Screening Egypt: Reconciling Egyptian Film's Place in "World Cinema"

Omar Kholeif, Royal College of Art and FACT, Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, UK

Technical Note

I have tried, as much as possible, to limit the use of Arabic transcription throughout. However, in those rare instances where it is necessary, the format I use is a simplified version of the commonly cited transcription found in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Bosworth, 1960). Moreover, Arabic names, places and titles are not always strictly transcribed, but referred to as most commonly referenced. It is worth noting that they may appear differently in other published materials.

Introduction

> To dream of Egypt […] is not very different from the appreciation of the sublime: it is a response to distances, abysses, dangers, and self-annihilation. It is a kind of ecstasy. (Kuberski ,1989: 91)

The above quotation alludes to the difficult task of trying to critically assess the canon of Egyptian cinema. Egyptian film is first and foremost a popular form. Each text is engaging because of "sublime" features that relate to the culturally specific senses of the Egyptian viewer. Yet, Egyptian film also acts as a unifying device for Arab cultures. Its cinema represents one of the most socially and ethnically diverse cultural regions in the world, in a manner that is divergent from mainstream cinematic representations of the "Other." However, even within the broad label of "World Cinema," a problematic title in itself, Arab cinemas have not traditionally been given much attention (Khatib, 2006: 203). When discussing "World Cinema," I refer broadly to the array of non-English films distributed across the international film festival circuit and widely profiled, both within the academy and in the international press. Taking this consideration into account, it is worth noting that Egyptian cinema, which is not only one of the oldest cinemas in the world (Ghoneim, 2004a; Sardar, 2007), but also the foundation of the Arab media culture (Shafik, 1998; Al-Obaidi, 2000) is particularly excluded from the canon of "World Cinema," not only in terms of viewership, international distribution, and criticism, but also, within the scholarly academies. Dissanayake (2000: 144) argues that part of the problem is that the various cultures that comprise the non-Western world are continually expanding and cannot be accounted for in essentialist terms. More

importantly however, is the consideration that "World Cinema" favours films that are driven by high art concerns. And that film theory, and accordingly the canonisation of "World Cinema" are formed out of Eurocentric paradigms, which are far from universal (Appiah, 1992; Dissanayake, 2000). These factors together, mean that certain films are excluded because of their own national popularity (*ibid.*).

Viola Shafik, aware of the substantial lack of research in this field, is the first academic to thoroughly contextualise Egyptian and Arab cinemas within a critical and global framework, which takes Western film theory into account. And although a large number of publications exist about Egyptian film history, in both English and Arabic, the existing literature, as Shafik observes, reveals very little. This is because it is approached from a strongly historiographic point of view that rarely takes up other factors involved in the "production of meaning" (Shafik, 2007: 7). Moreover, the majority of the literature written about the canon tends to be concerning a similar theme (for instance, the stereotyping of women in Egyptian cinema). Yet, even the expositions into these issues tend to be lacking in contemporary theoretical approaches (Zaatari, 2005; Shafik, 2007).

This analysis aims to reveal the barriers that exist, both industrially from within Egypt, as well as from international taste brokers, who have prevented it from being examined and screened internationally. This will involve looking at constraints such as censorship and the rise of Islamicisation that reveal the existing clash between Eastern and Western civilisations, which is generally regarded as a product of Western colonialism and its subsequent downfall.

My interest in this topic has been ongoing for over five years. As an Egyptian growing up in the West, I have always felt removed from my culture, identifying little with its traditions and what I perceived as Islamic hypocrisy. However, these films have become a means for me to maintain a connection with my heritage. As a Westerner, my cultural readings of Egyptian texts diverge greatly from those of my parents and extended family who were born or raised in Egypt. Coming to terms with these differences in the textual readings has helped me with this analysis. My aim here is to understand why a popular national cinema, which is culturally intrinsic to the one billion citizens of the Arab world, is largely excluded from the canon of "World Cinema." This is especially relevant in light of the consideration that the smaller national cinemas of comparable countries such as Iran are much more widely distributed and debated within the broad canon of film studies.

Background Information

Egyptian cinema is incredibly popular in the Arab region, and accordingly, is part of the canon of "Arab Cinema," a larger generic construction that is based on language (often spoken in many different vernaculars), but that also denotes a large geographical area that encompasses some twenty countries ranging from the Gulf to Morocco, and from Syria to Sudan. However, Egypt, being the first Middle Eastern country to launch a national cinema, has dominated the film market. In fact, its cinema is so hegemonic that the local productions of other regional cinemas deploy Egyptian colloquial dialects within most of their films. For instance, a survey of Lebanese films from 1963-1970, finds that (54 out of 100) used the Egyptian dialect for dialogue (Shohat, 1983; Shafik, 2007: 28-29). This no doubt illustrates the omnipresent nature and the identification that other Arabs have with Egyptian film.

The narrative traditions of this medium, at first, tended to be melodramas (Sharqawi, 1970) adapted from novels, the first of which was Muhammed Karim's silent film *Zaynab* (1930) (Elnaccash, 1968). [1]   A shift from melodrama to realism followed with the adaptations of novels by Naguib Mahfouz, who became the resounding literary voice of Egyptian cinema, with his representations of everyday life. The second most popular genre in the Egyptian film canon was light comedy. The early films starred slapstick comedian Isma'il Yasin in the 1950s (and were mostly directed by ex-army officer Fatin 'Abd al-Wahab) (Hafez, 2006: 239). Armes and Malkmus observe that comedies in the Arab world are treated like bread in Europe, regularly consumed, but rarely discussed. Indeed, "European critics classify most of them as farce and move on" (1991: 83). These generic conventions are perhaps partly responsible for the notion that Egyptian cinema "is often prone to [either] sentiment [or] escapism, rather than sophistication or serious art" (Fawal, 2001: 1).

This discussion has become more than an exercise in reconciling Western and Eastern identities. Instead, what I hope to achieve here is to highlight how certain film cultures can often be overlooked. The fact that Egypt, which has produced over three-thousand feature films since 1924 (Hafez, 2006: 228), is rarely referred to in discourses surrounding "World Cinema" raises some interesting points about world cinema produced in the developing world, and the relationship between nationhood and world canon formation (Willemen, 1989). To further unpack this discussion, I will develop the context, history, and narrative devices of the form. I will then look at institutional barriers such as censorship and Islamicisation within Egypt, as well as external tensions such as Orientalism. The argument ends with comparative models, and suggestions.

For the majority of the thesis, I will use the recent *Yacoubian Building/Omaret Yacoubian* (2006) to anchor the analysis. The reasons

for this are twofold. Firstly, the text adheres to many of the popular conventions of Egyptian cinema. It is an adaptation from a famous novel, with star power, and it deploys both melodramatic and realist conventions. Yet it has also uniquely been offered entry into critical discourse about "World Cinema." This, I will argue, is due to the fact that the film aspires to its Franco-European influence, and in a sense elevates itself from culturally specific Egyptian popularism. This raises questions about the contradictory nature of world cinema canon formation, because as this argument will attempt to prove, if a cinema is to gain entry into the global canon, then it must diverge from its own tradition in order to find audiences abroad.

Developing Cultural Context: History, Narrative Characteristics & Industry

If I am going to evaluate Egyptian cinema's place within the larger context of global cinema, a number of important questions need to be answered. First, why is it that texts that aim to be "truthful" representations of Egyptian culture fail at attracting foreign audiences and critics, while films such as *Yacoubian Building* become part of critical discourse? Is it because there is a metaphorical "screen" of institutional and self-censorship that prevents Egyptian films from "finding" cultural context with those who are not Arabs? Or is it because most films are tailored to a specific Egyptian/Arab popularism, while the *Yacoubian Building* is not? Before I answer these questions, the cultural context of Egyptian production must be placed in perspective.

History

The brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière showed some of their first films in Alexandria in 1896 (Ghareeb,1997; Shafik, 1998). In the following year, they filmed 35 films in Egypt, using the country for its exotic locations and value. But like Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beirut and Damascus, Egyptian cinematographic images were presented as exotic pleasures of consumption for the European/Western gaze. This links into Edward Said's (1978) "dogmas of orientalism," which illustrate that there is an absolute and systematic difference between the Orient (irrational, undeveloped and inferior) and the West (rational, developed and superior). Thus, the West defines itself as the opposite of the Orient, withholding itself from ever coming to terms with it. The West, in fact, is not only portrayed as the diametrical opposite of the East, but also as its protector and carer. This places the Orientals in a position of lack (of power and morals). In essence, Orientalism sets out to reduce the "Other" to a set of essentialist variables (Khatib, 2006a: 5). Said further argues that the Orientalism is characterised by how 'the […Westerner] writes about, whereas the Oriental is written about" (1978: 308). Writing, Khatib argues, refers to how it is only the West that creates

discourse about the East, and not vice versa. The Orient is thus deemed a silent other, an object that is incapable of defining or effectively representing itself (Khatib 2006: 7). [2]

Accordingly, when cinema first emerged in Egypt, it was considered a mere mechanised version of Western film, which rarely accounted for its own culture (Cluny, 1984: 46). Consequently, cinema in Egypt has been criticised for acting as a source of westernisation and acculturation (Shafik, 1998: 4), seeing that its film industry was initially run by non-native cineastes (Shohat, 1983). And, although films were shown and produced in Egypt as early as 1896, it wasn't until 1927 with *Layla* (Shafik, 1998 and 2007; Hafez, 2006) that the history of Egyptian production began properly. These new films were in turn made to appeal to the Egyptian audience's nationalist pride, disavowing foreign (Western) audience pleasures and concerns, almost completely.

During colonisation, European control of the film industry was merely one dimension of the political-economic regime, whereby the British, Greeks, Italians and French dominated Egyptian trade and industry (Shohat, 1983; Shaheen, 2009). Despite the granting of formal independence in 1922, the British retained political and economic control of Egypt until the early 1950s (*ibid*.). The end of colonial rule, spurred the government to nationalise its industries, which caused a mass exodus of foreign nationals, who often found themselves driven out of their jobs (Shafik, 2007: 19-23). This tension between colonialism and the East I believe serves as the first argument for this debate. This denial of European influence could perhaps be interpreted as a rejection of Western approval, which is problematic considering that it is mostly Westerners who foster the canon of world cinema distribution and discourse (Dissanayake, 2000).

By 1935, the Egypt Company for Acting and Cinema (ECAC) and Studio Misr (in English, "The Studio of Egypt") were securely in place, both of which produced and trained new talent (Shafik, 1998).   Sabry Hafez (2006) suggests that being trained in an Egyptian institution gave Egyptian filmmakers a sense of national pride. The significance of the new studio and the ECAC contributed to the nationalist upsurge that occurred, following the 1919 Egyptian revolution (*ibid*.: 235-236). In fact, the very first Egyptian films illustrate this link between cinema and nation clearly, not only because their maker, Mohamed Bayoumi, was a nationalist officer, but also because his first film recorded the return of Sa'd Zaghlul, the nationalist leader, from exile in 1923 (Drew, 2002). Thus, one can assume that these separatist movements fostered the culturally specific inclination found in Egyptian films.

Aesthetic and Narrative Characteristics

Like most films that are produced in the developing world, the choice of locations is constrained by financial limitations, which keeps production values relatively low. A.S. Naggar argues that these technical standards have prevented Egyptian cinema from finding audiences abroad (2002: 319). Richard Tapper speaking of Iranian cinema, makes an interesting statement about the expectations of Western viewers:

> Audiences and critics tend to have a series of, often contradictory expectations of international cinema: an appealing aesthetic, fitting current trends in filmic style, with professional and expert filming and cutting; (yet these also expect) a focus on universal human themes such as family relationships, loss and search, survival; (as well as a) 'documentary' portrayal of a little visited country; images that contradict standard media stereotypes of a given people and culture. (Tapper, 2002: 20)

This can be particularly problematic, as many Egyptian texts are highly specific to Arabic culture. For instance, Egyptian films rely heavily on the use of dialogue. Actors and the audience alike derive much pleasure in verbal exchanges (Fawal, 2001: 62). In Egypt, there is a high rate of illiteracy and film is the dominant cultural medium of interaction and representation (Hafez, 2006: 232).

Translating this emotional and colloquial dialogue is particularly difficult. Especially considering that subtitles are often of extremely poor quality (Mattin 2007), as distributors have little or no money to fund them, unless a foreign production company is involved. [3] Most of the films that I surveyed—*Yacoubian Building*, *The Nightingale's Prayer/Du'aa al-Karawan* (1959), *A Beginning and an End/Bidaya Wa Nihaya* (1960), *The River of Love/Nahr al-hub* (1961) and *Cairo 30/Al-Qahira Thalatheen* (1966)—place a higher importance on the verbose exchanges between the actors to relay their messages, as opposed to an emphasis on mise-en-scène that is perhaps more evident in the allegorical forms of other foreign cinemas in the region. Matters are further complicated by the fact that like most foreign cinema, Egyptian films are heavily character-based and use small narratives that drag out over lengthy films.

The final straw of cultural specificity is derived from the fact that all the popular genres created by Egyptian cinema share the determination to entertain and an absolute readiness to compromise with the oft recited motto: *El gumhoor 'ayiz kida* (colloquially, "what the audience wants, the audience gets").   Ultimately, what an Arabic audience *wants* is extrapolated from a culturally specific popularism that does not fit into the confines and high-art expectations of "World Cinema."

Mette Hjort (2000) further argues that certain films are so specific to their national culture that they may seem only partially comprehensible to those living in different national contexts (2006: 116). Hafez substantiates this with his statement that "films in an Arabic culture (are) never ideologically or cognitively neutral" (Hafez, 2006: 5). Instead, he believes that Arabic film is a product that elaborates a locus of meaning that is specifically tailored to the Arabic people (*ibid*.: 226). Egyptian Cinema can thus be seen as an ideological instrument through which the national (Arab) conscience conceptualises its being-in-the-world (Anderson, 1983). This nationalistic verve developed because as soon as Arabic culture became modernised, it fell right into the struggle of independence from colonialism (Hafez, 2006: 227). This led to an inseparable quest for national identity. Thus, Hafez argues that cinema in Arabic culture simply cannot be imported to non-Arab countries, for it is a "hybrid cultural product, generated by the inner dynamic of social discourses and internal socio-economic energies" (*ibid*.: 228).

Even looking at the critical reception of the high-profile *Yacoubian Building* in the West reaffirms some of these assertions. Critics, although they commend the film's production values (at the time of writing, it is the most expensive film ever produced in Egyptian history), dispel part of the narrative as "dated and shallow" (Bradshaw, 2007), and describe it as a "soap opera" that lacks "subtlety and nuances" (Knight, 2006). These rationalisations ignore the context of the Arab national culture and identity. For instance, one criticism is how Zaki Pasha's sister, Dawlat in *Yacoubian* only articulates her feelings through violent screams, and is rarely ever conversational. But this so-called melodramatic quality (Wilkinson, 2006) of the text in fact reflects the hyperbolic colloquialisms of the upper classes. Thus, there is a tension between culturally specific characteristics and the narratives of Egyptian films, as they do not possess the broad appeal expected of "World Cinema."

Institutional Factors & Contemporary Issues

Censorship

The institutional boundary that is often credited with diminishing the "quality" of Egyptian cinema is censorship, both on a governmental and self-imposed level (Aufderheide, 1991; Khatib, 2006). Egyptian censorship laws limit the diversity of representations possible (Vogt, 2002). This creates texts, where the message is culturally specific to the native audience, and accordingly prevents them from fitting into the label of "World Cinema," which requires a broader appeal. The most notorious act came into law in 1947. This detailed the five major areas of prohibition (loose morality, politics, religion, seditious ideologies and violence) from previous laws and increased them to include seventy-one prohibitions. In 1976 the laws were reinforced, and in addition, the

contemporary laws empowered the clergy with censoring powers, thus providing fundamentalists with the final say in film content (Shafik, 1998 and 2007). In fact, some of the provisions in film censorship are so broad that they could potentially prevent any representation, real or unreal from being portrayed. These policies consequently foster bigotry and limit the chances of these films aspiring to the realistic "observational" mould expected of "World Cinema" productions.

Another limitation of institutional censorship is that, Christian (Coptic) productions are rarely authorised for portrayal by state censors or investors. They are however, sanctioned to be filmed and exhibited, as long as they are not distributed publicly (Shafik, 2007: 52). One example is a script that protestant author Hani Fawzi penned and submitted in the mid-nineties, entitled *An Indian Film/Film hindi* (the title is used as a metaphor for triviality). The script deals in a comic manner with a sexually frustrated Protestant and his friendship with a Muslim, and was intended to be the first film to look at Christian psychology and upbringing in depth (Shafik, 2007: 49). However, obtaining approval from the state censors turned out to be incredibly problematic. Some of the censors expressed the opinion that no church should be seen and no prayers heard; others wanted the hero, Samuel, to carry a religious neutral name. It took the director an appeal to a special independent committee before it was approved.

Despite this, the film was incapable of coming off the ground. Producers were reluctant to accept a film that dealt with a sensitive issue, in the fear that it could alienate audiences in the religious markets of the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia (which is responsible for much Egyptian film funding). It wasn't until 2003 that the film finally found a production company to support it (*ibid*.). This was achieved at the expense of certain alterations, such as changing the title character's name to the more secular Atif. Even *Yacoubian Building*, which is considered unique in the plurality of outlooks it presents, at times uses religious bigotry in its narrative. The brothers Malaak and Fanous, the only Christian characters in the plot, are portrayed negatively. Malaak is distinguished by his disability, a plastic leg, which is indicative of his moral weakness and scheming personality, while his brother Fanous is a frugal salesman who repeatedly uses blackmail to gain economic advantages. At one point he is even referred to by one Muslim character as "a devil." He appears gormless, with long dirty fingers, and balding hair. This limitation in the plurality of views and identities, in turn creates a series of culturally specific texts that are likely to be seen as chauvinistic by most non-native audiences, and accordingly will diminish the chances of these films aspiring to the insightful high-art qualities of "World Cinema."

Although some filmmakers can secure foreign funding to allow them to diverge from these institutional boundaries, the integrity of their work

may still be at risk. This was evidenced in the case brought against Youssef Chahine, who was sued by Muslim circles who accused his film *The Emigrant/ al-Muhagir* (1994) of flouting the Muslim convention. This was because the story of young Ram bore a strong resemblance to the biblical Joseph (Ghareeb, 1997; Khatib, 2006). These strict regulations suggest that Egyptian texts use melodramatic devices as allegory to overcome censorship. It is perhaps because melodramatic devices seem surreal to censors and thus do not pose a threat to the construction of the nation.

Melodrama vs. Realism

Because of the aforementioned institutional factors, the use of melodramatic devices has become commonplace in Egyptian cultural production. These melodramas draw upon culturally specific narrative devices such as exaggerated dialogue and surreal conflicts. These usually involve love rendered impossible by circumstance, as well as, rape, seduction and fateful events such as diseases and handicaps, which render protagonists pity worthy (Sharqawi, 1970). These qualities however, are not commonly associated with the more conceited concerns of "World Cinema." Although, a realist movement began in 1926, which tried to reject traditional melodramas and musicals, budgetary constraints meant that 'realist' films had to make use of the same sets and plot structures of more popular genres (Shafik, 2007: 214). This poses problems, as both realism and melodrama have been perceived as mutually exclusive, belonging to different classes and audiences. Speaking in 1964, at a symposium on Arab Cinema and culture held in Beirut, the Egyptian film archivist Farid al-Mazzaoui complained "We have always heard this refrain when art critics were talking about Egyptian films, or Arab films in general. They want us to produce more realist films" (quoted in Armes, 1987). More than 20 years later, Armes and Malkmas stated that the refrain was still heard, but that the problem was rooted in the fact that the term "realist" was never made clear to the film practitioners of the Arab world (1991). Bazin (1971) argues that for a film to be realist, it must utilise a quasi-documentary style, refuse the star system, occasionally employ amateur actors, and to shoot in original locations to give the viewer a sense of authenticity. These qualities relate to the high-art concerns of "World Cinema" to which Tapper and Dissanayake allude. Yet these qualities are unlikely to be adopted into Egyptian production, as there is not the economic or social infrastructure for such films to be created, or any guarantee that there would be demand for such films on the international film circuit.

New Media vs. the Film Industry

The Egyptian film industry has recently been threatened by the growth of the electronics industry. In 1994 alone, five television productions were

released into movie theatres to compete with feature films. This has also caused a serious shortage of studios, equipment, and technicians. In 1995, 80% of cinema studios were rented to television and advertisement productions (Shafik, 1998: 43). The advent of satellite television in the early 1990s, with its more than two-dozen digital channels is credited for this situation. With more than 70% of the Egyptian population owning a television today, the TV set has been given significant cultural and familial importance (Lane, 1997; Atef, 2005). The film industry is however unable to profit from this development. Due to insufficient trade regulations, Egyptian films are often sold for next to nothing, sometimes for as little as a few hundred dollars to broadcasters, which seriously undermines future productions (*ibid*.). This dependence on television has also started to diminish the existence of film theatres. Cinemas no longer exist in main city centres, and are often relegated to third-class theatres in satellite districts (Naggar, 2002: 303).

In addition to these new constraints, the government now taxes film distributors large sums (up to 45% at times), which effectively ruins the chances of developing audiences for quality films (Rosen, 1985). Moreover, the minister of culture has discretionary powers to determine the maximum number of foreign films to be distributed by domestic firms that are concurrently involved in the production of Egyptian films. The limit that the minister sets has serious repercussions on funding available to Egyptian producers, who use the profits from the distribution of foreign films to finance the production of Egyptian films (Ghoneim, 2004a: 6-8).

As research by Shafik suggests, these limitations of cost and accessibility suggest that it is now mainly middle-class women who frequent the cinema in Egypt (2007). This has given rise to what have lately been deemed the "shopping-mall movies," which deal with issues of sexuality and morals (Shafik, 2007: 226). Some argue that these new texts do little more than affirm the status quo and its existing values, resisting any innovation or change (*ibid*.). Abu Shadi observes that the rise of these genres merely provides easy formulaic answers to difficult questions in order to appease their audiences (1996: 85). Thus, one can conclude that institutional and social tensions have been hindering both distribution and production. Accordingly, it is less likely that worthy cinematic texts will be produced, or indeed develop into the discourse surrounding "World Cinema" abroad.

Yacoubian Building, Moral Binarisms and the Rise of Islamicisation

Yacoubian Building

Dissanayake believes that we can broadly classify world cinema from the developing world into popular, artistic, and experimental categories (2000). The artistic films are driven by "high art" concerns, more so than

profits and are exhibited at international film festivals. He also states that while popular cinema appeals to the masses and upholds the notion of the unified nation state, that artistic cinema tends to criticise it. Accordingly, this can awaken international interest, as films that are showcased internationally need to appeal to a broader set of audiences and critics, and thus by criticising nationhood, instead of appealing to it, nationals of foreign countries can better relate to the "foreign" text they are viewing. As I mentioned in the introduction, the recent *Yacoubian Building* has garnered considerable international attention and is referred to in discourses surrounding "World Cinema." This can be put down to a number of factors. First and foremost, *Yacoubian Building's* construction is designed around Eurocentric high-art assumptions. The film was marketed to the public as a breakthrough in Egyptian film, which would surpass all of its extravagant predecessors, utilising professional cinematography and expert editing in the same manner as mainstream Western productions. It also alludes to the European colonisers by using long tracking shots that highlight the architecture that was erected by the Europeans, the most notable being the Yacoubian Building itself.

The film also seems to reject somewhat its Oriental qualities, by mixing its Arabic musical score with plenty of Western music. For instance, French singer Edith Piaf's voice is heard repeatedly throughout the narrative. The film's male protagonist, Zaki Pasha, continually speaks of Edith Piaf as well as French culture with such reverence that it assumes that the coloniser's image is more appealing than the humiliating Egyptian nation. This is also highlighted by the numerous performances of Franco-Egyptian lounge singer, Christine (played by Yousra), who performs renditions of "La Vie En Rose" (performed three times during the film), and other Western songs such as "Dream a Little Dream." Christine's voice is soft and airy, and lacks the depth or grain of habitual Egyptian and Arab singers. Traditionally, Arab singers such as the iconic Umm Kulthum or Fairouz are the ones who can be heard in the soundtracks of Egyptian film. Umm Kulthum, in particular, who is credited with being the "voice of Egypt," usually performs songs that are marked with a religious verve and deploy operatic passages (Danielson, 1998: 23), which differ greatly from the sensual breathiness of Christine's voice. This contrast indicates that the *Yacoubian Building* ultimately suppresses its popular Egyptian qualities in favour of becoming a cultural product that resonates beyond the boundaries of the Arab world.

Moreover, on a textual level, a number of the characters seem to indicate disdain for their nation and their desire to escape. In one scene, the working-class Busayna expresses her desire to live like a Westerner, claiming that "no one can bear Egypt's injustice anymore." This conversation is followed by Edith Piaf's "La Foule" playing over long tracking shots of Cairo. The European voice juxtaposes the previous comment and serves as an escape from the cruelty of the Arab/Eastern

world. This is coupled with Zaki Pasha's constant assertions that he was educated in France, and that Egypt "once used to be better than Paris," before it was corrupted.

In addition to these sources of Westernisation, the film also possesses some of the other contradictory characteristics of "World Cinema" that I have outlined. For instance, it presents universal human themes such as love and family relationships, and also makes representations that defy traditional media stereotypes. A case in point relates to how the film portrays various aspects of being a fundamentalist. It achieves this, by displaying the source of a fundamentalist's hatred, while also humanising him, by showing us his daily life, i.e. seeking sexual pleasure, acceptance, friendship and love. This is contrary to a Hollywood representation, which Khatib believes would concentrate instead on the evils of terrorism, almost ignorantly asserting that the terrorist's culture is to blame (2006b). Moreover while Hollywood portrays these terrorists as ruthless, faceless killers, *Yacoubian Building* "psychologises fundamentalism" (*ibid*.).

Despite these diverging stylistic and narrative qualities, the film was a domestic success, breaking box office records and has become one of the highest grossing Egyptian films of all time (BBC News, 2006a*;* Anonymous, 2007). Some of this can be attributed to maturing audience tastes. Yet the most probable reasons for the film's success is that it employed Egypt's biggest stars (i.e. Adel Immam and Yousra), the fact that it was adapted from a best-selling novel (written by Alaa Al Aswany), and because a wealthy personality and business mogul funded it. Indeed, the film was financed and distributed by the seemingly unshakable media mogul Emad Adeeb (Chairman of Good News Group), who began his career as a respected journalist – garnering numerous accolades, before venturing into the world of information technology. Moreover, his brother, Amr Adeeb, is one of the Arab world's most liberal TV news personalities, hosting a popular magazine show on satellite television. Similarly, the film's director, Marwan Hamed, is the son of one of Egypt's most renowned screenwriters, Wahid Hamed – which all in all affords the filmmakers a great deal of political leverage in the production and distribution process. Additionally, the producers were able to draw on their successful lineage, and their hefty budget to foster a sense of national pride for its viewers – many of whom believed that the film would be able to surpass the "lamentable myth that third world cinema requires a technical expertise that is only available in the West" (Kennedy-Day, 2001: 372).

However, *Yacoubian Building* was not taken up into the canon of "World Cinema" because it stayed true to its national traditions. Instead, it has been allowed stature because it is critical of its own nation state and aspires to Eurocentric (Western) conventions. The most popular of

Egypt's melodramatic adaptations—*The Beginning and The End*, *Cairo 30*, *A Man In Our House/Fi Baitina Rajul* (1961) and *Midaq Alley/Zouqaq al-Midaqq* (1963)—praised the nation state and were critical of colonialism, while *Yacoubian* praises its Franco-European influence. In 1979 a similar film, Yousef Chahine's *Alexandria, Why?*, became part of critical discourse, but like *Yacoubian Building*, the text was enamoured with the Western world, festishising images of the American Technicolor musical and deploying British actors. Thus, as Dissanayake argues, for cultural products to gain entry into the canon of "World Cinema," they need to forego characteristics that define their own identity, in favour of finding sources of recognition with Western taste brokers abroad.

Moral Binarisms

Although *Yacoubian Building* has broken new ground with its plurality of views, the impositions of institutional and self-censorship has meant that the moral binarisms of what is right and wrong in Egyptian film texts can seem bigoted and contradictory. First and foremost, women in much Egyptian cinema are oppressed by male hegemony. A case in point can be found in *Yacoubian Building,* which makes class-related moral assumptions about women. In one scene, Busayna, a poor, twenty-something living on the roof of the building is scolded by her mother for quitting her job. When Busayna tries to explain that her boss was about to sexually assault her by "unzipping his trousers," her mother responds, "Every man is free to do what they want with their own clothes!" In a later scene, Busayna's friend tells her that all men expect to have their way, and if she isn't willing to compromise her morals, she'll never be able to hold down a job. Busayna eventually succumbs to offering her employer sexual favours for a monetary reward. This loose morality is relegated to the lower classes, struggling to survive, and who wish to escape their life and nation. This narrative model conforms to the Egyptian stereotype that lower class females are sexually permissive, and devoid of morals, when it comes to getting what they want (Enloe, 1990; Khatib, 2006: 64).

However, a second storyline in *Yacoubian Building* contradicts this stereotype. In the narrative, a poor widow, Soad, is married off as a secret second wife to a wealthy politician, Hajj Azzam. Azzam, who is sexually frustrated and no longer finds sexual pleasure with his first wife, is encouraged by an Islamic cleric to take on Soad to fulfil his desires. Soad is hesitant at first, but subsequently agrees to the arrangement, after considering the financial rewards for herself and her son from the marriage. Interestingly, the film exposes Islamic hypocrisy by likening this act of marriage to prostitution. Soad is portrayed as being sold to a man as a secret object of sexual desire; she foregoes her pride, love and respect for the sake of financial security. Ultimately, Soad falls pregnant with her husband's child, and when she refuses to have an abortion, Hajj

Azzam has her kidnapped, forces an abortion and divorces her all in the space of a day. Soad is left helpless. This narrative is particularly unique, because traditionally Egyptian women in film are seen as either "virtuous, virginal females who pose no threat to patriarchy [or] as low-class, sexually permissive females" (Enloe, 1990: 64). It is assumed that audiences of popular films rarely read into the messages that the narrative insinuates (Shafik, 2007). Yet this portrayal seems to assume maturity from the viewer, which is uncommon for popular texts. Arguably, this hints towards the more highbrow motivations of "World Cinema."

Still, even within *Yacoubian Building*, there are problematic representations, particularly of homosexuals. This is indeed the case throughout much of Egyptian cinema's history (Menicucci, 1998). Historically, homosexual characters have rarely appeared on the Egyptian screen. As is evidenced by the notable exception of the character Kersha in *Midaq Alley*, whose homosexual tendencies in the original novel were all but removed from the film. The character that remains in the film is portrayed as an evil and menacing opportunist. He deals drugs to British troops and finds conquests for his scheming plans in dark, derelict spaces. Even the more tolerant Chahine in *Alexandria, Why?* chooses to mask homosexual desire with "murderous hatred" (Kiernan, 1995), by portraying the homosexual relationship as a product of a situation between a nationalist kidnapper and his captive. The most polemical representation however, is displayed by the gay characterisation in *Yacoubian Building*. Hatem Rashid, the editor of French newspaper *Le Caire*, is portrayed as a predator who feeds on a naïve upper Egyptian police guard called Abd Rabu. He seduces Abd Rabu by getting him drunk while watching heterosexual pornography. Hatem's sense of logic is also considered warped and confused. He convinces Abd Rabu that cheating on his wife with a man is not sinful, because "a man cannot get pregnant." Subsequently, he threatens the young police guard when he refuses his advances, warning that he "could harm him" if he didn't continue to consummate their relationship. Homosexuality is again portrayed as a source of evil in the narrative when secret intelligence officers rape Taha, a university student, who refuses to reveal the names of his co-conspirators in a religious protest. Taha's subsequent revenge against his captors (in an all-out blood bath) is a direct retaliation against this (homosexual) act of menace.

By the end of *Yacoubian Building*, the filmmakers engage in unfortunate pop philosophising by suggesting that Hatem's homosexuality is a product of child molestation. Thus, the creators feel that they must justify to the audience the source of this unnatural behaviour. Although, the narrative does eventually awaken sympathy for the homosexual character, which is indeed very rare for a Middle-Eastern cultural product (Yosef, 2007), it ultimately ensures that the character is murdered by one of his sexual conquests, almost as if to insinuate that this is inevitable for someone

who engages in Hatem's lifestyle. Whether the scene of Hatem's murder was intended to be a depiction of reality or to appease audiences, I am unsure. However, director Marwan Hamed has stressed that his main concern while making the film was the audience, and "how to tackle taboos and yet keep the audience from walking out" (BBC News, 2006b). It has also been noted on Internet blogs, (Al-Bab, 2007) that many cinema audiences burst out clapping during the scene of Hatem's murder, as well as during the scene that involves the slaying of the police officer; both of which represent the homosexual menace. This use of narrow stereotyping is one of the reasons why Egyptian films have been deemed "garrulous, unreflective stuff" (Bradshaw, 2007) by Western critics. Moreover, the fact that Hatem is the son of a sexually promiscuous French woman illustrates Egyptian culture's willingness to disavow certain minority groups and to relegate them to degenerate foreign sources. Sa'id observes that it is "easier and safer for a writer to flatter people's national and religious instincts by stating that all problems we meet are but the results of a Western, Zionist, or a satanic conspiracy" (1994). These shallow rationalisations of morality reflect the growing trend towards more conservative interpretations of Islam in Egyptian media. This limits the plurality of views represented in its films, and in turn presents bigoted representations, which do not conform to the broad cultural appeal detailed in the (Westernised) paradigms of "World Cinema."

The Rise of Islamic Morality and Conservatism

Egyptian cinema has not gone under the same process of Islamisation as say Iranian cinema. However, cinema in Egypt has long held a place on the "dark" side of moral binarism. This is evidenced textually at times in *Yacoubian Building*, where audience sympathies are intended to rest with the Islamic fundamentalist, who stands out as both a victim and a hero. However, this conservative shift has been taking place for a number of years. It began initially with the retreat of a number of high profile actresses in the mid-1990s, which confirmed that in Egypt, "cinematic practices are considered oppositional to Islamist-defined piety" (Shafik, 2007: 170). In fact, from the 1980s until 1994, as many as twenty-one actresses and at least two actors decided to retreat from show business for religious reasons (Shafik, 2007). The most talked-about case is that of singer and actress Shadia, who from 1949 to 1983 had starred in over 100 feature films (Shafik, 2007: 198). Yet after wearing the veil in 1987, Shadia refused to be seen in public and declined to attend her honouring at the Cairo International Film Festival in 1995. The secular press reacted by claiming that religious leaders were bribing actresses with large sums (Lughod, 1995).

This curtailment ran parallel with the rise of popular preachers such as Shaykh Mitwalli al-Sha'rawi, who was offered a satellite television channel

that was broadcast into millions of Arab homes. One belief that Sha'rawi popularised is that women should not be allowed onto the screen because they "incite sexual instincts." Another equally popular religious cleric, Shaykh Muhammed al-Ghazali, cited the arts in the same breath as "atheism and prostitution" (Shafik. 2007: 201). This rise in Egyptian prudishness has been attributed to the country's dependence on the Gulf states, which sourced many Egyptian workers (more than 4.5 million) and are responsible for funding many Egyptian cinema productions. Moreover, the large Arabic satellite TV stations (who fund film productions) in Egypt such as ROTANA and ART are financed by Arab-Gulf money, which are mainly funded by individuals from big Saudi families, such as Prince Waleed Bin Talal Al-Saud (El Darshy, 2007).

What industrial practitioners ignored at first was that these investors would be able to control what did and did not get screened. They are so powerful that it is believed they can 'easily cut, destroy and prohibit any film that doesn't match their own beliefs' (El Darshy, 2007). A recent example has been made out of British/Egyptian filmmaker Khaled el-Hagar's Egyptian musical, *Mafeesh Gher Keda!* (*None But That!*). After the film was filmed and completed, it was accepted for a screening at the 2006 Cairo Film Festival without any problems. However when the film was released in Egyptian cinemas on 14 March 2007 (after being cleared by the Egyptian censorship board without any cuts), the Saudi owners of ART felt that the nude scenes in the film were overtly explicit, and that the dance scenes in the film were "corrupt and sinful" (*ibid*.). After the film was shown at the Agoralumiere section at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival, it was signed up for exhibition at more than fifteen international film festivals. The production company, however, apparently refused to make any prints with French or English subtitles, or in fact, send any screeners to those festivals. This rise in moral conservatism consequently has prevented Egyptian cinema from developing a more global perspective and presence.

Comparative Cinemas and the Problems with Canon Formation

Comparative World Cinemas

When I began my research, I was perplexed by the number of books written about other world cinemas that were culturally similar to Egypt, and located in the geographic proximity of the Middle East. The first cinema that I consider here is that of Iran. The success of Iranian cinema is paradoxical, especially considering the "Western perception that Shi'I Islam as practiced in Iran today is anti-modern and backward" (Naficy, 1992). In addition, the widely reported curtailment of Western-style performing arts, and the government's maltreatment of entertainers have reinforced this notion (*ibid*.). Yet the rise of allegorical political films from this tension has created great interest by film scholars. Many books have

been published about Iranian cinema, and as far as modest nationalized cinemas go, it has fared incredibly well on the international film-festival circuit. However, one interesting difference is that the field of Iranian studies in the West is heavily dominated by diasporic Iranians, as opposed to Westerners (Tapper, 2002). These academics no doubt are better able to contextualise Iranian films, taking cultural differences into account in a manner that is unique from Western scholars.

Iranian film also possesses different politicized connotations for its viewers. Tapper argues that "the New Iranian cinema" in particular offers Iranians in and outside the country the opportunity to form a dialogue of reconciliation (in the post-revolution era), and in turn offers a renewed sense of cultural identity (Tapper, 2002: 22). It is also important to note that French cinéastes have been credited with the recent funding of new Iranian cinemas. With this foreign investment comes more attention from the foreign press (*ibid*.: 94). Since these films have European investors, they are more likely to promote them at the large European festivals (i.e. Cannes, Venice, Locarno, etc.).

Moreover, Iranian cinema has had little direct influence on social attitudes and behaviour within the country (Armes, 1987; Sadr, 1999). The poor domestic box-office revenues for its films reflect this. Accordingly, there is an emphasis on these films finding audiences abroad to make up financially for their existence. This is not the case in Egypt, where most films are produced with the intention of becoming domestic box office successes. As such, Iranian cinema is freed from the burden of being popular domestically. This highlights the often-contradictory politics of film festivals, and indeed, "World Cinema" canon formation. Unless the films have foreign (Western) investment (such as the films of Chahine) or appeal to high-art norms, it is unlikely that they will ever be put in front of the appropriate festival programmers. This is true, Hafez (1995) suggests, of the cinema of the Maghreb, which often mixes in French and European languages and codes into its production contexts (due to the heavy existing influence of their Franco-colonisers). This cultural aspiration to the coloniser is not evident in the cinemas of Egypt, which is perhaps one of the reasons why it is excluded from the international canon.

Another case I would like to mention briefly is that of Israel. In Israel, a small handful of films have gone on to be screened at numerous international festivals and are written about widely within the academy. Yet one can conclude that Israeli cinema is widely discussed with regard to "World Cinema" discourse because Israel, as a state, possesses an ideological and geopolitical orientation almost exclusive to the West (Shohat, 1987: 3). Moreover, because the most prominent Israelis emigrated from Europe, there tends to be a creative European hegemony in the narrative devices and aesthetics (*ibid*.). Accordingly, Israeli

filmmakers rarely refer to their work in the context of, for example, Middle Eastern cinema. Rather, in debates surrounding the Israeli moving image, Israeli filmmakers often refer to such movements as the French New Wave, British Free Cinema, Italian Neorealism, and even Eastern European cinema (*ibid*.: 5) when speaking of their own work. Thus, Israeli films have gained certain esteem by repressing their "Easterness," and by cultivating the images of the idealised West (*ibid*.).

The Trouble with Academic and Critical Canon Formation

When considering the ignorance of Egyptian cinema, I found the observations of Stephen Crofts (2006) particularly useful. Crofts observes that film scholars' mental maps of world film production, are often far from global. He argues that even those who are considered assiduous historians such as Georges Sadoul make notable historiographic exemptions. For instance, Sadoul's *Histoire du cinéma* devotes more pages to the Brighton School and the beginnings of Pathé than he does to the whole Latin American cinema between 1900 and 1962. Hence as Edward Said (1984) argues, a respective country's relations (military, economic, diplomatic, cultural, or ethnic relations) considerably inform national film cultures.

Consequently, Crofts argues that Sadoul, informed by French colonialism, knows more of African cinema than of Latin American, while an American scholar, informed by US imperialism and substantial Hispanic immigration, knows more of Latin American than African cinema, and a British scholar informed by European and cultural influences may not see much outside the transatlantic axis (2006: 53). However, other cultures, for instance those of the Far East, Africa and so forth, are exposed to a much wider canon of film viewing, even if there is not as much overall film scholarship taking place there. Annette Hamilton remarks that "the average viewer in Thailand or Singapore has been exposed to a much wider range and variety of visual material, in style, genre and cultural code than is the case for any average Western viewer" (1992: 91).

Such a skewed worldview, Crofts observes, will demonstrably influence canon formation. This is particularly problematic, considering that the cinemas of the developing world are the prime excluded category in canon formation, in that they do not register on the axis of Western film scholars. Crofts uses the following quote from Luis Buñuel, who at the time was speaking of the canon of world literature. Crofts argues that it can just as easily be applicable to "World Cinema":

> It seems clear to me that without the enormous canon of American culture, Steinbeck would be an unknown, as would Dos Passos and Hemingway. If they'd been born in Paraguay or Turkey, no one would ever have read them, which suggests the alarming fact that

the greatness of a writer is in direct proportion to the power of his/her country. (Buñuel, 1984: 222)

Crofts' conclusions pose a solution to many of the problems and barriers that I have highlighted throughout this argument. That is, to pursue the question of canon formation in relation to the national cinemas of the third world, demands not only a "historical understanding and reassessment of national cinemas, but also an understanding of international relations, cultural diplomacy and also an analysis of the often flawed taste-brokering functions of film festivals and film criticism" (2006: 54).

Conclusions and Suggestions

Thus, by reassessing the manner in which we canonise and contextualise world cinemas, we may be able to uncover a more diverse array of films. Although other cases may have been used, I have discussed the example of Egyptian cinema in relation to discourses surrounding "World Cinema." Unfortunately, censorship, cultural specificity, bigoted stereotyping, and an industrial tension that began during colonial occupation have limited its context. The recent *Yacoubian Building* however represents an evolution from some of these constraints. After the film's initial release, 120 members of the Egyptian parliament tried to forcefully remove all allusions to homosexuality within the film (BBC News, 2006b). Despite much public controversy, the censors were unable to do so. This was put down to the affluence of the production conglomerate Good News Group, and its renowned chairman Emad Adeeb. This illustrates that privately owned media firms can overcome the bureaucratic barriers of the Egyptian film industry, if they choose to stick by their cultural productions (Sakr, 2004).

Nevertheless, although *Yacoubian Building* has taken narrative risks and at times strays from qualities that are characteristic of Egyptian popularism, it is still prone to the bigoted stereotyping of certain groups. Still, cultural identities in film are constantly changing and transforming (Hall 1994) and as they evolve their messages and narrative devices become more interesting and important. I have limited my discussion here to one film in the hopes of focusing the argument; however as Armbrust (1995 and 2000) suggests, researching the many generic texts from Egypt's history could be useful to critical discourse.

Finally, if Egypt is going to benefit from this kind of reflection, it must relieve some of its internal barriers. First, the Egyptian government needs to develop a competition policy that does not diminish the prospect of future productions.   It also needs to establish an appropriate restoration process and to pump public funds back into film exhibition. [4] The Cairo International Film Festival, which had been gaining momentum,

all but lost its profile as soon as the more generously funded Dubai International Film Festival and other regional festivals started to take away some of its lustre. This defeatist attitude is stifling what could be a potentially global cinema. Nevertheless, taste brokering, as I have indicated, is often hypocritical, requiring films to forego their identities for the sake of appealing to high-art concerns. This method of canonisation is limiting the kinds of texts to which critics and scholars are exposed. It is time that we reconsider the reasons why we watch foreign cinema, and indeed what constitutes "World Cinema," and how we develop the formation of that canon.

Notes

[1] Not only were Arabic novels used as source material for the screen, but Western novels by Dostoevsky, Chekhov and Dumas were also adapted and 'Egyptianised' for local audiences (Shafik, 2001).

[2] Orientalism is a theory that has been heavily contested. Windschuttle (1999), Landow (2002), Kerr (1980) and Porter (1994) all agree that Orientalism is impossible, as it does not account for the various differences among the peoples of the West. They also suggest that hegemony is something that needs to be maintained and that one cannot make the assumption that the West will forever be hegemonic. However, for the sake of this argument and the neglect that Egyptian cinema has received, Orientalism is an effective model of use.

[3] Although *Yacoubian Building* has rarely garnered outright negative critical reviews, Charlotte O' Sullivan's review in the *Evening Standard* (2007) offers the film a paltry two stars. Her only justification is that the film is "undermined by not-so subtle dialogue." This is an example of how Egyptian/Arab cultural specificity translates poorly onto the screen. The over-the-top, dramatic tone of the Egyptian colloquial dialect is never done justice. In my own experience of viewing *Yacoubian Building* at an arthouse cinema in Glasgow, audience members started laughing inappropriately during a very traumatic scene. In the scene, a mother who has just lost her child has an emotional breakdown in a hospital corridor. She screams: "my child, my beautiful child" in Arabic. However, the translation/subtitle was: "Oh sweet fruit of my womb!" This no doubt seemed overtly melodramatic and unsuitably placed within the context of the scene, thus inducing laughter from audience members.

[4] At the time of this writing, it has been rumoured that Good News Group mogul Emad Adeeb, who is extremely wealthy, has purchased every film in every archive in Egypt and intends to restore them and have

them organised into the nation's first comprehensive film archive. Most films prior to 1961, however, have been destroyed and the government has previously refused to support any national film restoration archive (El-Assyouti, 1999). This is problematic since archives play a key role in canon formation, and this is likely to increase in weight and scope as more and more films go out of commercial circulation (Wollen, 2002: 221). Without proper archiving, these texts have little chance of being recognised.

References

Al-Obaidi, Jabbar (2000) Egyptian Film: Gender and Class Violence Three Cycles, *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 27 (3), pp. 261-273.

Anderson, Benedict (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anonymous (2007) The Yacoubian Building, *The New Internationalist*, 45, (October).   Available   at: <http://www.newint.org/columns/media/film/2007/10/01/yacoubian/> [Accessed: 5 January 2008]

Armbrust, Walter (1995) New Cinema, Commercial Cinema, and the Modernist Tradition in Egypt, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 15, pp. 81-129.

Armbrust, Walter (2000) An Upper Egyptian in the American Press: Journalistic Misreadings of *Sa'idi in the American University*, *SAIS Review*, 20 (2), (Summer-Fall), pp. 215-224.

Armes, Roy (1987) *Third World Filmmaking and the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Atef, Ali (2005) Living Room Wars: Power Relations and TV Viewing in the Egyptian 'Upper-Middle' Class. Conference paper. Presented at: Reform in Egypt: Opportunities and Challenges Conference, 18-19 May, American University of Cairo.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony (1992) *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aufderheide, Patricia (1991) The Maghreb. *Black Film Revue*, 3.

Bazin, Andre (1971) *What is Cinema*? Berkeley: University of California Press.

BBC News (2006a) Taboo-Smashing Film Breaks Egypt Records, 5 July. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/5150216.stm> [Accessed: 15 May 2007]

BBC News (2006b) Egypt Debates Controversial Film, 5 July. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5150718.stm> [Accessed: 15 May 2007]

Bradshaw, Peter (2007) The Yacoubian Building, *The Guardian*, 14 September 2007.

Bosworth, Clifford Edmund (ed.) (1960) *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

Buñuel, Luis (1984) *My Last Sigh*. London: Jonathon Cape.

Cluny, Claude Michel (1984) al-sinima al maghribiya, in Muhammad al-Qalyubi (ed.), *Al sinima al-'arabiya wa-l-ifriqiya*. Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha, pp. 44-52.

Crofts, Stuart (2006) Reconceptualising National Cinema/s, in Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (eds.), *Theorising National Cinema*. London: BFI, pp. 44-60.

Danielson, Virginia (1998) *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Darwish, Adel (1997) Obituary: Henri Barakat, *The Independent*, 30 May .

Dissanayake, Wimal (2000) Issues in World Cinema, in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.), *World Cinema: Critical Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 527-534.

Drew, William M. (2002) Mohamed Bayoumi (1894-1963). Available at: <http://www.gildasattic.com/mbayoumi.html> [Accessed: 1 February 2008]

El-Assyouti, Mohamed (1999) Forgotten Memories, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 8 September.

El Darshy, Anoer (2007) The Killing of an Egyptian Film 'Mafesh Gher Keda!', *(arab) film*, 11 June. Available at: http://arabfilm.blogspot.com/2007/06/zensur-von-none-but-that.html [Accessed: 5 December 2007]

Elnaccash, Ataa (1968) Egyptian Cinema: A Historical Outline. *African Arts*, 2 (1), (Autumn).

Enloe, Cynthia (1990) *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Fawal, Ibrahim (2001) *Youssef Chahine*. BFI: London.

Ghareeb, Shirin (1997) An Overview of Arab Cinema, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 6 (11), pp. 119-127.

Ghoneim, Ahmed Farouk (2004a) Competition, Cultural Variety and Global Governance: The Case of the Egyptian Audiovisual System. Available at: <http://purl.umn.edu/26109> [Accessed: 3 February 2011]

Ghoneim, Ahmed Farouk (2004b) Performance of Cultural Industries in Egypt. Conference Proceedings, WIPO/LAS National Seminar on Intellectual Property for Journalists and Members of the Media. Available at: <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/arab/en/wipo_ip_dipl_cai_04/wipo_ip_dipl_cai_04_10.pdf> [Accessed: 12 November 2007]

Hafez, Sabry (1995) Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 15, pp. 39-80.

Hafez, Sabry (2006) The Quest for/Obsession with the National in Arabic Cinema, in Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (eds.), *Theorising National Cinema*. London: BFI, pp. 226-253.

Hamilton, Annette (1992) The Mediascape of Modern Southeast Asia, *Screen* 33 (1), pp. 81-92.

Hall, Stuart (1994) Cultural Identity and Diaspora, in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 392-403.

Hjort, Mette. and Scott Mackenzie (eds.) (2000) *Cinema and Nation*. London: Routledge.

Kennedy-Day, Kiki (2001) Cinema in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait, in Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film.* Routledge: London, pp. 364-406.

Kerr, Malcolm H. (1980) Rev. of Edward Said, *Orientalism*, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 12 (4), (December), pp. 547-547.

Khatib, Lina (2006a) *Filming The Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*. London: IB Tauris.

Khatib, Lina (2006b) Nationalism and Otherness: The Representation of Islamic Fundamentalism in Egyptian Cinema, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9 (1), (January), pp. 63-80.

Kiernan, Maureen (1995) Cultural Hegemony and National Film Language: Youssef Chahine, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 15, pp. 130-152.

Knight, Timothy (2006) Reel Review: *Yacoubian Building*, *Reel.com*, 8 December.   Available   at:< http://www.reel.com/movie.asp?MID=143019&buy=closed&Tab=reviews &CID=13#tabs> [Accessed: 15 January 2008]

Kuberski, Phillip (1989). Dreaming of Egypt: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Cinema, *SubStance*, 18 (3), (Issue 60), pp. 75-94

Landow, George P. (2002) Rev. of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Available at: <http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg/post/poldiscourse/said/orient14.html> [Accessed: 1 February 2008]

Lane, Sandra D. (1997) Television Minidramas: Social Marketing and Evaluation in Egypt, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly, New Series*, 11 (2), (June), pp. 164-182.

Lughod, Lila Abu (1995) Movie Stars and Islamic Moralism in Egypt, *Social Text*, 42, (Spring), pp. 53-67.

Malkmus, Linda and Roy Armes (1991) *Arab and African Film Making*. London: Zedde Books.

Mattin, David (2007) Rev. of *The Yacoubian Building*, BBC News, 8 September. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2007/09/10/the_yacoubian_building_2007_review.shtml> [Accessed :4 January 2008]

Mazzaoui, Farid l. (1950) Film In Egypt, *Hollywood Quarterly*, 4, (3), (Spring), pp. 245-250.

Menicucci, Garay (1998) Unlocking the Arab Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in Egyptian Film, *Middle East Report*, 206, (Spring), pp. 32-36.

Naggar, A.S. (2002) *Sina 'at al-sinima fi Misr: Al-itijahat al-iqtisadiya al-istratijiya*. Cairo: al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

Naficy, Hamid (1992) Islamizing Film Culture in Iran, in Samih K. Farsoun and Mehrdad Mashayekhi (eds.), *Iran: Political Culture in the Islamic Republic*. London: Routledge, pp. 178-213.

Porter, Dennis (1994) Orientalism and its Problems, in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pp. 150-161.

Rachty, Gehan and Khalil Sabat (1987) Importation of Films for Cinema and Television in Egypt (Unesco Report), *Communication & Society*, 7.

Rosen, Miriam (1985) Letter from Paris: Arab Cinema in Exile, *MERIP Reports*, 136/137, (October – December), pp. 47-50.

Sa'id, Muhammed S. (1994) *Ruz al-Yusuf*, May 9, 78.

Sadr, Reza H. (1999) Contemporary Iranian Cinema and its Major Themes, in Rose Issa and Sheila Whitiker (eds.), *Life and Art: The New Iranian Cinema.* London: National Film Theatre, pp. 26-43.

Said, Edward (1978) *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.

Said, Edward (1984) *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. London: Faber.

Sakr, Naomi (2004) Arab Satellite Broadcasting and the State: Who Curbs Whom, Why and How?, *Transnational Broadcasting Studies*, Fall/Winter.

Sardar, Zia (2007) What Egyptian Cinema Can Teach Us, *The New Statesman*, 2 April.

Shadi, Alia A. (1996) Genres in Egyptian Cinema, In Alia Arasoughly (ed.) *Screens of Life: Critical Film Writing From the Arab World*. Quebec: World Heritage Press, pp. 84-129.

Shaheen, Jack G. (2009) *Real Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Northampton: Olive Branch Press.

Shafik, Viola (1998) *Arab Cinema: History & Cultural Identity*. Cairo & New York: The American University in Cairo Press.

Shafik, Viola (2001) Egyptian Cinema, in Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*. Routledge: London, pp. 23-129.

Shafik, Viola (2007) *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Shohat, Ella (1983) Egypt: Cinema and Revolution, *Critical Arts: A Journal for Media Studies*, 2 (4), pp. 22-31

Shohat, Ella (1987) *Israeli Cinema: East/West and The Politics of Representation*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Sharqawi, G.A. (1970) *Risala fi tarikh al-sinima al-'arabiya*. Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Misriya al-'Ama li-l-Kitab.

Sullivan, Charlotte O. (2006) Building Wobbles From Start, *Evening Standard*, 13 September. Available at <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/film/review-23412049-building-wobbles-from-start.do> [Accessed: 3 February 2011]

Tapper, Richard (2002) *The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation & National Identity*. London: IB Tauris.

Vogt, Achim (2002) Regulation and Self-Regulation: The Role of Media Commissions and Professional in the Muslim World, *Political Communication*, 19, pp. 211–223.

Whitaker, Brian (2007) 31 March 2007: Yacoubian Building, *Al Bab: Arab Gateway Arab Cinema*. Available at: <http://www.al-bab.com/unspeakablelove/blog06105.htm> [Accessed: 12 November 2007]

Wilkinson, Ron (2006) Movie Review: The Yacoubian Building, monstersandcritics.com, 22 May. Available at: <http://www.monstersandcritics.com/movies/reviews/article_1165743.php/Movie_Review_The_Yacoubian_Building_Omaret_Yakobean> [Accessed: 3 February 2011]

Willemen, Paul (1989) *Questions of Third Cinema*. London: BFI.

Windschuttle, Keith (1999) Edward Said's *Orientalism* Revisited, *The New Criterion*, January. Available at: <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/17/jan99/said.htm> [Accessed: 1 February 2008]

Wollen, Peter (2002) *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film*. New York: Verso.

Yosef, Raz (2004) *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Zaatari, Akram (2005) The Singular of Seeing, *Third Text*, 19 (1), (January), pp. 45-52.

Filmography

A Beginning and An End/Bidaya Wa Nihaya. 1960. Dir. Salah Abou Seif.

Alexandria, Why?/Iskindiriyah Leh? 1979. Dir. Youssef Chahine. MISR International Films.

A Man in Our House/Fi Baitina Rajul. 1961. Dir. Henry Barakat.

An Indian Film/Film Hindi. 2003. Dir. Mounir Rady.

Cairo 30/Al-Qahira Thalatheen. 1966. Dir. Salah Abou Seif. Cairo Cinema Company.

Isma'il Yasin Military Policeman/Isma'il Yasin Bolis Harbi. 1959. Dir. Fatin 'Abd al-Wahab.

Isma'il Yasin in the Police/Isma'il Yasin Fil Bolis. 1956. Dir. Fatin 'Abd al-Wahab.

Isma'il Yasin in the Army/Isma'il Yasin Fil Geish. 1955. Dir. Fatin 'Abd al-Wahab.

Layla. 1927. Dir. Wedad Orfi and Stephan Rosti.

Midaq Alley/Zouqaq al-Midaqq. 1963. Dir. Hassan Al Immam.

None But That/Mafeesh Gher Keda! 2006. Dir. Khaled el-Hagar.

The Emigrant/al-Muhagir. 1994. Dir. Youssef Chahine.

The Nightingale's Prayer/Du'aa al-Karawan. 1959. Dir. Henry Barakat.

The River of Love/Nahr al-hub. 1961. Dir. Ezzel Dine Zulficar.

Yacoubian Building/Omaret Yacoubian. 2006. Dir. Marwan Hamed. Good News Group.

Zaynab. 1930. Dir. Muhammed Karim.