repeats, for example, a short while into the film's narrative, where it alternates with shots of the worker/actors playing the role of machines. By film's end, the progressive alternation between offstage conversation and onstage enactment convolutes: the distinction between them blurs as the worker/actors' consciousness is gradually raised, and they "leave" the play for the post-theatrical world, potentially to other workplaces, potentially to organize. In this context, the ontological—and chronological—status of the diegesis is momentarily ruptured. This is especially true respecting El-Roba', the central figure in the film's revolutionary trajectory, for whom it eventually becomes uncertain whether he is performing his role as factory supervisor or speaking as himself (although performativity wins out insofar as he speaks Fusha [formal Arabic] when playing the supervisor). This delimited uncertainty then comes to qualify the positionalities of the other worker/actors as well.

A hyperrealist reading of this apparent ontological confounding would be remiss, however, for failing to account for its historicity. It is not simply that the profilmic here is representable á la Bazin or simulacral á la



Fig. 12.5 *Out on the Street* (Jasmina Metwaly/Philip Rizk, Egypt, 2015)

Baudrillard, or both, but that its ostensible anti-foundational structuring—what Rizk has referred to in conversation with this author as the film's "hybridity"—at once traces the existential coordinates of, and critically symptomatizes, neoliberal social relations in Egypt, in turn allegorizing the revolutionary transcendence of their core contradictions.[19] This allegorical tracing is in fact literalized when worker/actors involved in designing the theatrical set paint a line on the floor across one corner of the performance space that will come to represent an invisible prison cell in which some of them will enact the sort of incarceration that forms the dramatic core of the film's critically irruptive opening scene, and that in this later scene becomes visualized as a panopticon-effect now engaging the role of cinema as well in the revolutionary dialectic (Fig. 12.5).

Here the uncertainty marked out in the opening scene, with its surreptitious cellular phone footage of the abandoned factory, finds its modal obverse in the factory-become-prison, where human beings are the detritus, i.e., living labor-become-dead labor. In this respect, *Out on the Street* is much closer to Watkins than Veiel, yet different still for its refusal to abandon material foundations, for its Marxian insistence upon a *return to the real* in order to untangle its distortion by the praxis of exploitation, through a "pedagogy of revolt" (De Smet 376). Unlike Watkins, that is, *Out on the Street* finds its origin and center in the *situationality* of its

subject workers, with which the film begins and ends. Exemplary in this respect is the film's final scene, in which the factory supervisor played by El-Roba' basically disappears in an evident intertextual reference to Jean Genet's *The Balcony* (1957), a theatrical play about an unexplained revolution that, while erupting outside in the streets, is allegorized by the interior setting of a brothel.

This is not to say that *Out on the Street* is unconcerned with phenomenality, that is, with representational politics. According to Rizk (E-mail, 2019), some of the film's most engaged audiences have been at public screenings in the Cairo working-class neighborhood of Helwan and at the Goethe Institute, also in Cairo, and, farther afield, in Buenos Aires (where Boal himself had developed the modality of Theater of the Oppressed known as "Invisible Theater," the aim of which was to circumvent governmental repression, and where the film won its only prize to date).[20] On the contrary, recalling *Cairo Chronicles*, the film's evident counternarrativity and anti-aesthetic, which are in fact hallmarks of both art and avant-garde cinema, not least in their Third Cinematic incarnations, function ideally to propel the spect-actor out of entrenched frameworks of reception and critical response. Whereas representational politics, that is, may be the primary components of such frameworks, their significance becomes that of political pedagogy once they are resituated by praxes of performance onto carnivalized terrains, where, recalling Kamal-Eldin continually returning to Egypt, s/he may recognize rather than normalize lived contradictions, including those of cinema, in an effort to forge paths of liberation from the ideological obstacles to change.

Notes

1. For example, *Atamanah* [*Make a Wish*] (Cherien Daebis, Palestine, 2006); *Happy Days* (Larissa Sansour, Palestine, 2006); and *The Clothesline* (Alia Arasoughly, Palestine, 2006).
2. At the Toronto International Film Festival, where *Barakah Meets Barakah* premiered, director Mahmoud Sabbagh gave an interview entitled, "I Believe in Saudi" (Sabbagh). Sabbagh's explicit nationalism and implicit support for neoliberal hegemony are palpable in this context. *Waves '98* won the Short Film *Palme d'or* at the Cannes Film Festival.
3. See Carter for an instructive exception, with its critical plea for Moroccan cinema of and for rural and working-class audiences and milieux.
4. The property is subject to monitoring by Egyptian state security ostensibly protecting the U.S. Embassy across the street. This general theme

also figures in the 2006 Iranian documentary, *Letters from Iran* (Nezam Manouchehri), also concerning a filmmaker's return to his nation of birth after a long exile, and its sociological implications.

5. These commentaries were published as promotional endorsements, that is, as marketing devices rather than as instances of sustained analysis and critique by professional film critics or scholars. For exemplary instances of which on the film's website, see Badran; Mindikoglu; and Rojer.
6. It is interesting in this context to consider the fact that nostalgia is a categorical theme within the United States Information Agency-produced propaganda films catalogued in the Indiana University Library Media Archive (Etem).
7. On Kamal-Eldin's view (Personal), it is precisely this refusal to apologize to which MESA participants objected in the film.
8. As Jack Shenker observes, under Sadat and Mubarak, "in ever more aggressive attempts to attract tourist dollars, Egypt's unrivalled Pharaonic treasures were gated, plastic-wrapped and commodified to within an inch of their ancient lives, then bundled into a carefully sterilized visitor experience: a four- or five-star hotel on the Nile, organized plexiglass trips to the Egyptian museum and Giza pyramids, a felucca on the river and then on to Luxor, Aswan or Sharm el-Sheikh […] This regressive notion of Egypt as little more than a kitsch playground of the past became institutionalized and marketed to the world […] [S]ays Cairo urbanist Mohamed ElShahed, who has written extensively about the state-sponsored neglect of the country's *belle époque* history[,] 'The Sadat and Mubarak regimes have reproduced narratives about Egyptian history that are far more colonial and orientalist than any nineteenth-century colonial orientalist could ever have dreamed of'" (Shenker 116). For a relevant genealogy of the visual representation of Egypt in colonial exhibition culture, see Mitchell, *Colonizing* 1–33.
9. Indeed, whereas the proto-Pharaonism of Egyptian intellectual Taha Hussein was an early manifestation of the Egyptian call for unity against colonialism that nonetheless remained cosmopolitan and thus connected to "Mediterranean" interests and subject positions, Egyptian journalist and political figure Muhammed Heikal's later Pharaonism was a pan-Arab ideology resistant to the cosmopolitanism which he, by contrast, saw as fundamentally disunifying (Talhami 164, 167–170). Following the death of Nasser and the ascension to power of Anwar el-Sadat, Heikal would describe "the changes in Egypt with a wry play on language—the era of *thawra* (revolution) had been supplanted by the era of *tharwa* (fortune)" (Prashad 19). As further analysis will explicate, *Cairo Chroncles*' "queers" both Hussein and Heikal: Kamal-Eldin's turning away from the spectator toward the Pyramids enacts both a rejection of the fetishistic (trans)nationalist gaze and a delinkage from it in the form of a new

pan-(non)identity "beyond" both Heikal's Arab nationalism and Hussein's romantic nationalism.

10. According to Chion, "The Anempathetic impulse in the cinema produces those countless musical bits from player pianos, celestas, music boxes, and dance bands, whose studied frivolity and naiveté reinforce the individual emotion of the character and of the spectator, even as the music pretends not to notice them" (6).
11. Nearly a decade later, Sabet would produce his own film, *In Search of "Oil and Sand"* (Phillippe Dib/Wael Omar, Egypt/US, 2012), that attempts to reconstruct the titular film which his father, Adel, shot in 1952, using actors from the coterie of King Farouk (see Marks 202–204).
12. See Klein 142–146 for an extended discussion of the ideological function of "mixed-race" familial representation for the U.S. cultural imperialist project.
13. Here it behooves recalling the nostalgic character of the photograph as discussed famously by Barthes (*Camera Lucida*)—a phenomenology resisted by *Cairo Chronicles*' abstraction of the photograph and its practice into the film's unconventional narrative-compositional context.
14. It is interesting to note in this critical context that Women Make Movies, which distributes two other of Kamal-Eldin's films (*Hollywood Harems* [1999] and *Covered: The Hejab in Cairo, Egypt* [1995]), declined to distribute *Cairo Chronicles* on the misrecognition that the film does not significantly concern gender, feminism, or women's issues (Kamal-Eldin).
15. Mosireen's short videos depict police brutality, worker occupations, community demonstrations, and street confrontations and were particularly visible during the January 2011 Egyptian Uprising. See Shenker 367; Mosireen; and Hamam [in this volume].
16. The Egyptian nationalist Wafd Party was effectively active from the 1920s through the Free Officers revolution of 1952 and supported a constitutional monarchy, independence from England, and a liberal capitalist economic system. During the 2003 popular protests in Egypt against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the leaders of both the Wafd Party and the Nasserite Party were arrested and imprisoned (Prashad 30).
17. For critical historiographical analyses that stand to critique this revisionist tendency, see McMahon; and Stein. In fact, Timothy Mitchell ties programs of nationalization in the Arab region not to (neo)liberalism but to "the demands of oil workers for labour rights and political freedoms" (Mitchell, *Carbon* 237).
18. According to Rizk (E-mail, 2018), videographer Essam does not prioritize any particular cinematic aesthetic; his intention to "document" for proof comes down to "capturing" with little regard to "quality."
19. One notes a similar dynamic in Palestinian cinema, for example *Ticket to Jerusalem* (Rashid Masharawi, Palestine/Netherlands/France/Australia,

2002) and *Ford Transit* (Hani Abu-Assad, Palestine/Israel, 2003), although such films lack *Out on the Street*'s incisive economic critique and thus are more vulnerable to liberal readings.

20. Whereas the ostensibly elitist Goethe Institute, possibly due to a long presence in Cairo that enables it to draw varied audiences of different ages and social sectors, attracted a full house of nearly 200 very diverse spectators who engaged readily in post-screening discussion, a screening at Zawya, a Cairo art cinema house catering largely to cultural workers, local elites, and expatriots, was less successful in drawing an audience or inspiring post-screening conversation. Also attracting a small audience, despite much local publicity by the film's worker-actors, was the Helwan screening, which in Rizk's view (E-mail, 2019) symptomatizes an ongoing, general decline in cinematic culture among popular Egyptians that began with the dismantling of Nasserism and has never really recovered.

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