

This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 30 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Edited by Rob Stone, Paul Cooke, Stephanie Dennison
and Alex Marlow-Mann

The Routledge Companion to World Cinema

Rob Stone, Paul Cooke, Stephanie Dennison, Alex Marlow-Mann

Locations and narrative reorientations in Arab cinemas/World Cinema

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315688251.ch16>

Anne Ciecko

Published online on: 27 Sep 2017

How to cite :- Anne Ciecko. 27 Sep 2017, *Locations and narrative reorientations in Arab cinemas/World Cinema* from: *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* Routledge

Accessed on: 30 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315688251.ch16>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

16

LOCATIONS AND NARRATIVE REORIENTATIONS IN ARAB CINEMAS/WORLD CINEMA

Anne Ciecko

Introduction

This chapter begins with a cinematic disappointment: a cautionary tale of the sparse landscape of a national/domestic film culture giving way to foreign interests and global aspirations, and a seeming desert of imagination. The Doha Film Institute in Qatar, together with a Tunisian film and television producer, teamed up to make a 55 million dollar production, *Day of the Falcon* (aka. *Black Gold*, 2011, France/Italy/Qatar/Tunisia, Jean-Jacques Annaud) that was almost universally panned upon its release (Ritman 2014). Located in an indeterminate Arabia, and filmed in Qatar and Tunisia, *Day of the Falcon* was directed by French filmmaker Jean-Jacques Annaud and starred a mostly non-Arab cast headed by Antonio Banderas and Freida Pinto in lead roles in a lavishly derivative, Arab-themed historical desert epic about the rise of the modern oil industry. Based on a 1957 book by Swiss writer Hans Reusch titled *South of the Heart: A Novel of Modern Arabia*, the ambitions of its film adaptation for grandiose global entertainment elided dimensions of cultural verisimilitude in favour of outmoded tropes and Orientalist stereotypes. The film failed to connect with contemporary audiences, and apparently contributed to the infrastructural implosion of the nascent Qatari film industry, and the squelching of dreams of an international Arab breakthrough blockbuster (Mintzer 2011; Pulver 2012). As this chapter examines and as Lina Khatib insists in her book *Filming the Modern Middle East*: “While it is important to study how the West represents the East, it is even more crucial to see how the ‘Orient’ represents itself”—or allows itself to be represented (Khatib 2006: 4).

Cultivating desert landscapes

The most immediate and nostalgic referent for *Day of the Falcon* is David Lean’s T. E. Lawrence biopic *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962, UK/USA), a celebrated and canonical film about a problematic “Arab” poseur; in the words of Jack Shaheen, author of a critical compendium of representations of Arabs in Hollywood, *Lawrence of Arabia* “may contain compelling cinematography and engrossing performances, [but] as [Arab] history [it] receives a failing grade” (2001: 290). The film is paradoxical in its combination of reductive representations of tribal Arabs, coupled with a critique of colonialism (Caton 1999: 19). David Lean and his team shot the film in Morocco, a country that has served as locations for many international films, starting in the early decades of

the twentieth century when European and American films featured locations from North Africa and the Middle East, and also frequently depicted “passive groups of the colonized” (Orlando 2011: 7). Alongside Peter O’Toole as Lawrence, Mexican-born Hollywood star Anthony Quinn plays Auda abu Tayi, the Bedouin leader of the Arab revolt; Quinn is later cast as Libyan tribal leader Omar Mukhtar, who fought Mussolini’s troops in the deserts of Libya in *Lion of the Desert* (1980, Libya/USA, Moustapha Akkad). Aiming for authenticity, and partially funded by Libyan revolutionary leader Muammar Gaddafi, *Lion in the Desert* was actually filmed in the deserts of southern Libya. For Aleppo-born director Akkad, who became a major Hollywood player as producer of the *Halloween* slasher horror franchise, *Lion in the Desert* was the second of an unfinished Arab epic trilogy he had planned to complete before his tragic death in a 2005 hotel bombing in Amman, Jordan. It was a means of recuperating pan-Arab cinematic identity and promoting cultural understanding (Ciecko 2010: 14).

Perhaps the most globally visible dunes of the Arab world landscape are those recontextualised in the Star Wars franchise’s mythical desert planet Tatooine, constructed of images filmed mostly in real-world locations in southern Tunisia. Tunisian landscapes and locations in movies such as *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* (1977, USA, George Lucas), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, USA, Steven Spielberg) and *The English Patient* (1996, USA/UK, Anthony Minghella), among others, inspired the National Office of Tunisian Tourism to capitalise on topographical iconicity made famous by foreign blockbusters and epics (Ben Bouazza and Schemm 2014). Instead, Tunisian filmmaker Nacer Khemir’s “Desert Trilogy”—*El haimoune* (Wanderers of the Desert, 1984, Tunisia/France), *Le collier perdu de la colombe* (*The Dove’s Lost Necklace*, 1991, France/Italy/Tunisia) and *Bab’Aziz* (Bab’Aziz—The Prince Who Contemplated His Soul, 2005, Switzerland/Hungary/France/Germany/Iran/Tunisia/UK)—mines a personal and collective image-repertoire of memory, folklore, Sufi mysticism and Arab Islamic representation more generally, in his examinations of the Arab desert and the Arab wanderer (Shafik 2007: 53). Locations find new currency as genres become culturally relevant. For example, after the 2003 military invasion in Iraq and subsequent occupation, Jordanian desert landscapes have served as displaced stand-ins or surrogates for the country-under-siege in foreign films, war movies such as *The Hurt Locker* (2008, USA, Kathryn Bigelow) and *Battle for Haditha* (2007, UK, Nick Broomfield). Writing on recent generations of Arab road themes in films and audio-visual culture, Laura Marks observes the relative absence of geographical deserts in current Arab filmmaking and video art, asserting that “the new desert is the Arab highway” in filmic works of “asphalt nomadism” (Marks 2015: 153). However, *Theeb* (2014, United Arab Emirates/Qatar/Jordan/UK, Naji Abu Nowar) is one case of contemporary national/pan-Arab cinema that reclaims the region, the physical desert, Arab history and the nomadic figure. A co-production of Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the UK, it focuses on a Bedouin boy’s coming of age and struggle for survival in the Wadi Rum desert during the First World War era, in the period following the Arab Revolt. Drawing inevitable comparisons, some critics have referred to *Theeb* as an Arab corrective or companion piece to the cinematic imaginary of Lean’s *Lawrence of Arabia*. *Theeb* also extends Arab cinema’s discursive journey into the international image market and critical acclaim as Jordan’s first ever nominee for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar at the Academy Awards.

Charting the Arab cinematic world(s)

Within the larger map of world cinema, the concept of Arab cinema (or Arab cinemas, plural, e.g., *les cinémas Arabes* as they are frequently called in French) is problematised by the concept of a world within a world, as well as the transdiscursive legacies of Occidentalism, Eurocentrism,

nationalism, colonialism and civilisation. There is “not one school, form, structure, or style” to Arab cinema (Ghareeb 1997: 119, cited in Mellor 2011: 103). Because of the heterogeneity of “communities, peoples, states, governments, societal forms”, as well as the diversity of languages (including multiple Arabic dialects), religions and sects, ethnicities and cultures, the Arab world is not a monolith; however, there are some common cultural topography and historical parallels across the cinemas of Arab nations (Shafik 2007: 1–2). Arab cinema does not have the same specific continent-focused valences of Asian cinema and African cinema, as member states of the “Arab world” or the Arab League of nations and territories (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen) intersect with or are contained within the two largest continents. However, the Arab world or Arab nations construction generally maintains a sense of shared Arab identity (political, linguistic, cultural) informed by the ideological project(s) of Arab nationalism. Some, but not all, of these sovereign Arab nations and territories are also frequently encapsulated in the transcontinental configuration of the “Middle East” that additionally includes non-Arab nations such as Iran, Cyprus and Turkey. Collected studies of Arab cinema and, or within, the Middle East configuration include editions by Gugler (2011), Ginsberg and Lippard (2010), Devi and Rahman (2014), among others. In making a further distinction, some scholars such as Hafez (2006) favour the linguistic and cultural inflections of the term “Arabic Cinema”.

As an extension of the challenge of naming and locating, “Arab cinema”, like Asian cinema and African cinema, may also include transnational and global diffusions and amalgamations of personnel, productions and representations as part of the category. Arab films and filmmakers have variously asserted or contested the nation-state and national/cultural identity. Arab films may represent interstitial and contested spaces; reappropriate and subvert cinematic stereotypes; engage with exilic, diasporic, and glocalised experiences. Arab cinema employs a wide array of ever-more-hybridised genre and iconographic conventions, yet the category (like Asian cinema and African cinema) can function discursively like a meta-genre, as in the case of Arab film festivals (such as the multi-site Arab Film Festival in multiple California cities inaugurated in 1996, the largest and oldest such festival in the United States, and the Biennial of Arab Cinema at the Institute du Monde Arab in Paris/Biennale des cinémas arabes à Paris) and distribution companies and networks (e.g. Arab Film Distribution, which “promotes and distributes the cinemas of the Arab world in North America” (Arab Film Distribution website), initially established in partnership with the Seattle Arab and Iranian Film Festival in 1990). For film scholarship, overlapping categories such as “*beur*” cinema (a colloquial vernacularisation of the word Arab, a term for films made by Maghrebi immigrants and their descendants, especially in the French context) and *le cinéma de banlieue* (depicting multi-ethnic experiences in the periphery of French cities) provide a means for “reframing difference” and intersectionality in Arab and African diasporic cinemas in particular national-cultural contexts (Tarr 2005).

In historicising Arab cinema, scholars and programmers have negotiated the perceived chronology of world cinema. For example, in the mid-1990s, discourse of the “centennial” of cinema became pervasive, frequently attributed to the “originary” discourses of the French brothers Lumière, the “pioneering” short films they and their team produced (*actualités*), and their combined camera, printer and projector invention (*Cinématographe*). Using as a starting point the 1896 production and exhibition in Cairo of films made in Egypt by Lumière collaborator Alexandre Promio, the Film Society of the Lincoln Center in New York City presented, in 1996, a showcase of 41 films from throughout the Arab world, then the largest such representation of Arab films in the USA (including films from Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia), co-curated by Richard Peña and Alia

Arasoughly. In tandem with this project, Palestinian filmmaker, scholar and programmer Arasoughly edited and translated essays in a collection titled *Screens of Life: Critical Film Writing from the Arab World* (1996).

Complexities of Arab cinema as a category are evident in English-language scholarship dedicated to Arab cinema, in the establishment of new film festivals, in filmmaker manifestos, and in reflexive documentary engagement. The earliest book-length study of Arab cinema to appear in English is *The Cinema in the Arab Countries* (1966), a translation of the anthology prepared for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). With most entries drawn from reports by Arab critics and filmmakers presented at round-table conferences on Arab culture and cinema in Egypt and Lebanon between 1962 and 1966, the volume was overseen by French writer and researcher Georges Sadoul, who also produced encyclopaedias of films and directors, and multi-volume histories of cinema, including *Histoire du cinéma mondial, des origines à nos jours* (1949). Additionally, it contains recommendations of the Arab League concerning film and television from meetings in Jordan and Syria in 1965 and 1966. Ambitiously reflective of the movement toward more pan-Arab inclusivity, *The Cinema in the Arab Countries* reports on Arab cinema in terms of larger film cultural activities (production, exhibition, marketing, and distribution) and inter-artistic relations (shadow shows, theatre, television, music). The book was published by the Interarab Centre of Cinema and Television in Beirut, that had, in its earlier incarnation as The Arab Film and Television Centre, previously sponsored multiple conferences on Arab cinema and culture and published the proceedings (Armes 2010: 30). *The Cinema in the Arab Countries* was published the same year as the inaugural Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia, devoted to Arab and African cinema, and considered to be the oldest film festival on the African continent. Adding coalition-building Third World and Third Cinema discourses into the mix, Arab filmmakers participated in the writing of their own versions following Latin American ground-breakers, Glauber Rocha's 1965 manifesto "Aesthetics of Hunger" and Julio Garcia Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema" in 1969 (Daulatzai 2012: 57). New film cinema club organisations and journals were formed in Egypt and Morocco including Jamaat al-Cinema al-Jadida (The New Cinema Group) established in Cairo (Khouri 2010: 57; Daulatzai 2012: 57). In December 1973, Algiers was the site for the Third World Film-Makers Meeting sponsored by the Algerian National Office for Cinematographic Commerce and Industry and the Cultural Information Center, and attended by filmmaker delegates from Africa and Latin America including filmmakers from Algeria and Morocco. This gathering resulted in an influential manifesto of cinema against imperialism and neo-colonialism, "Resolutions of the Third World Film-Makers Meeting, 1974" (2004), followed up by a charter adopted at the Second Congress of the Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes (FEPACI) in Algiers, The Algiers Charter on African Cinema" (1975). Subsequent to *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, key scholarly and documentary interventions explore Arab cinema as both distinct and politically and geoculturally intersectional—as in the case of Egyptian cinema and North African/Maghrebi cinema, frequently distinguished from Francophone Sub-Saharan African cinema and institutions such as the film festival, FESPACO (Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou, established in 1969). In their book *Arab and African Film Making*, Lizbeth Malkmus and Roy Armes discuss four geographical areas: "sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab West (or Maghreb), Egypt and the Arab East (or Mashreq) [that] all share the mark made on their political, economic and cultural developments by colonialism" (1991: 3). Tunisian filmmaker, screenwriter, and critic Férid Boughedir signals connections and divisions in the form of his documentary diptych, *Caméra d'Afrique* (Twenty Years of African Cinema, 1983, Tunisia/France) and *Caméra Arabe* (1987, Tunisia).

Situating the *Caméra Arabe*

Subtitled “The Young Arab Cinema”, *Caméra Arabe* offers a narrative account (with voiceover by Boughedir), asserting that Arab cinema, or rather the films watched by the Arab public, was/were, for more than forty years, dominated by melodramas and musical comedies from Cairo studios. Egypt is “the oldest and largest film industry in the Arab world [and] the only Arab country that was able to establish a local film industry even before national independence” (Hillauer 2005: 35). This commercial hegemonic model was confronted by cultural change marked by the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser, accompanied by a new realist cinema (with its exponents Salah Abou Seif, Henri Barakat, Kamel El Cheikh, Tewfik Saleh, Shadi Abdessalam, and “unclassifiable innovator” Youssef Chahine). For Boughedir, the liberation of the nations of Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria—the independence of Arab North Africa and the Third World more generally—encouraged the birth of a new cinema that was “totally different from its great Egyptian elder”, celebrating the past struggle and the dignity of the oppressed. He cites as a landmark the Algerian war film *Rih al-awras* (The Winds of the Aures, 1967, Algeria, Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina), made just five years after Algerian independence, that was followed by a wave of independent auteurs from North Africa and the Middle East who “struggled to give passion and voice to their own countries and dreamt of an alliance which would bring the lost family together again, and which would retrieve the lost grandeur and unity of Arab civilization”. However, Boughedir marks the Six-Day War defeat in 1967 and Nasser’s resignation thereafter as having a cataclysmic impact on the Arab psyche, as expressively reflected in Youssef Chahine’s drama *Al-asfour* (The Sparrow, 1972, Egypt/Algeria) set during the Six Day War, a film that inspired other Arab filmmakers to grapple head-on with crises of subjectivity and the recovery of memory.

Boughedir emphasises the importance of international film festivals as showcases for World Cinema, including the Carthage Film Festival as a forum for Arab and African cinema, and the Cannes Film Festival as a World Cinema showcase and platform for international recognition. He also underscores the necessity of negotiating multiple worlds in promoting Arab cinema, while also retaining commitment to the Arab experience. *Caméra Arabe* celebrates the Palme d’Or prize win at Cannes for Algerian film *Chronique des années de braise* (Chronicle of the Years of Fire, 1975, Algeria, Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina) which depicts Algeria’s struggle for independence; however, it also includes an excerpted interview with Lakhdar-Hamina, who describes his commitment to his land, people and their passions, and his unwillingness to leave Algeria to take any of the multiple opportunities in the West that came his way after his Cannes win, even though he had fallen out of favour with the Algerian regime. Boughedir asserts that the new Arab cinema could not find an exhibition circuit, with screens dominated by foreign films; therefore, festivals in the Arab world starting with the Carthage Film Festival (and later the Damascus Film Festival in 1972) became important regional/international vehicles for Arab and African filmmakers.

The Palestinian plight due to the 1948 war, exodus and displacement—coupled with atrocities of occupation after the Six-Day War—became a rallying point for Arab filmmakers. Two films mentioned in *Caméra Arabe* provide particularly potent representations of the Palestinian experience and its impact on larger Arab consciousness. Egyptian filmmaker Tewfik Saleh directed and co-scripted the Syrian-financed drama *Al-makhdu’un* (The Dupes, 1973, Syria), an adaptation of Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanfani’s 1962 novella *Men of the Sun* about the tragic struggles of desperate Palestinian refugees travelling to Kuwait for work. Because of its production circumstances, content and commitment, film scholar Viola Shafik, author of the afore-referenced landmark study of history and cultural identity in Arab cinema, calls *The Dupes*

“a Pan-Arab production par excellence” (Shafik 2007: 155). Demonstrating the ways the past is located in the present (and vice versa), Lebanese filmmaker Borhane Alaouié’s *Kafr kasem* (The Massacre of Kafr Kassem, 1975, Syria/Lebanon) dramatises the real-life events of the 1956 massacre of Palestinian civilians in the titular village. In an interview in *Caméra Arabe*, Israeli-born Palestinian filmmaker Michel Khleifi, living in exile in Belgium, muses about ways to represent Palestinian or Arab experience using cinema. Boughedir alludes to other Arab cinema manifestos, including the “Manifesto of the Palestinian Cinema Group” (1973) which called for a radical reformation of Arab cinema that has “for too long delighted in dealing with subjects having no connection to reality or dealing with it in a superficial manner” (Palestinian Cinema Group 1973: 273). Scholarship on Palestinian cinema, and Arab cinema more generally, has analysed the audiovisual delineations of visible and invisible borders, barriers, checkpoints and walls; interstitial spaces of exile and displacement; trauma, memory and dreams of a nation (Dabashi 2006; Gertz and Khleifi 2008). For scholar Kay Dickinson, road blocks have become part of what she calls the “everyday geographies” of post-year-2000 Palestinian film, “Second Intifada Cinema” (2010: 137–155). In building an infrastructure for expanded Arab cinema, Shashat Women’s Cinema, a registered NGO founded by Alia Arasoughly in Ramallah, Palestine in 2005, coordinates an annual film festival, considered the longest-running women’s film festival in the Arab world, and works toward capacity building, especially support of women, in the filmmaking sector (Hjort 2013: 102).

A final location *Caméra Arabe* explores is that of gendered subjectivity and agency. Boughedir asserts that part of the recovery process of Arab cinema is in the recognition, beyond the desire for a unified Arab subject, of Arab humanity and fractured identities. Films such as *Ahlam al-Madina* (Dreams of the City, 1984, Syria, Mohammad Malas), *Rih essed* (Man of Ashes, 1986, Tunisia, Nouri Bouzid), *Hadduta misrija* (An Egyptian Story, 1982, Egypt, Youssef Chahine) and *Traversées* (Crossing Over, 1983, Tunisia/France/Belgium, Mahmoud Ben Mahmoud) all deal in some way with a sense of collective defeat and a crisis of Arab masculinity, as well as the confrontation of memory and past faith in the Arab nation. *Omar Gatlati* (1977, Algeria, Merzak Allouache) is an international festival prize-winner that also drew record domestic audiences in Algeria (Armes 2005: 105). Through its savvy and uncondescending depiction of the vulnerable machismo of the pop culture-loving title character, it resonated with its exploration of the contradictions, pressures and absurdities of contemporary society and traditional values.

The historical recovery and recognition of Arab women filmmakers is also a critical project of world film scholarship and criticism. In her vitally interventionist *Encyclopedia of Women Filmmakers* (2005), Rebecca Hillauer notes that Lebanese filmmaker Heiny Srour’s documentary *Saat al-tahrir dakkat* (The Hour of Liberation Has Arrived, 1974, UK/Lebanon/France) is not only the first film directed by an Arab woman to be screened at Cannes, but also the first film by any woman to be screened at the festival (Hillauer 2005: 25). While there are relatively few women filmmakers discussed in the documentary *Caméra Arabe*, a clip of Tunisian screenwriter and director Néjia Ben Mabrouk is included; she critiques male filmmakers’ compulsion to either idealise women or represent them as full of gloom. *Caméra Arabe* also incorporates an extract from *Poupées de roseau* (Reed Dolls, 1981, Morocco), a woman-centred drama about a pregnant widow who ends up losing custody of her children, directed by Jilali Ferhati and written by Farida Benlyazid, who would go on to become an active film and television director (Gauch 2016: 196). In Boughedir’s voiceover, the work of dynamic Lebanese filmmaker Jocelyne Saab is praised as taking risks in depicting street level realities of the civil war in Lebanon. Later in her career, in a broader pan-Arab filmmaking nexus, Saab would face another set of challenges with censorship in making her daring Cairo-set 2005 Egyptian/Lebanese/French co-production about female sensuality and the impact of forced female circumcision, *Dunia* (Kiss Me Not on the Eyes, 2005).

Caméra Arabe also reflexively integrates the agency of Arab women filmmakers, as it is edited by Tunisian filmmaker Moufida Tlatli who would go on to direct *Samt el qusur* (The Silences of the Palace, 1994, Tunisia/France), a powerful dramatic feature that provocatively asserts that national independence did not necessarily liberate women (Hillaier 2005: 19).

Pointing to the future (and to the past): multiplying narratives

In this chapter, I have suggested that intersectionality may be a valuable way of complicating constructions of Arab cinema and its storytelling functions. The recent proliferation of multi-strand narratives in world cinema is illustrative of the ways a single narrative feature film can open up diversifying narrative possibilities. In contemporary Arab cinema, it serves as a means to tease out myriad differences including cultural and racial/ethnic perceptions, regionalism and nationality, class and occupation, age and generation, and ideological and religious perspectives. *City of Life* (2009, United Arab Emirates, Ali F. Mostafa), *Sukkar banat* (Caramel, 2007, France/Lebanon, Nadine Labaki), and *Omaret yakobean* (The Yacoubian Building, 2006, Egypt/France, Marwan Hamed) are three disparate examples of multi-strand Arab filmmaking centred in a specific city location—Cairo, Beirut and Dubai, respectively—that create Arab cinema in cosmopolitan narrative spaces of globalisation. *City of Life* intertwines the lives of an Air Emirates air hostess from Romania, an Indian cab driver with Bollywood aspirations, two young male Arab Emirati friends from different economic backgrounds, and an anonymous cyclist (apparently of Southeast Asian heritage), who wordlessly frames the narrative from the perspective of street-level reality, and offers the possibility of hope and good luck for the disenfranchised. *Caramel*, referencing depilatory beauty ritual, intersects five Lebanese women in the location of a beauty shop in Beirut: Labaki's character who is having an affair with a married man, a Muslim wife-to-be who is not a virgin, a tomboy salon worker who experiences lesbian desire, an aging aspiring actress, an older dressmaker who sacrifices romantic love to focus on the care of her invalid sister. Centring on social mores, tensions in families and romantic relationships, and moral choices, *Caramel* refocuses attention from memories of the Lebanese Civil War that pervade much of contemporary Lebanese cinema, including the local hit musical comedy/drama *Bosta* (2005, Lebanon, Philippe Aractingi) in which Labaki played a central acting role. *The Yacoubian Building*, an adaptation of a best-selling novel by Alaa al-Aswany with reportedly the highest budget of any Egyptian film to date, features a pantheon of some of Egypt's most popular stars including the beloved Adel Emam, Tunisian-born Hend Sabry (who started her career in Moufida Tlatli's aforementioned 1994 feminist classic *The Silences of the Palace*), and veteran actress/chanteuse Yousra, in a trenchant critique of corruption in Egyptian politics and society. The film, named after a building that houses all classes from impoverished roof dwellers to debauched penthouse pashas and politicians, touches on an array of taboos including sexism and sexual exploitation of workers and wives, homosexuality and repression, religious hypocrisy, and the rise of fundamentalism and extremism. *The Yacoubian Building* employs multi-strand narration also as a vehicle for intertextuality as it references the melodramatic excess of Golden Age Egyptian melodrama and the multivalent politics of Egyptian television serials (Abu-Lughod 2004). While this expensive formula has not yet proven sustainable beyond the commercial success of *The Yacoubian Building*, with shifting local audience tastes toward more modest fare, Egyptian production and distribution company Good News Group has envisioned an integrated corporate structure across media and entertainment industries, and has been seeking out international co-financing partnerships (Jafaar 2010).

It can be argued that the future of all World Cinema is in co-partnerships, whether in terms of financing and modes of production, or in terms of imagining audience appeal through some

sense of veracity that registers on multiple local, national and global levels. Arab cinema, like World Cinema, does not exist in a vacuum, or in a single location. Some future trajectories of Arab cinematic storytelling (and Arab film criticism and scholarship) and Arab/global film cultures can be found in extensions of cinema via new transmedial platforms, video-sharing, social mediations, multimedia artistic explorations and performances, pirate and hacking operations, citizen journalism, and diaristic documents. Arab cinema studies should be part of a larger dialogue with audiovisual culture and digital media. Research tends to focus mainly on the narrative fiction feature film intended for theatrical release as the standard-bearer of Arab Cinema/World Cinema, but scholarly work such as Laura U. Marks' *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* (2015) and *Unfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (2010) offers compellingly rigorous and expansive contextual and theoretical frames for engaging with time, space, and embodiment in Arab experimental film and video works of all lengths, genres and formats. The structure of the "anthology" can also serve as an exciting vehicle for promoting a polyphony of independent Arab film/media voices in pan-Arab omnibus films and compilations such as *Resistance[s] I and II and III*, a multi-volume DVD project launched by the Paris-based label lowave. Another necessary site for representational expansion is created by queer Arab cinemas (and non-binaristic approaches to gender)—reading Arab film history against the grain to fill in the lacunae created by repression and censorship, but also recognising courageous queer independent and underground voices (Hassan 2010).

Arab cinema is also becoming an urgent contemporary discursive location for refugee cinema, with long histories of grassroots film/media training in camps and community centres. There is a need to document narratives of heroic process as well as product. For example, filmmakers and educators Maysoon Pachachi and Kasim Abid, who had previously run workshops in Ramallah and the West Bank, co-founded the Independent Film and Television College (IFTC) Baghdad in 2004 to provide free-of-charge intensive courses. Over the years, the College has helped train talented Iraqi documentary filmmakers including Hiba Bassem from Kirkuk who made an award-winning short called *Baghdad Days* (2005). However, IFTC has also shut down periodically because of violence, destruction and safety risk; or relocated students to Damascus. There Pachachi also ran a photography project with Iraqi refugee women in Syria that yielded a documentary film *Open Shutters Iraq* (2008, Iraq, Maysoon Pachachi), as well as a book, and photographic exhibitions (Clarke 2009; Dolberg 2010).

Another challenge that contemporary Arab cinema contends with is the potential "effacement" of film history in the heralding of emerging film cultures. Nascent Arab cinemas are vulnerable to the celebratory possibilities and limits of what I call "first film" discourses. The convergence between Arab cinema and world cinema, and corresponding media coverage, is evident in the understandably effusive response to the "World Cinema Audience Award" at the Sundance film Festival for the 2008 Jordanian film *Captain Abu Raed* (2008, Jordan, Amin Matalqa) or the first-ever submission of an officially Saudi film for the Best Foreign Language Film category of the Academy Awards for *Wadjda* (2012, Saudi Arabia/Netherlands/Germany/Jordan/United Arab Emirates/USA, Haifaa al-Mansour). However, decontextualised replication of "first film" assertions can lead to the sense that cinemas of Arab countries begin with Western discovery in the most reductive sense. Therefore, the following can make the field of inquiry more dialogic: recovery and documentation of lost film histories; the translation and circulation of film scholarship, journalism and criticism across linguistic and cultural boundaries; and attention to larger contextual questions of film culture and production/exhibition/distribution/reception. All narratives (including this attempt to narrativise Arab cinema, related scholarship, and film cultural initiatives) are necessarily elliptical. Another potential dialogic direction for World Cinema studies is the exploration of anecdotes, ephemera, affective investments, authorial

subject positions, and nostalgia, in experiences of cinema (films already made and those not yet realised) and the world. Multiple testimonials can enrich the public extradiegetic discursive realm of Arab cinema and, indeed, World Cinema's offscreen locations. For example, first-hand experiences have informed this chapter on Arab cinema. Here are just a few: Jocelyne Saab at the NETPAC film conference and festival of Asian and Arab film in Delhi, where she told me about her travails making *Dunia* in Egypt; seeing *The Yacoubian Building* in Cairo and being invited by a local festival-goer to visit the building that inspired the novel/film; watching Ali Mostafa's award-winning graduation short in Dubai several years prior to his debut feature *City of Life*; happening upon Nadine Labaki and her team shooting *Caramel* at the Mayflower Hotel in the Hamra neighbourhood of Beirut and being told by a crew member that "everybody" already knows the first-time filmmaker/insta-auteur before finding out that this was true among young people in the region because of Labaki's well-known previous work as a music video director; interviewing a very young Naji Abu Nowar and his producer Nadine Toukan in Amman almost a decade before *Theeb* (2014), when they were trying to get his based-on-a-true-story script about an urban serial killer off the ground. As we know, his acclaimed first feature would become, instead, a Bedouin western, a truly epic desert journey.

References

- Abu-Lughod (2004) *Dreams of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Arab Film Distribution website, www.arabfilm.com.
- Arasoughly, A. (1996) *Screens of Life: Critical Film Writing from the Arab World*, St-Hyacinthe, Quebec, CA: World Heritage Press.
- Armes, R. (2005) *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- (2010) *Arab Filmmakers of the Middle East: A Dictionary*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Ben Bouazza, B. and Schemm, P. (2014) "Tunisia Turns to 'Star Wars' to Boost Tourism", *Huffington Post*, 30 April, www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/30/tunisia-star-wars-tourism_n_5242531.html.
- Caton, S. C. (1999) *Lawrence of Arabia: A Film's Anthropology*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Ciecko, A. (2010) "Akkad, Moustapha (1935–2005)", in Ginsberg, T. and Lippard, C. (eds) *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 14.
- Clarke, C. (2009) "Heroes and Handicams", *The Guardian*, 30 April, www.theguardian.com/film/2009/may/01/maysoon-pachachi-iraq-baghdad-film.
- Dabashi, H. (2006) *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, London/New York: Verso.
- Daulatzai, S. (2012) *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond, America*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Devi, G. and Rahman, N. (eds) (2014) *Humor in Middle Eastern Cinema*, Detroit, IL: Wayne State University Press.
- Dickinson, K. (2010) "The Palestinian Road (Block) Movie: Everyday Geographies of Second Intifada Cinema", in Jordanova, D., Martin-Jones, D. and Vidal, B. (eds) *Cinema at the Periphery*, Wayne State University Press.
- Dolberg, E. (ed.) (2010) *Open Shutters Iraq*, London: Trolley Books.
- Gauch, S. (2016) *Maghrebs in Motion: North African Cinema in Nine Movements*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gertz, N. and Khleifi, G. (2008) *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ghareeb, S. (1997) "An Overview of Arab Cinema", *Critique* 6 (11): 119–127.
- Ginsberg, T. and Lippard, C. (eds) (2010) *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Gugler, J. (ed.) (2011) *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Hafez, S. (2006) "The Quest for/Obsession with the National in Arabic Cinema", in Vitali, V. and Willemen, P. (eds), *Theorizing National Cinema*, London: British Film Institute.
- Hassan, O. (2010) "Reel Queer Arabs", *Film International* 43 (8), <http://filmint.nu/?p=1295>.

- Hillauer, R. (2005) *Encyclopedia of Women Filmmakers*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Hjort, M. (2013) *The Education of the Filmmaker in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jafaar, A. (2010) "Good News to go international", *Variety*, 15 February, <http://variety.com/2010/film/markets-festivals/good-news-to-go-international-1118015246/>.
- Khatib, L. (2006) *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*, London: I.B. Taurus.
- Khouri, M. (2010) *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Malkmus, L. and Arnes, R. (1991) *Arab and African Film Making*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books.
- Marks, L. U. (2010) *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- (2015) "Asphalt Nomadism", in *Hanan-al Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 147–169.
- Mellor, N. (2011) "Arab Cinema", in Mellor, N., Ayish, M., Dajani, N. and Rinnawi, K. (eds), *Arab Media*, Cambridge: Polity, 67–84.
- Mintzer, J. (2011) "Black Gold: Film Review", *The Hollywood Reporter*, 9 November, www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/black-gold-film-review-259456.
- Orlando, V. (2011) *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Palestinian Cinema Group (1973/2014) "Manifesto of the Palestinian Cinema Group", in MacKenzie, S. (ed.) *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 273–275.
- Pulver, A. (2012) "Black Gold—Review", *The Guardian*, 23 February, www.theguardian.com/film/2012/feb/23/black-gold-review.
- "Resolution of the Third World Film-Makers Meeting, Algiers, December 5–14, 1973" (2004) in Shepherdson, K. J. (ed.), *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Film and Media Studies*, Volume 3, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 325–334.
- Ritman, A. (2014) "Whatever Happened to the Qatari Film Industry?" *The Guardian*, 6 March, www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/06/qatari-film-industry-doha-festival-black-gold.
- Shafik, V. (2007) *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* [revised ed.], Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Shaheen, J. (2001) *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, New York: Olive Branch Press/Interlink.
- Tarr, C. (2005) *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.