

**The Plight of Women in Egyptian Cinema
(1940s – 1960s)**

Marisa Farrugia

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy

**The University of Leeds
Department of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies**

September 2002

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement

I dedicate this work to
my husband George and my late parents
in gratitude for their unparalleled love,
patience, support and wisdom.

Acknowledgements

The research and fieldwork of this thesis span over a period of seven years in different countries, and, I am truly indebted to numerous people and institutions for their help.

First and foremost, my deep and sincere thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Zahia Salhi, who stood by me in times of dire need and gladly accepted to supervise my work, when my previous supervisor abdicated his responsibility at the most critical stage of the thesis. Through her continuous help, patience, understanding and valuable comments, Dr. Salhi was instrumental in ensuring that this thesis would be completed in the stipulated time. I would also like to thank my colleague at the University of Malta Professor Lydia Sciriha, who read the manuscript and helped me to improve it and whose insights enriched my way of thinking. Special thanks are due to my Egyptian friend Mona Al-Nammoury, who meticulously prepared a list of resources, centres and institutions for me to consult and visit during my four months of fieldwork in Cairo in 1995 and 1996, and who even arranged for the face to face interviews with film directors, producers, and film critics. She always opened up new doors for me during my fieldwork in Cairo.

In addition, I would like to thank all members of the Department of Arabic & Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Leeds for their assistance and friendliness during my study. I am also greatly indebted to the staff at the libraries of the University of Leeds, Robarts Library at University of Toronto, The British Film Institute in London, the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, the UNESCO Library in

Paris, Cairo University, the American University in Cairo, La Médiathèque-Centre Français de Culture et de Cooperation in Cairo, The British Council Library in Cairo, Egyptian Cinema Cultural Centre in Cairo, the Higher Cinema Institute in Cairo, the Cairo Audio-Visual Centre, the Catholic Cinema Centre in Cairo, and the National Film Archives in Cairo, particularly those working in the reference section.

I am also grateful to the Egyptian Ministry of Culture and Information, the Cairo Film Society and Studio *Misr* for their support and co-operation during my fieldwork in Cairo.

Finally, a special note of thanks and gratitude goes to my beloved husband George, for his unstinting support, patience, and encouragement, and for proof reading and setting up the electronic format of this entire work. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to my feline friends, whose loyalty and unconditional love during the write-up stage of this work helped to boost my morale.

Marisa Farrugia

ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that the period between the 1940s and the 1960s was 'the golden age' of Egyptian cinema – a period of growth, innovation and popularity. The aim of this research is to focus on the plight of Egyptian women in selected long feature films of this period, and how this was realistically represented on the screen. It was a daunting task for the present researcher to embark on such controversial gender issues, especially from a westerner's perspective on a Muslim Arab society. But the researcher's determination and sense of duty to investigate and expose the hardships of Egyptian womenfolk through films, managed to overcome that feeling of trepidation, together with the tremendous support of her advisor Dr. Zahia Salhi.

This study begins by tracing the historical development of Egyptian cinema and the important role played by female pioneers in the newly emergent film industry, whereby an assessment of the role of these pioneers is also considered. This leads to an analysis of the status of the Egyptian woman within her socio-historical and cultural contexts that are essential for the identification of gender based representational strategies in these films. The research reviews major film theories related to representation, communication and gender issues, and how films as products of their creators, are connected to the social, economic, political and cultural backgrounds of a given time and place. In addition to these film theories, the study recommends a textual variation approach for film analysis, for those films based on literary texts that have been adapted to the screen. The textual variation approach looks for the ways in which the film director modifies the original text when it is adapted into a film. The aim behind the textual variation approach is to

understand the function of the dominant theme in both literary text and film, and scrutinise its visible or latent realistic meanings *vis à vis* the structures of thought which dominated the Egyptian society of the 1940s to the 1960s. It is these structures of thought that impose on the film-makers the textual variations from novel to film. The difference in the time period when the novel was written is compared with the period when the film was produced in order to assess the present social dominant ideologies or the shifting values. Thus, the time dimension factor, together with the film-makers' own views, help us determine the internal expectations of the Egyptian society and the realistic plight of its womenfolk. To bring the concept of textual variation into application, three film case studies are considered, the findings of which demonstrate that when textual variations or total adherence to the novel were involved, dominant ideologies were either reaffirmed, shifted or evolved according to the era of the film production.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	x
List of Appendices	x
Transliteration Scheme	xi
Introduction	1
Chapter One – The Rise and Development of Egyptian Cinema	8
1.0 Introduction	8
1.1 The invention of cinema	8
1.2 Cinematographic projections in Egypt	11
1.3 The first cinema theatres	12
1.4 The birth of Egyptian cinema and the foreign influence	14
1.5 Early debuts	17
1.6 Short feature film productions	20
1.7 The Silent era and its precursors (1926-1931)	24
1.8 The birth of the Egyptian sound film	33
1.9 Studio <i>Misr</i> and other studios	40
1.10 The birth of Realism	43
1.11 Egyptian cinema during and after World War II	46
1.12 The 1952 Revolution and the call for a committed cinema	49
1.13 Conclusion	57
Chapter Two - The Egyptian Feminist Movement from historical, social and legal perspectives	62
2.0 Historical perspectives	62
2.1 Social and traditional perspectives	72
2.2 The social and legal status of Muslim women	83
Chapter Three - Women and the Egyptian Cinema	95
3.0 Introduction	95
3.1 Aziza Amir (1901-1952)	98
3.2 Assya Dagher (1908-1986)	103
3.3 Bahija Hafez (1908-1983)	107
3.4 Conclusion	111

Chapter Four - Feature Films as Reality	115
4.0 Introduction	115
4.1 The film text and its role	115
4.2 The pioneers of Realism	117
4.3 Ferro's film analysis	119
4.4 The representative theory	121
4.5 The content analysis approach	128
4.6 Fantasy and reality	132
4.7 The communication theory	135
4.8 Analogy and interpretation of film-meaning	142
4.9 The language and culture of the image	143
4.10 Binary-Opposition theory	143
4.11 The narrative as a social product	146
4.12 The film reality	148
4.13 Statement of Thesis	152
4.14 Textual Variation Theory	153
4.15 The gender issue in Egyptian popular films	154
4.16 Conclusion	156
Chapter Five - Film analysis: Honour Killings in <i>The Call of the Curlew</i>	160
5.0 Introduction: The plight of women as represented in films	160
5.1 Analysis of <i>The Call of the Curlew</i>	162
5.2 Variations from the novel to film	166
5.3 Dominant social ideologies	174
5.4 Honour and virginity	175
5.5 Honour killings or crimes of honour	176
5.6 The moral and social order of Egyptian women	177
5.7 The characters of Hanadi and Amna	181
Chapter Six - The plight of women in <i>The Open Door</i>	187
6.0 Introduction	187
6.1 Analysis of <i>The Open Door</i>	188
6.2 The Film	201
6.3 Variations from novel to film	202
6.4 Dominant social ideologies	214
6.5 Conclusion	228
Chapter Seven - Woman's Oppression in <i>The Beginning and the End</i>	230
7.0 Introduction	230
7.1 The setting of the novel	231
7.2 The Film	250
7.3 Film closure and the triumph of morale with a tragedy	262

7.4	Conclusion	263
	Chapter Eight - Conclusion	267
	Bibliography	279
	Appendices	299

List of Tables

1.1	Some representative examples of early public screenings around the world	10
5.1	Variation of novel to film	170
6.1	Film variations related to the plight of women	212
6.2	Characters: a comparison between novel and film	226

List of Figures

4.1	Artistic expression	123
4.2	Ferro's representative theory of reality	126
4.3	Film message in content analysis	129
4.4	Film conventions and their meaning	137
4.5	Binary opposites	145
4.6	Textual variation theory	153
4.7	Reproduction of patriarchal stereotypical image of women	154

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Film details and synopsis	299
Appendix 2 –Filmography	305

Transliteration System

The Library of Congress (LC) system of transliteration has been followed with regard to the names of Arabic films, Arabic sources and their authors, and Arabic expressions. Renowned names of Arab film directors, actresses, or famous Egyptian novelists are not transcribed, but given as commonly cited and known.

The following table shows the Library of Congress system of transliteration:

First: Consonants

Arabic	LC	Arabic	LC
ء	'	ظ	ḏ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Second: Diphthongs

ٲ ٲ (ay)	ٲ ٲ (aw)
-------------	-------------

Third: Vowels

Arabic (short vowels)	LC	Arabic (Long vowels)	LC
ٲ ٲ	a	ٲ ٲ	ā
ٲ ٲ	u	ٲ ٲ	ū
ٲ ٲ	i	ٲ ٲ	ī

Fourth: Others

ٲ at- (in idāfa phrase)

ٲ al- (for article)

l- (for article preceded by word ending with a vowel)

Introduction

The impetus of this research came not only from academic interests, but also from several nagging personal questions as an observer of the Arab culture and its traditions, especially the gender issues. Being an ardent viewer of classic Arab films, especially Egyptian long-feature films broadcasted via satellite, the present researcher became intrigued in the image of the female protagonists as conveyed in these films. The portrayal of unveiled, courageous, hardworking, ambitious, devious yet submissive and suffering women led the present researcher to delve further into the socio-historical, political, religious and cultural issues of Egypt.

The initial two weeks visit to Egypt for visiting film studios and libraries, turned out into years. Further inquiry, readings and on-site extensive fieldwork led the present researcher to wonder whether there was a connection between the films' narratives and their social context, especially those films whose script was based on popular Egyptian novels. The main questions that arose from the initial examination of the available data were: how realistic was the portrayal of the plight of women in Egyptian feature films? What were the major or minor modifications undertaken by the film-directors who opted for adapting novels to films and why? Is the status of the Egyptian woman of the period in focus determined by the precepts of Islam or is it conditioned by a group of factors of which Islam might be a part? These questions, together with succinct historical review of the birth and development of the Egyptian cinema and a socio-cultural examination of the status of the Egyptian urban woman

endeavour to trace and analyse the plight of women in Egyptian cinema from the 1940s to the 1960s.

For this purpose this research sets out to examine the connections between the Egyptian long-feature films of the selected period and the socio-historical and cultural realities of Egypt of the same era, thereby showing that cinema is a representation of reality. Further to the discussion of the film representation theories, this study reinforces these theories by applying the textual variation approach. This approach entails the analysis and comparison of the novel to its filmic adaptation. Textual variation outlooks for the ways in which, the film-director modified the original literary text, when it was adapted for the screen. When comparing the film to the novel, the textual variation would be examining in particular the ideological shifts, the changes to the social existent values as well as the major plot modifications, especially as these are played out around the representation and narrative centrality of female characters.

The primary interest of the researcher in these film-texts is that of an avid observer of the status of women and their plight in the Egyptian society as represented in Egyptian cinema. The numerous Egyptian feature films referred to in this study, together with the three selected film cases, centre on gender issues as represented via the roles and adventures of the female protagonists. The films of concern in this study deal with various gender issues such as adultery, polygamy, prostitution, widowhood, spinsterhood, forced marriages, crimes of honour and women's changing social status.

This research makes use of the historical, cultural and gender related descriptive research methods of analysis with regard to the brief history of Egyptian cinema, the contribution of female pioneers in this industry and the behavioural parameters of the female characters mentioned in the films. The researcher thereafter attempts to review the literature of major film theories, but mainly relying on Marc Ferro's method, which associates film analysis with social analysis. The film is thus taken as a documentary evidence (directly or indirectly) of the era when it was produced.

Since the majority of the films of the selected period are based on famous Egyptian novels, the film-director's role becomes central in these film adaptations. Thus, to discover the extent of the modifications, the reasons, if any, behind them, and whether the director's modifications contributed to the realistic representation of the woman's condition, the textual variation theory was applied. Through the textual variation approach, this research attempts to reveal the mechanics of the predominant theme, namely the plight of Egyptian women, in the selected three case studies.

This research will also make use of the contextual analysis method in the novel and the film case studies section, whereby the themes, contents, plot and narrative of both novel and film are evaluated in terms of their socio-historical and cultural relevancy. Furthermore, the film analysis shall be tackled by identifying the major or minor variations of the novel to film, and the total adherence to the novel by the film director. The film analysis will not focus on the technical aspects of film direction such as acting, cinematography, or the film's aesthetic nature, such as the use of colour, lighting and angles, but it will concentrate more on the role of the characters, especially the variation of the female characters' role. When treating gender issues or

sociological ideologies, mention shall be made as to whether the film director, through his/her modifications, has reaffirmed an existent tradition, attacked it or contributed to its improvement.

To bolster the textual variation theory, the following methods were applied: (a) extensive on-site fieldwork was personally carried out; (b) the filmic adaptations were compared to their antecedent novels; (c) personal interviews with the film directors were held.

A filmography of the Egyptian films viewed by the researcher for the purpose of this study has been compiled to facilitate a better understanding when films or directors are referred to in this study.

Methods of Data Collection

The data compiled in this study are of two genres: visual data and textual data. The visual data comprise available video duplications of long-feature films produced in Egypt. Most of the viewed, analysed and referred to films came from the early stages of production in the 1930s until the late 1960s, the end time frame concerned with this study. All of the analysed visual data were available only in the Arabic language or rather in the Egyptian dialect. To a certain extent, the researcher was privileged to be granted access to film archives and managed to view a few rare silent films at the National Film Archives in Cairo, with the assistance of Professor Madkour Thabet.

As to the textual data, they include the majority of literature on the subject of this study, such as books, articles, bibliographies, periodicals, film festivals' publications, official documents and unpublished theses. The present researcher also read reviews and articles in the general press and even attended occasional evening debates held on Thursdays at the Egyptian Cinema Critics Society in Cairo. Both the textual and the visual sources together with the interviews used in this study have been conducted at various locations namely in Cairo, Leeds, London, Paris and Toronto, and thus proved to be time-consuming exercises. A substantial amount of the textual data was available in Arabic, French, Spanish or German. While the Arabic and French sources were easily handled by the present researcher, qualified translators were commissioned to conduct the translations of the Spanish and German sources.

This endeavour has evolved over a period of seven years, due to certain obstacles or blind alleys that the researcher encountered, amongst them the lack of funding, the voluminous disorganised and badly recorded sources in Cairo, or the inaccessibility to certain material especially for Westerners, in Egypt.

Since the Egyptian cinema industry knows its inception to 1896, and thus, thousands of films have to date been produced, this study had to be limited to a specific time frame, namely the long-feature films of the 1940s to the late 1960s. The study had also to be narrowed down to a specific area or film theme, namely gender issues and women as victims of the patriarchal Egyptian society.

Although various books and articles have been published about film productions in the Arab world in general and Egypt in particular, hardly any research has been

produced on the participation and representation of women in Egyptian cinema, especially historically and culturally.¹ Hence, this study endeavours to fill a lacuna regarding the analysis of the predicaments of women in the Egyptian cinema productions of the period in focus.

The main body of this research is divided into eight chapters including the conclusion. The introduction outlines the scope, method and significance of this study. Chapter 1 is devoted to a brief history of the formative stages of the Egyptian film industry until the 1960s, the end date of the study. This historical overview endeavours to address issues of colonialism and post colonialism. Chapter 2 traces the birth of the Egyptian Feminist Movement and then explores the social, traditional and religious background of the Egyptian women to locate the ways that cultural creators might have influenced gendered screen representatives. Chapter 3 presents the roles played by women, not just as actors, but also as producers and directors in the newly emergent Egyptian film industry.

Chapter 4 intends to provide a broad background in major film theories: representation, communication and gender. This part also presents the proposed textual variation theoretical approach. The discussion in this chapter serves as a groundwork for the last three chapters of the case studies.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7, analyse three key films that have been adopted from their antecedent novels. A general description of their themes, location, characters and social dominant ideologies within the historical and cultural backgrounds will be analysed. In this section the predicaments of the Egyptian woman in relation to her

socio-historical, cultural and religious environments, as manifested in both novel and film will be identified.

In conclusion, Chapter 8 deals with the key findings and contribution of this study together with suggestions for future studies.

¹ See for example A.K. Gabous, *La femme et le cinéma Arabe* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1985); Amina Hassan, "La représentation de la réussite sociale dans le cinéma Egyptien des années 70", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sorbonne, Paris 1994; Sherifa Zuhur, (ed.), *Images of Enchantment: Visual and Performing Arts of the Middle East* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998).

Chapter One

The Rise and Development of Egyptian Cinema

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins by looking at the invention of cinema and cinema equipment in Europe and America, and how these pioneering attempts also reached the Egyptian shores as early as 1896. Then, the chapter proceeds by giving a historical overview of the birth and development of the Egyptian cinema during the pre-Nasser and post-Nasser eras. It focuses on the individual efforts of major Egyptian pioneers and early foreign influences that collectively contributed to the beginning of the Egyptian cinema production.

1.1 The invention of cinema

The medium of cinema was invented in Europe during the 1890s. It appeared in the wake of the industrial revolution, as did the telephone (invented in 1876), the phonograph (1877), the fax machine (1865) and the automobile (developed during the 1880s and 1890s). Besides the industrial revolution, the nineteenth century saw the American expansion and the establishment of European empires in the Balkan states and the Ottoman territories.

Like other innovations, cinema was a technological device that became the basis of a large industry. It was also a new form of entertainment and a new artistic medium. Cinema was less the product of a specific invention than the culmination of some

seventy-five years of international research and experimentation. In 1832, Belgian physicist Joseph Plateau and Austrian geometry professor Simon Stamfer independently created the phenakistoscope. In France, thanks to Joseph Niepce and Louis Daguerre, a photographic process to convert reality into imagery became possible by 1839. Frenchman Emile Reynaud developed this idea further, projecting animated transparencies that were seen by hundreds of thousands of people between 1892 and 1900.²

The significant breakthrough of movies came just over one hundred years ago. In 1890, Thomas Edison, the famous American inventor, and his English assistant, William Dickson, designed a camera the size and weight of a small upright piano, and the following year Edison applied for a patent on a one-man viewer called the kinetoscope. The films, recorded on 35-millimetre strips of perforated celluloid, were shot in the world's first film studio, the Black Maria, in West Orange, New Jersey. These film strips featured various vaudeville, circus, and wild-West acts as well as scenes from successful New York plays. The first kinetoscope parlour was opened in New York in 1894, and that same year several machines were exported to Europe.³

It was a copy of Edison's kinetoscope that inspired Auguste and Louis Lumière, industrialists in Lyon, France, to invent a hand-cranked camera that could both photograph and project films. Their *cinématographe* (from the Greek *kinema*, meaning "motion" and *graphein*, meaning "to depict") was patented February 1895, and on December 28, cinema's official world première took place at the Grand Café, 14 Boulevard des Capucines, Paris. Ten short film strips were shown to the public,

depicting workers coming out of the Lumière factory, the Paris train station and scenes from the beach among others. Soon the Lumière brothers were opening cinemas and sending cameramen all over the world to show and shoot films on location. It is worth noting that the Lumière initially avoided selling their machines. From 1896 on, the Lumière catalogue rapidly expanded to include hundreds of views of the different countries, including Egypt that their operators had visited. Because the Lumière Brothers began exhibiting their film strips around the world, the first showings of projected motion pictures in many countries were put on by their operators. Thus, the history of the cinema in many nations begins with the arrival of the *cinématographe*. Among the names proposed for the first film projector was thaumatrope, from the Greek for dream⁴ but cinematographe won out in the name race.

The following Lumière chronology⁵ samples the earliest known public screenings in several countries by their operators:-

Table 1.1 Some representative examples of early public screenings around the world

1896	
March 1	Lumière programme premieres in Brussels, Belgium.
May 15	Lumière programme begins a run in Madrid, Spain.
May 17	A Lumière operator shows films in St. Petersburg, Russia.
July 7	Lumière operators show films in a rented room in Watson's Hotel, Bombay, India.
July 8	A Lumière programme opens in a fashionable district of Rio de Janiero, Brazil.

July 15	The first Lumière screening in Czechoslovakia takes places in the Casino of Karlovy Vary.
Aug 11	An unidentified operator shows films as part of a vaudville programme in Shangai, China.
Aug 15	At a rented hall in Mexico City, a highly successful run of Lumière films begins.
December	A Lumière programme shows at a cafe in Alexandria, Egypt.

1.2 Cinematographic Projections in Egypt

Historians differ on the exact date of the first cinematographic show in Egypt. Samir Farid says that the first cinematic show in Egypt was shown only ten days after the premiere of the Lumière brothers in Paris. According to him the first show was held at Café Turani in Alexandria, in January 1896.⁶ This date is close to that registered in the Lumière chronology as shown in the above table. The daily *Al-Ahram* in its issue of 6 January 1896 described this projection as “a curious mixture of cinematographic arts and a magic lantern game.”⁷ Ali Abu Shadi gives us another version of the first ever cinematic projection in Egypt. In his well-researched chronology, Abu Shadi dates this historic event to 5 November 1896, held in Alexandria at the Stock Exchange of Tussun Pasha, Bāb al-Ḥadīd street.⁸

Other historians trace the first cinematographic projection as occurring on 27 January 1896 at the hall of the Continental Hotel, Cairo, while another opinion asserts that motion pictures were not shown in Egypt until April 1900 in the Santé Café by Francesco Potfigli and his wife.⁹ Various sources indicate that cinematographic

projections arrived in Cairo after those of Alexandria. The 28 of November 1896 marks the first cinematographic projection in Cairo. This premiere was organised by Henri Dello Strologo, an Italian representative of the Lumière Brothers, who resided in Egypt. The first show in Cairo was held at the Schneider Swimming Pool.¹⁰ *Al-Muqattam* newspaper in its issue of Tuesday 1 December 1896, reported this event as follows:

Among the eye pleasing inventions and games brought to us by the Europeans this winter, is the motion pictures. The readers of *Al-Muqattam* already know about this invention. Last Saturday these moving pictures were shown at the Schneider Swimming Pool to a host of refined people and men of letters, headed by His Excellency the mayor of the capital. They all enjoyed the motion pictures that they saw, which appeared to them as though they were living bodies lacking only sound. These beautiful pictures shall be shown every night at the same place after having obtained a licence for this purpose from His Excellency the mayor of the capital. A special night for women will be appointed and announced later.¹¹

Shows began to be held uninterrupted and were widely covered by the newspapers of the time. They attracted different segments of the society, and the place where the films were shown started to be called 'exhibit of motion pictures' or 'the moving photographs'. Notices in the newspapers of the era indicate that shows were held from 16.00 to 23.00 hours for the general public, while local and foreign women were allotted two hours every Friday from 16.00 to 18.00 hours. Tickets were priced at five piastres for adults, and two piastres for children. The special day and hours allotted to women indicate that even in this new way of entertainment, the seclusion of women from men's activities was being adhered to, while on the other hand one notes that women were not neglected from enjoying this activity.

1.3 The First Cinema Theatres

The success of the early shows led to the opening of several small cinema halls in different quarters in Cairo and Alexandria. Special chartered projections were also

held in royal palaces or local cafes. The proliferation of these cinema halls induced competition among the different non-Egyptian owners. For example, an owner of a cinema hall resorted to some competitive gimmicks by offering a free lottery ticket with every cinema ticket bought, so as to encourage more picture-goers. The lottery prize was a motion picture reel containing fifteen scenes worth 25 francs.¹²

Nevertheless, on 30 January 1897 a real cinema theatre was inaugurated in Alexandria, Mahattet Misr Street by Henri Dello Strologo. It was baptised as "Cinématographe Lumière".¹³ The Lumière Brothers were not content by just exporting their films but they ventured to produce films outside France. On 9 March 1897, they sent to Egypt their cameramen, Eugene Promio and Francis Delie to shoot the first shots ever that were filmed on Egyptian soil.¹⁴ Among these early shots one could see the Italian Consul's family, Egyptians riding donkeys in the streets, city scenes, important sites and monuments.¹⁵ Then on 3 April 1897, the first real cinema theatre in Cairo was inaugurated at Halim Pasha's house.¹⁶

The Lumière Brothers did not enjoy the cinema monopoly for long. In 1906 the French Pathé Company and the Italian Irpanora companies arrived on the Egyptian market. By 1907 more cinematographic halls opened mainly in Cairo and Alexandria. The most popular ones were Lumière, Pathé, Mondial, Irpanora, Cosmos, Olympia, Saint-Clair, Ideal and Aziz/Dorès. Under the British occupation, cinema halls were considered to be foreign institutions. Thus, at the re-opening of the French owned Cinématographe Pathé in Alexandria in 1911, in the presence of the French consul, the Marseillaise (the French national anthem) was played.¹⁷ When in 1911 the first decree of the law regulating the opening of cinema theatres in Egypt appeared, there were already eight cinemas in Cairo and three in Alexandria, all

regularly showing European or American films.¹⁸ These cinema halls were all owned by foreign residents. Cinema and business frenzy led the chocolate company Poulain and the cigarette company Matossiant to rebuy the theatres, giving reductions on entry tickets for holders of coupons found enclosed in chocolate bars or cigarette packets.¹⁹

Meanwhile, envious of the great success of the foreigners that had stolen their market, locals like Tadros Maqur and Muhammad Osman decided to open cinema halls in provincial towns like Assyut and Port Said as they could not compete with the foreign owned theatres in Cairo and Alexandria.²⁰

1.4 The birth of Egyptian cinema and the foreign influence

For centuries Egypt had faced waves of different migratory groups who have settled and grown roots there, in a melting pot where all strangers became integrated. In his article “Une genèse cosmopolite” Ahmad Yusuf²¹ points out that in spite of all the foreign influx that Egypt received, and despite those foreigners who succeeded in imposing their political supremacy on Egypt, they have failed to impose their foreign customs, but instead adapted themselves to Egyptian traditions. Thus, Egypt remained intact as it received different influxes of immigrants who brought with them fresh energy and new ideas into the country. Migratory waves which landed in Egypt came from Greece, Cyprus, Malta, France, England, Italy, Turkey, Iran, North Africa and other Arab countries.²² Ahmad Yusuf remarks that it is difficult to identify the “stranger” in Egypt, as one has to consider whether the “stranger” is the one who blended in the local cultural background by bringing fresh blood, but left the country after a while, or the one who had integrated completely there. Yusuf

intelligently terms this foreign presence in Egypt over the years as “the crucible,”²³ with the positive and negative outcome of its process.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Muḥammad Ali (r. 1805 – 1849) dreamt of establishing an Egyptian empire independent of its Ottoman rulers. These dreams vanished as the French and English, the two great powers of the era, shared the Middle East some decades later. The building of the Suez Canal (1859-1869) turned Egypt into the “corridor of the world”. Then, with the British occupation in 1882, foreigners multiplied, and contacts became more frequent in Egypt. The non-Egyptian entrepreneurs dedicated themselves mainly to commerce and the tertiary sector. This ethnic mixing overturned the legal order of the country because of the multitude of laws each community introduced. Mixed tribunals were created giving birth to a state within a state on Egyptian soil. In 1907 when the Egyptian population was less than 11 million, the foreign population reached 143,671.²⁴ The protection of these “strangers” who lived mainly in Cairo and Alexandria, gave Great Britain a political excuse to impose its protectorate on Egypt.

The assimilation of these foreigners in Egypt had both negative and positive effects: negative because some strangers left the country once they had become rich at Egypt’s expense, and positive because some became part and parcel of the Egyptian culture and society. As the Europeans excelled in the commercial and financial sectors and showed their supremacy in Egyptian political and military affairs, they exposed the shortcomings of the Egyptian society, mainly in technical resources. As a result, nationalist groups were born, holding the foreign presence as a menace to modern progressive and independent Egypt. But not so was the situation with the

cultural side of this foreign presence. The “crucible” complex was best represented by cultural exchange.

Arabic culture was rudely awakened when Bonaparte invaded Egypt in 1798. He brought with him a team of French experts, scientists and scholars, founded the *Institut d’Egypte*, and introduced the very first Arabic printing press to enter Egypt. Some Egyptians admired the efficiency and organisation of the French, while others turned their backs to their innovations and ideas. But a few European-trained officers, administrators, engineers, doctors, and translators were themselves the instruments of change introduced by Muḥammad Ali and his successors. As Muḥammad Ali’s innovations proved viable, and even more clearly after the British Occupation, the Egyptians found themselves in a situation in which European knowledge was the key to advancement, individual Europeans were in positions of authority and privilege, and European nations wielded power that neither Egypt nor other Muslim countries seemed able to withstand. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, in the minds both of those who favoured the new developments and of those who saw in them a danger to themselves, the ways of the west were firmly associated with success and prosperity. The new Egyptian elite or ‘modernists’ preferred to give their children a European education while many others learned French, English or Italian. Initially, the Egyptians were ambitious to put their own culture and literature on the same level as that of Europe. The period from 1834 to 1914 is classified in the history of modern Arabic literature as the ‘Age of Translations and Adaptations’ or ‘Neo-classicism’.²⁵ This translation and adaptation period led to the direct importation of new literary genres in Egypt, namely the theatre and the novel. Foreigners, since Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt, had created

theatrical companies to entertain their own communities settled in Cairo and Alexandria.²⁶ Thus, the “crucible” reached its pinnacle first in the theatrical world and then in cinema. The urge to emulate the West created a certain dependence as well as an obstinate fight for survival. This is why the attitude of Egyptians towards culture has always been ambivalent: on one hand the assimilation (at times) according to the policy of integration mentioned earlier, and on the other hand the policy of liberation from the West. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Egypt appeared as a prestigious gateway, the most culturally open country in the Middle East, to receive the great innovation that was the cinema.

1.5 Early Debuts

As in many capital cities of the era, Cairo and Alexandria, started projecting the heroic debuts of the Lumière Brothers in the back halls of cafes since 1896. In 1903²⁷ there already appeared in the Egyptian press a number of letters from readers who desired to know more about the “animated photography” resulting in the birth of a specialised press for cinema, which would develop fully after 1918.²⁸

Cinema was introduced in Egypt by cosmopolitan circles, while foreign technical expertise played a key role in the beginning of motion picture shows in Egypt. The same can be said about the onset of cinematic production. From the start Egyptian cinema was a means of entertainment and for those employed in it, mostly non-Egyptians, a means of getting rich down the fast lane. The French and Italians dominated the Egyptian cinema market for a long while through Lumière and Pathé film strips that were either imported or shot on location,²⁹ with the aim to entertain their large communities and also to encourage the locals.³⁰ J.M. Landau says:

The activities of Pathé, which introduced a great many silent films into Egypt, in the years 1904-1911, attracted considerable notice. It appears that, beginning with the year 1908, short-film shows were given at least twice weekly in Alexandria and Cairo; and some time afterwards, at Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez. However, by far more important was the influence of many films brought to entertain the Allied troops stationed in the Near East. These forces were centred in Egypt and a good number of cinema halls were erected for their recreation. The influx of foreign films and the erection of cinema halls were amongst the various reasons (along with the country's relatively high proportion of intellectuals and its favourable climate), which were to make Egypt the centre of the Arab film industry.³¹

Before dealing with the first company of movie productions in Egypt, we shall mention the first attempts, prior to this, at cinematic photography made by foreigners. Most of the early film strips were of the newsreel type with scenes such as The Paris Opera, The Eiffel Tower, The Coliseum etc. But, for the Egyptians these were "exotic" realities and the foreigners realised that familiar scenes should be shot to please their Egyptian audiences. The French Lumière operator Félix Mesguich, arrived in Egypt in 1906, to film popular Egyptian sites.³² This resulted in tough competition, so the Frenchman De Lagarne, Pathé's representative in Egypt, also took some local shots. De Lagarne made use of a French invention by Grasso, an apparatus capable of producing sound effects like trains, water cascades and fire-shots. These new techniques attracted many spectators, both foreign and Egyptian.³³ However, what caught the spectator's eye was an invention by the Italian Lopoldo Fiorello, who in 1912 started the sub-title system, showing Arabic sub-titles for European silent films. The sub-titles were written on clear glass and mounted on a magic lantern rendering them visible.³⁴

Such new inventions together with local scenes contributed as weapons in the war of cinema among owners to attract spectators, who initially were foreign, but were soon to become Egyptian.

The enthusiastic attendance of the public to these showings motivated some foreigners to pay more attention to the cinema industry. At the height of World War I, the first cinematic company was formed on 30 October 1917 in Alexandria: SITCIA, the Italian Society for production of local cinema,³⁵ run by the Italians and financed by the Banco di Roma. Its director was the famous photographer Umberto Dorès, owner of the Aziz and Dorès Cinematograph in Alexandria, who had already shot numerous film strips since 1906. The aim of SITCIA was to produce short fictional films. This event marked a giant step forward in the history of Egyptian cinema. Not only did this enterprise intend to produce for the Egyptian public but also to export world wide, choosing for this purpose subjects like *The Arabian Nights*.³⁶

The actors and technicians of this company were Italians. Their first short films were *Naḥwa al-Hāwiya* (Towards the Abyss), *Sharaf al-Badawī* (The Honour of the Bedouin) and *Al-Azhār al-Mumīta* (Mortal Flowers) under the direction of Osato. These films were shown in 1918 without any success, because of their lack of attraction of the plot for the Egyptian public, as well as the foreign actors.³⁷ SICTIA went bankrupt causing the Banco di Roma to withdraw from this venture. The Italian company had spent about 25,000 Egyptian pounds on the building of the studio with a glass ceiling in Alexandria, where its films were shot. The SITCIA studio was equipped with state of the art equipment imported from Italy including printing and developing laboratories. All the apparatus was handled by Italian technicians brought specifically from Italy.³⁸ When the company was liquidated, the studio was never used again and most of the equipment was sold to an Italian cameraman, Alvesi Orfanelli, who had started his career changing the music records

that accompanied the reels. This proved to be the true debut into the world cinema of the young Italian who was destined to become one of the authors of the launching pads of Egyptian cinema.

1.6 Short Feature Film Productions

After SITCIA's setback, foreigners soon realised that the Egyptian audience was no longer keen on their foreign movies, neither in style nor in subject matter. Up to now, these foreigners had produced films with foreign capital, foreign actors and foreign technical staff. Orfanelli was among the first to perceive the reason behind the downfall of SITCIA. He did not try to export worldwide film strips produced with rudimentary and modest means. Instead of giving the enthusiastic Egyptians the cold-shoulder, or exploiting them by using them as extras, as had happened before, he decided to approach them. To win over the viewers' support, who looked forward to see their favourite actors on the screen, the young Italian resorted to the famous Egyptian theatre groups of the era for his film productions, whereby their theatrical works were to be represented in cinematic form. Orfanelli restricted the European expertise to technical matters only, such as cameramen and film directors. This recipe of Egyptian actors and foreign technicians was to dominate Egyptian cinema for quite a long time. Orfanelli's measure was met with great public approval as spectators loved to see their theatrical stars again on the screen.

Work on short feature Egyptian films began in 1919 and continued until 1926. These films were approximately 30 minutes long, and although they were not films in the true sense of the word, but filmed theatrical productions, they signified the first attempts toward real Egyptian film-making.

While the production of foreign films took place in Alexandria, Cairo saw the birth of local productions. In 1919 the Cairene theatrical company Dar Al-Salam, under the direction of the very popular comedian Fawzī al-Ghaezerli, produced *Madame Loretta*, a comedy filmed by Orfanelli and directed by Léonard La Ricci. The plot centred around the burlesque situation created by the flirtations of an Egyptian household male servant towards his foreign employer Madame Loretta, who together with her neighbours, beats him hard with a broomstick.

The following year another Italian, Bonvelli, directed a 32 minute film *Al-Khāla al-Amrīkiyya* (The American Aunt), an adaptation from the English play *Charlie's Aunt*. The main roles were assigned to the famous comedian Ali Al-Kassar and the playwright Amina Şidqi.

In 1922 Orfanelli produced and shot another film under La Ricci's direction, *Al-Khātim al-Mashūr* (Soliman's Ring or The King's Ring). The comedian Fawzī Munib and his theatrical troupe acted in this one act comic short film.

Besides these short feature films, produced, directed and filmed by non Egyptians, from 1919 onwards various other petty features and documentaries were shot but with Egyptian actors and involvement. Orfanelli's method of foreign technical expertise blended with the Arabs' direct participation in acting, helped to stir in them an enthusiasm for cinema and a new genre of artistic expression. For the Egyptians the post-war period served as an experimental training and preparatory phase. They had a strong desire for emulating the Europeans in this new artistic genre, which they

found quite appealing. Egyptians were, indeed, the first among Arabic-speaking countries to start their own film production.

Inspired by Orfanelli's rule, some Egyptian actors followed suit, by seeking foreign technical assistance for the production of their feature films. For example Naguib al-Rihani, famous for his role in *Keshkesh Beg*, employed foreigners for directing his films, such as the Italian Stelio Chiarini for *Sāhib al-Sa'āda Keshkesh Beg*, 1931 (His Excellency Keshkesh Bey), and Carlo Bobba for *Mashākil Keshkesh Beg*, 1931 (The Troubles of Keshkesh Bey). Foreigners proved to be the driving force in the Egyptian cinema industry, and while Egyptian pioneers like al-Rihani or Aziza Amir had resorted to foreign technical assistance for their productions, others were more independent.

A young Egyptian, Muḥammad Bayyūmī (1894 - 1963), who since 1919 had studied cinema in Austria, returned home in 1923 with solid professional experience, as well as with cameras and equipment to build a studio. Determined to create a real Egyptian cinema, Bayyūmī founded his 'Studio Amon Films' in Shubra, Cairo, the first studio to be established by an Egyptian. Besides the film studio, Bayyūmī launched a cinematographic journal *Amon Journal*, which he attempted to distribute not only in Egypt but also abroad. In this respect he can be considered the founder of documentary cinema in Egypt. The first issue of *Amon Journal* covered the return from exile of the *Wafd* 1919 revolutionary leader Sa'ad Zaghlūl. This series of newsreel stopped after the third issue, and to this day no copy has been found.³⁹ Bayyūmī shot and directed his first feature film *Al-Bach Kātib*, 1922 (Al-Bach Kateb) with theatre actor Amin Atallah, in the role of a civil servant falling for a

seductive dancer and embezzling money for her sake. He ended up in prison where he faced a number of unhappy misadventures.

Bayyūmī's ambition was to launch a series of films inspired by Charlie Chaplin's movies, and created an Egyptian character, whom he called Master Barsum. His first film in the series was *Al-Mu'allim Barsum Yabḥath ʿan Wazīfa*, 1923 (Master Barsum looks for a job), a comic social film which featured his own son as one of the main actors, who, unfortunately, died before this film was completed.⁴⁰ The trauma of his son's death was such that Bayyūmī closed the studio and sold its equipment to 'The Egyptian Company for Acting and the Cinema' (established in 1925), which appointed him director of the photography department. It was here that Bayyūmī met the well-known businessman and founder of Egypt Bank, Ṭalʿat Ḥarb,⁴¹ with whom he collaborated on various film projects, such as a documentary film of Ṭalʿat Ḥarb's visits to Europe and the Middle East to campaign for Egypt Bank project in 1925. It was from this collaboration that the embryonic idea of building Studio *Misr* was inspired.⁴²

In 1933 Bayyūmī established in Alexandria the first Egyptian Cinema Institute, whose aim was to direct, and to gratuitously train Egyptian students on the cinema techniques. This Cinema Institute was funded by rich and influential Egyptians, among whom, Prince Omar Toussun Pasha.⁴³

Bayyūmī is regarded as the pioneer in laying the foundations for true Egyptian cinema. He was among the first Egyptians to be qualified from Europe in cinema studies, and he had tried his hand in all types of cinema: documentary, fiction and

journalistic events. He courageously embarked on cinematic projects on a national level by seeking financial assistance from well-established people. Bayyūmī's objective, very innovative and ambitious for his time, was to establish the Egyptian cinema on an international level, and not simply produce a few films on an amateur category, like many of his contemporaries. For him, the camera was the eye, the witness and the memory of Egyptian current events. The camera meant for him a means of national awareness, and a mirror of the present history. Few were those cinema enthusiasts who seem to have had his know-how, aspirations and aims in this field.

1.7 The Silent Era and its precursors (1926-1931)

The pre-1926 short films are important attempts at film-making, whose merits are mainly giving experience and coaching both technicians and actors, while providing them with practice in the job. In the short five-year period (between 1926-1931), fourteen full-length feature films were made, six in Cairo and eight in Alexandria. The film-makers, actors or actresses that dominated the silent era were Aziza Amir, Widad Orfi, Aḥmad Jalāl, the Lama brothers, Togo Mizrahi, Muhammad Karim, Assya Dagher, Fatma Rushdi and Bahiga Hafez. Since Chapter 3 is dedicated to the female pioneers in Egyptian cinema, this chapter will merely focus on the male forerunners and Egyptian cinema film companies that were a landmark at its inception.

The long feature films of the silent era were mainly melodramas and Bedouin love adventures in the desert. Some films with these themes were partially historical facts, whereas others used life in the desert as a site for the plot for stories influenced

by American films, like those in which Rudolfo Valentino, Edgar Selwin and Ramon Novarro starred. The first Egyptian long features with this pattern only helped to accentuate the cinema clichés as regards the Arabs, particularly the Bedouins. *Qubla fī al-Ṣaḥrā'*, 1928 (A Kiss in the Desert) is nearly a remake of Novarro's *The Arabs* or Valentino's *Son of the Sheikh*. The same influences are found in *Leila*, 1927 (Leila) and *Ghādat al-Ṣaḥrā'*, 1928 (The Beautiful Desert Girl). The foreign but Egyptianised directors, Widad Orfi and Istephan Rosti, were perhaps responsible for this, alongside their female partners Aziza Amir and Assya Dagher. In these films foreign characters play an equally important role as Bedouin characters. In *A Kiss in the Desert* the Bedouin's brother falls in love with a young American woman, and in *Leila* another Bedouin hero abandons his beloved Leila, after having seduced her, to follow an American tourist abroad. But eventually these subjects were to undergo an evolution and adapt to an Egyptian context.

Leila (1927) was the first full-length feature film produced by the theatrical actress Aziza Amir (1901-1952). Thus, as early as 1926, the history of Egyptian cinema in long features begins with a female pioneer. *Leila* is historically considered by critics to be the first fully-fledged Egyptian film, mainly for two reasons: first, because previous attempts of lesser efforts are not taken into account, and second it was conceived and realised by Egyptian stars and technicians with local invested capital. Its premiere was held in Cairo on 16 November 1927, at the Metropole Cinema. Kamal Ramzi disagrees with other sources in that the Lama's film *A Kiss in the Desert* preceded *Leila* and rules out this mistaken fact.⁴⁴ *Leila*, directed by Widad Orfi, Aḥmad Jalāl and Istephan Rosti, was well received by the public, and earned Aziza Amir to be dubbed the founder of the cinematic art in Egypt. Among those

who viewed the first show of *Leila* was the famous businessman and cinema enthusiast Ṭalʿat Ḥarb, who told Aziza Amir after the film show: “You have accomplished a great feat. This is an achievement that no man could have accomplished.”⁴⁵

In June 1928, Aziza Amir began to work on her second film *Bint al-Nīl* (Daughter of the Nile) whose plot tackled the problem of Egyptian youths, who upon returning from their studies abroad look down upon Egyptian women and regard them as backward and inadequate when compared to European women. The film ends on a tragic note as the heroine, played by Aziza Amir, kills herself by plunging into the Nile. The Italian actor named Roca, and the photographer Stelio Chiarini directed the film. Other actors with Aziza Amir were Aḥmad Allam, Abbas Faris, Marvet Najjar etc. Amir’s films revolved around the abused and oppressed woman who because of the social norms becomes the victim that is destined to suffer.

At the same time when cinematic activity was in full swing in Cairo under the leadership of the young Aziza Amir, the Lama Brothers, Badr and Ibrahim, Chilean returned emigrants of Lebanese origin, established their company for cinematic production under the name of ‘Condor Films’ in Alexandria in 1926. Their first film *A Kiss in the Desert*, shown in January 1928,⁴⁶ was the second film ever in the history of the Egyptian cinema. As already mentioned, this film was heavily influenced by the Rudolf Valentino type of films that were very popular in the 1920s. The Egyptian press criticised the Lama Brothers for having assigned limited female roles in their film,⁴⁷ and considered *A Kiss in the Desert* as a regression in Egyptian cinema, especially when compared to *Leila*, whereby Aziza Amir had appeared in

numerous scenes. The press was of the opinion that *A Kiss in the Desert* posed a foreign concept of Egyptian life, and the producers were accused for not respecting Egypt.⁴⁸ Ibrahim Lama defended the film by saying that their film was not about Egyptian life.⁴⁹

Their second film *Fajr a Fawqa al-Harām*, 1928 (Tragedy on the Pyramid), featured the famous and popular theatre actress Fatma Rushdi. This second film was met with harsh criticism by the press, who referred to it as “Tragedy of the Egyptian Cinema”, despite its financial success as it made seven hundred Egyptian pounds a week, a substantially large amount by the standards of that time. This financial success was attributed to the popularity of Fatma Rushdi as newspapers were quick to point.⁵⁰

In spite of the press criticism for their cinematic productions, the Lama Brothers pursued their career for a quarter of a century, Badr in front of the camera and Ibrahim behind it, together with the stage actress Rose Sarkis, known as Badriyya Ra’fat. Besides the numerous Bedouin tales of love and adventure, Condor Films produced some melodramas like *Al-Hārib*, 1936 (The Fugitive) and *Shabaḥ al-Mādī*, 1934 (Ghost of the past). They also produced modest historical films like *Qays and Leila* (1939) and *Saladin and Cleopatra* (1941). The cinematic career of the Lama Brothers came to a tragic end in 1952, thus bringing to a sudden halt the “foreign” contribution to the Egyptian cinema industry.

After Aziza Amir had launched her film *Leila* and the Lama Brothers their film *A Kiss in the Desert*, Fatma Rushdi (b. 1908) entered the cinematic field and formed

her own company under the name 'The Egyptian Star Films'. In 1928, she produced her first film *Taht Samā' Miṣr* (Under the Egyptian Sky) with the collaboration of the Turkish artist Widad Orfi, who wrote the script and played the main male part with her. The premiere was held in June 1928 at Cinema Metropole. Rushdi had starred in the unsuccessful film *Tragedy on the Pyramids*, then in *Taht Ḍaw' Al-Qamar*, 1928 (Under the Moonlight) which was a failure before it was even released.

Another female pioneer who followed in the footsteps of Aziza Amir was the Lebanese actress Assya Dagher (1908-1986) who came to Egypt in 1923 with her young niece Daad, the famous Mary Queeny. In 1928, Assya Dagher formed her film company 'Lotus Films'. Her first film *The Beautiful Desert Girl* was directed by Widad Orfi (1900-1969), who also wrote the script and played the main role with Assya Dagher. After its release in Cairo, Assya took a copy of her film to Syria where the Syrian government recognised Assya's efforts in cinema and bestowed upon her a prestigious award.

Nevertheless, Mohammed Karim's (1896-1972) *Zeynab* (1930) remains the most important silent film, considered representative of Egypt from all productions of this era. This film was the first screen adaptation of an Arabic literary work in the history of Egyptian cinema taken from a novel of the same name, by M.H. Haykal. Like *Leila* it was a peasant's melodrama that reflects the intense romanticism of Mohammed Hussein Haykal, who himself was influenced by French literary romanticism, very trendy among the Egyptian intellectuals and the middle classes during the inter-war period. *Zeynab* was well received by the press and the public in general, though for political considerations, the members of the *Wafd* party tore this

film to bits in its newspapers, because M.H. Haykal was the lawyer and spokesman for the *Aḥrār* party.⁵¹

Prior to the production of *Zeynab* in 1930, Mohammed Karim played secondary roles in two short films in 1918, then in 1920 he studied cinema in Europe, went to Rome and Berlin to study film-making, and returned to Egypt in 1928, whence he began to work on *Zeynab*.

The controversial figure of the Turkish artist Widad Orfi is closely tied with the beginning of Egyptian cinema. Often described as an adventurer and a crook, Orfi's main ambition during his long stay in Egypt was to produce films. On arriving in Cairo in 1926, he acted as a representative agent for Marcos and Steiger, a German company, and some Egyptian investors with the aim of producing a series of films, namely *Ḥubb al-Amīr* (Love of the Prince), *Al-Jāsūs* (The Spy) and *Al-Ḥubb al-Muḥarram* (Forbidden love). The plot of *Ḥubb al-Amīr* revolved around the life of the prophet Muḥammad, and opposition from the religious authorities and the press claimed that such a film would blemish the prophet's image, which caused the project to be occluded. Orfi did not give up and started to write some theatre plays. He succeeded in establishing contacts with theatre stars, persuading them to invest in the cinema. The economic boom in Egypt that followed World War I made the cinema industry the best investment for fast gains as well as glory. Orfi succeeded to establish close contacts with theatre personalities like Aziza Amir, Fatma Rushdi, Assya Dagher and the Lama Brothers. In her memoirs Mary Queeny reports:

Widad Orfi was a Turkish playwright. Several of his plays were translated from Turkish to Arabic and played in theatres all over Egypt. He had come to Cairo penniless, but with the aim of making money. Some actresses accepted to produce his films. His first victims were three: Aziza Amir, Fatma Rushdi and my aunt, Assya Dagher. All three started shooting a film with him and were left stranded half

way through. Yet they did not despair, and with the help, in each case, of the young main actor, they finished the film.⁵²

Unlike other cinema pioneers, Widad Orfi's career was one of mishaps and problems, mainly due to his ambitions. Orfi's cinematic debut, with the film *Leila* (1927) of Aziza Amir, led him to disputes with the producer and had to be remade. Amir's agreement with Orfi stipulated that he should direct her first film, write the story and play the main male role with her. The film was originally called *The Call of God*. After three months of shooting, disputes flared up between Amir and Orfi about the quality of the work, the excessive duration for completion of the film and that Orfi dominated the scene. Amir cancelled Orfi's contract and work came to a halt on 27 June 1927 as she realised that she had been taken in by a swindler who posed as author, director and actor. She then sought help from her actor colleagues, Ahmad Jalāl and Istephan Rosti, the latter a Hungarian actor whose name stuck to Egyptian cinema long after Widad Orfi was forgotten. The plot remained the same although the film was renamed *Leila*, while the story re-enacted by Rosti, had Amir as the heroine.

After appearing in other films, Orfi met Fatma Rushdi, and in 1928 he produced for her *Under the Egyptian Sky*, a film, which remained on the shelf. Rushdi, who played the heroine in this film, was not pleased with it, however, she did not give Orfi's part to someone else or for a remake of the film and remained silent about Orfi's bad workmanship. It is believed that after seeing the film in private she burned the celluloid.

Mishap haunted Orfi. His third film *Al-Daḥīyya*, 1928 (The Victim), was neither remade nor destroyed. The main stars Hosni Ibrahim and Ihsan Sabri simply quit their job. Orfi's fourth film *Ma'sāt al-Ḥayāt*, 1929 (The Drama of Life) was withheld by the censors due to numerous dance scenes and debauchery, as well as the mutilated treatment it gave to the love of two brothers for a female dancer.⁵³ This film reflected the naive perspective which Widad Orfi had to cinema, while he intruded the fortunate classes in the cinema industry.

The only successful film of Orfi was *The Beautiful Desert Girl* (1929) starred by Assya Dagher. The film was acclaimed by the press for being the "only film to present the real life of the Arabs in the desert."⁵⁴ Critics attribute the success of the film to Dagher's presence. If Assya Dagher's role in Orfi's film was a success, it is surprising how her niece Mary Queeny described her as a "victim" of Orfi.

Another important name in the beginning of Egyptian cinema was Togo Mizrahi (1905-1986), who was born in Alexandria to a rich Italian family that had settled there. Both Mizrahi and Dagher made films with equal zeal, but whereas Dagher made Egypt her homeland, Mizrahi was only a passer-by, like Widad Orfi and the Lama brothers.

After finishing his studies in commerce, Mizrahi left for Rome, France and Germany where he visited cinema studios. When he returned to Egypt in 1930 he bought a hall in Alexandria, which he transformed into a production studio and established the 'Egyptian Film Company' for which he wrote, produced and directed most of the films. His first silent film was *Al-Kūkayin*, 1930 (Cocaine) which was shown in

Alexandria under the title *Al-Hāwiya*, then in Cairo in 1931 at Cinema Cosmograph. After a period of silence, Togo Mizrahi produced a number of films together with the famous comedians Ali Al-Kassar and Fawzi Al-Ghazaerli. These films were nearer to the theatre, adopting the exaggeration and the farce. Besides filmed theatrical comedies, Mizrahi also produced some musicals where he launched popular singers like Leila Murad and Umm Khulthoum. In 1948, the activities of the Egyptian Film Company, which lasted for eighteen years stopped abruptly and Togo Mizrahi left Egypt. His withdrawal from the cinema production was neither failure, as in the case of Orfi, nor bankruptcy as in the case of the Lama Brothers, but perhaps Mizrahi, being of Italo-Jewish origin, felt uneasy to live in Egypt after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, which ended Togo Mizrahi's contribution to Egyptian cinema.

When writing about the birth and growth of the Egyptian cinema, one must mention the audacious efforts of the great businessman Ṭalʿat Ḥarb (1867-1941), who embraced this new art and strove to Egyptianise film-making with all possible means. In 1924 he was the dynamic force behind the establishment of the 'Egyptian Company for acting and the cinema', which in 1925 was solidified by a Royal Decree to establish an Egyptian corporation under the name of 'The Egyptian Company for Theatre and Cinema'. In his opening speech at the launching of this company in 1925, Ṭalʿat Ḥarb said:

We have thought of creating this company, because we believe that the best way to fight the vices advertised in Western films is with our modest efforts in this factory. May it enlarge and become powerful. I will be capable of producing for ourselves Egyptian films with Egyptian themes, Egyptian literature and Egyptian aesthetics, high quality films which could be shown in our country and in other Arab countries.⁵⁵

After this declaration Ṭalʿat Ḥarb was content to produce newsreels for various government commercial enterprises and some short propaganda films for the branch

companies of *Banque Misr* (Bank of Egypt) till the foundation of Studio *Misr* in 1935. Ṭalʿat Ḥarb opted from the outset for the gradual progress of his project relying mainly on the locally available economic and artistic possibilities. He wanted to make sure Egyptian cinema production took into consideration the local talents and the artistic tastes, which were prevalent in the Egyptian society at that time. He did not embark on the production of big films all at once, but instead he began by establishing small laboratories for the development and printing of films. Harb recruited the French photographer Gaston Madry to head the photography unit in the company. Then the Egyptian Company gave scholarships to go abroad to Egyptian students to learn film-making techniques. Ahmed Badrakan (1909-1969) was sent to France to study script-writing, Maurice Kassab filming and script-writing, Mohammed Abdel Azim and Hasan Mourad went to Germany to study photography. In Berlin, Niyazi Mustapha (1911-1986) was already studying film direction and Walal Al-Din Samih set decoration, both at their own financial expenses. The latter then joined Ṭalʿat Ḥarb's team after the foundation of Studio *Misr*. Thus, this studio started functioning with a number of qualified Egyptian technicians, who gained valuable experience from assisting foreign producers in a number of films for several years. Then, when World War II was declared, foreigners left Egypt and the Egyptians finally had the chance to prove themselves.

1.8 The birth of the Egyptian sound film

Late in November 1931, the great theatre actor Yusuf Wahbi (1898-1982) announced: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour to bring you good news about the impending release of *Awlād al-Dhawāt* (Sons of the Privileged), the first Arab

sound film ever. No doubt you will all be pleased to see and hear Egyptian actors and actresses speaking in our own beloved language.”⁵⁶

On 14 March 1932, *Awlād al-Dhawāt* was released and viewed at Cinema Royal. The film was directed by Mohammed Karim, photographed by Gaston Madry, and produced by Ramsis Film Company, owned by Yusuf Wahbi. The story of the film was adapted from Yusuf Wahbi’s play by the same name. The main actors were Amina Rizq and Yusuf Wahbi. The film was a great success as it was on show in Alexandria for fourteen weeks and made a great profit. The fifty percent talking part of the film was recorded in Benson Studio, in Paris, while the silent parts were made at Studio Ramsis in Egypt.⁵⁷

At the same time that *Awlād al-Dhawāt* was being produced, another film *Unshūdat al-Fu’ād* (Songs of the Heart) was also underway. Produced by Behna Brothers and directed by Mario Volpi and Istephan Rosti, it is according to Samir Farid, considered the first Egyptian sound film because it was produced before *Awlād al-Dhawāt*.⁵⁸ *Unshūdat al-Fu’ād* was shown at Cinema Diana on 24th March 1932, ten days after *Awlād Al-Dhawāt*. The film featured the popular singer Nadra and famous actors George Abyad and Abdel Rahman Rushdi. The film achieved some commercial success due to Nadra. The sound parts of this film were produced in Studio Eclair, Paris. In her memoirs, Mary Queeny writes that although the Behna Brothers had spent a huge budget on their first sound movie, it was a flop.⁵⁹

Although the arrival of the American talkies in 1929 gave Egyptian cinema a blow, Egyptian film-makers did not give up. Directors and actors went to Paris to work on

their talking movies, like in the two films mentioned above. Until early 1932 the recording of the sound was being done abroad, which was obviously more expensive to make. Egyptian film-makers began to look for ways and means to start recording it locally. Muhsin Szabu, a Hungarian who migrated to Egypt and embraced Islam, provided them with a solution. Szabu was an engineer who had started his career by owning a private radio station. With his recorder he recorded the royal speech at the opening of Parliament in 1931. Szabu managed to construct a recording apparatus that synchronised sound and picture, thus improving on a sound apparatus that already existed in Egypt.⁶⁰ With Carlo Bobba and Stelio Chiarini, Szabu was co-founder of the Egyptian Company for Talking Pictures. The first film in which the sound was recorded with Szabu's equipment during its shooting was *Awlād Miṣr*, 1935 (Sons of Egypt). Since then, the Company set up a sound synchronising laboratory, dedicating itself solely to the recording of sound during the shooting of films.⁶¹ In her memoirs Mary Queeny recalls that prior to 1935, "we still shot our films in the 'natural way'. After the filming and editing, voice recording was made, or better dubbing. In this manner we made *'Indama Tuḥibb al-Mar'a*, 1932 (When the Woman Loves), *'Uyūn Sāḥira*, 1933 (Eyes of the Sorceress) and *Shajarat al-Durr*, 1934 (Shajarat al-Durr)."⁶²

With the appearance of sound films in Egypt in 1932, starring popular Egyptian theatre actors and singers, a new trend in the history of Egyptian cinema had begun. Local producers soon realised that what could not be achieved in foreign films could now be done in local film: Arabic song and dance. At the birth of the "talkies" the musical was also born on the banks of the Nile.

The Egyptian musical has had a great impact on the Arab world. Music and dance occupy a very high place in the East, in Indian and in Islamic civilisations, where reciting is privileged, music and dance have always occupied an important role. Egyptian life, in city as well as in the countryside, is a rhythm of feasts with engagements, weddings, births, circumcisions, and other religious feasts, Islamic, Christian or Jewish. The development of the radio, the only distraction in the monotonous life of poor people in a country where the majority of the population was illiterate, gave considerable weight to singers, who replaced storytellers and musicians. As for dancing it was always present at marriages, births or private entertainment, where professional dancers and singers were hired.⁶³

Thus, the exploitation of music and dance in Egyptian films that dominated the screen from the 1930s to the 1950s is no surprise. For the Egyptian middle class the musical comedy, even the Egyptian version of it, was the nearest genre to the American film that for a long time was in fashion in the country. For the broad-minded Egyptians to remake these films and to appreciate them was a step in the direction of modernisation, represented above all by the American way of life. On the insertion of song and dance in films, the cantor of realist cinema Salah Abu Seyf declares:

Dancing exists in real life, even in the lives of conservative Egyptian families ... every girl, every woman will try to take over the gathering, one plays the piano, the other dances, even dominating the gastronomic side of the meeting ... the oriental dance is a normal thing in an eastern society, all the women can dance. Belly dancing has its special place in the country's reality. Its presence in a film is by no means a hair in the soup.⁶⁴

With the arrival of sound, producers were obsessed with introducing song and music in their films, ingredients of success with audiences, who saw in them the mark of their own culture. The Egyptian musical owes its success to actor, singer and

musician Mohammed Abdul Wahab (1897-1991). Safeguarding his unchallenged reputation, Abdul Wahab did not want to risk recording his films locally. After forming his own cinematic company 'Abdul Wahab Films', he recorded his first film *Al-Warda al-Bayḍā'*, 1933 (The White Rose) in Paris. This film proved to be a great success with profits exceeding even the best foreign films that were being shown in Egypt. The film ran for some 56 weeks in Alexandria alone.⁶⁵ In *Al-Warda al-Bayḍā'* Abdul Wahab (1897-1991) and director Mohammed Karim (1896-1972) had embroidered a screen play with a melodramatic tone, ably punctuated with songs of various rhythms, different from the Hollywood style musical: a mixture of action, song and dance. The film's success clearly indicated that the future of talking movies was in songs. Abdul Wahab Films continued to produce films once every two years all directed by Mohammed Karim. In 1946 Abdul Wahab, "singer of kings and princess", stopped appearing in films, but he continued to produce films for other singers.

Among the famous film singers, one must mention Umm Kulthoum (1904-1975), Farid al-Atrash (1907-1974), Abdel Halim Hafez (1929-1977), Leila Mourad (1918-1995) and Shadia (b.1931). Umm Kulthoum was definitely the sacred cow of the Egyptian musicals. Although she was not a great actress like Abdul Wahab, the public did not come for the insipid story, nor for her relative beauty, but for her voice, full of emotion and distinguishable among thousands of voices. Launched by her recording company and by Studio *Misr*, Umm Kulthoum took part in six films between 1935 and 1947, which widely contributed to her celebrity all over the Arab world. During the second half of the 1940s, a new generation of actors-singers appeared, among whom the Lebanese Asmahan (1912-1944), sister of Farid al-

Atrash, was the most brilliant. Younger and more beautiful than Umm Kulthoum, gifted with an equally marvellous voice, she was considered her rival, until 1944 when she tragically disappeared in a car accident. Sabah (b.1928) the Lebanese as well as Shadia, also formed part of this generation of great talented singers.

As regards the men, the 1950s and 1960s were dominated by Farid al-Atrash and Abdel Halim Hafez. The former fitted perfectly in the parts of the melancholic lonely young man, in the role of singer-composer in most of his films. He forms an inimitable couple with dancer Samia Gamal, typical of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers. Abdel Halim Hafez was nicknamed by his female fans the “dark skinned nightingale”. A brief glance at musical statistics gives one a vague idea of the “singing” cinema rather than the talkies. For example, between 1940 and 1960 Farid al-Atrash and Leila Mourad appeared in 25 and 24 musicals respectively. Between 1945 and 1960 the Lebanese singer Sabah sang her way through 34 films, while Shadia sang in 72 films during the same period.

The duration of the popularity of musicals was partly due to economical stakes. With the arrival of the sound film at the beginning of the 1930s the powerful recording companies took hold of the market which was available to them and went into film production where they “forced songs” on their stars. Cinema was the only visual means of entertainment then, since television had just been invented and commercialised after the Second World War. For a period of about forty years the stars of the song were to contribute to Egyptian films with all the force of their lungs. From Munira al-Mahdiyya, the first Arab singer to appear in a music hall in the 1920s, to Abdel Halim Hafez who had a state funeral in 1977, the list is rather long.

All kinds of music are presented in films, from the traditional recitals of Umm Kulthoum, to the melodies of Abdul Wahab who lived to borrow from the western repertoire introducing a local tempo of rumba here, and some accents of waltz there, the charm of musical films is due to this variety of styles.

The law of casting and the exigencies of producers who were attached to proven recipes made musical sequences a must. Screenplays were set in the framework of cabarets, theatres and music halls with the heroes' profession often of a musical nature. Most of these films were commercial ones *par excellence*, as they did not give a faithful image of the social life of the country. The song and dance inserts may be regarded as a *mise en scene* of pleasure. Whether they take place in a pompous palace or behind an apartment window frame or modern balcony, once the song arises, happy or melancholic, emotions are set. These moments depict all the liberties - the voluptuous bodies of female dancers, purposefully scantily dressed in suggestive clothes, and all the eroticism, contained or elsewhere channelled, is displayed on the screen, like Naima Akef's (1929-1966) supple movements of the hip, or the feline wavings of Samia Gamal. The figure of the female dancer remained part and parcel of the Egyptian musical comedy. While Farid al-Atrash melted women's hearts, Samia Gamal (1924-1994) made the hearts of men throb. Accompanied by Taheya Carioca (1915b.) and Naima Akef, they brought the oriental dance to an unequalled point of perfection towards the end of the 1940s.⁶⁶

The Nasser Revolution never carried at heart the dance scenes, a symbol of decadence of the old regime. In the 1960s the cinema progressed to keep its distance from song, which in turn found its haven on television. With the arrival of the 1970s

the musical became more modern and less frequent. As a consequence of religious morality, which was taking up again during this era, the dance had its final blow, to the effect that it is now virtually non-existent.

1.9 Studio *Misr* and other Studios

For Egypt it was impossible to build a cinema industry without studios to film in. When Studio *Misr* opened in 1935, it was the first Arab film studio, in the real sense of the word, not only in Egypt, but also in the entire Arab world. It goes without saying that the opening of Studio *Misr*, financially tied to *Banque Misr*,⁶⁷ was a step forward which led to an improvement in the quality of its productions and in the formation of a team of professionals. Although Studio *Misr* was not the first film studio in Egypt, these studios that opened since 1917, were primitive, modest and with limited resources. In his memoirs, the American Ohan Hagop says that “the studios where we worked were simply garages.”⁶⁸

Ṭalʿat Ḥarb founded the *Banque Misr* with its multiple companies, among them the *Société Misr pour le théâtre et le cinéma* in 1925. The birth of Studio *Misr* was scheduled for the production of feature films with sound. Its aim was to supply a modern setting for teams of film-makers who wanted to exploit their talents in cinema. As such, it served as a training school for film-makers. Ṭalʿat Ḥarb realised that the *Société Misr pour le théâtre et le cinéma* could finally play an important part in the production of full-length feature fiction films without abandoning the short reels or documentaries. The *Société Misr* paved the way to a second generation of Egyptian technicians by giving further scholarships abroad in different sectors of the cinema. As already mentioned earlier in this chapter, many were those who were

sent to France or Germany to study filming, script-writing, and photography, among whom, for example, was Mustafa Wali, who studied sound technique. Thus, this group of qualified cinema Egyptian technicians contributed their expertise to Studio *Misr*, and also assisted foreign technicians in numerous films. In the 'training school' of Studio *Misr*, Salah Abu Seyf (1915-1996) and Kamal Al-Sheykh (b.1919) apprenticed in the editing department.

Located in Giza on the road to the Saqqara pyramids, over an area of 80,000 square metres Studio *Misr* were equipped with the latest equipment transported and installed under the supervision of Mustafa Wali. Foreign experts were also engaged among them the German director Fritz Kramp, the Russian cameraman Sami Brel, directors of photography Robert Scharfenberg and Antoine Polizois, a Russian make-up artist.

The company's first film was *Widād* (1936) starring Umm Kulthoum, directed by the German Fritz Kramp, shot by the Russian Sami Brel, and the music was written by the Italian, Pino Bardi. These credits showed the company's reluctance to work with unknown and inexperienced personnel. The Egyptians, therefore, were content to act as assistants. This policy was maintained even with purely Egyptian films like *Al-ʿAzīma*, 1939 (The Will) directed by Kamal Salim (1913-1945) and shot by Feri Farkash, or *Lāshīyn*, 1939 (Lashiyn), directed by Fritz Kramp and shot by George Still.

For Ṭalʿat Ḥarb "the cinema has become one of the century's major events, sharing the scene with the press and very soon to replace it."⁶⁹ The huge facilities at Studio *Misr* had a positive effect on Egyptian cinema. When *Widād* was released it was a

great success. It ran for five weeks at the Royal Cinema in Cairo, something to date unequalled in Egypt.⁷⁰

Studio *Misr* not only produced its own films but also offered various services to independent producers. It hired out stages, prepared set constructions, shooting and sound recording. Even foreign companies made use of Studio *Misr*'s facilities.

However, in spite of all the activities, the *Banque Misr* Bulletin in 1942 revealed that the *Société Misr pour le Théâtre et le Cinéma* was providing all the capital to Studio *Misr*, and borrowing from *Banque Misr* suffered a loss of £90,000 at the end of 1939. Because of the expensive sophisticated equipment of Studio *Misr*, which was nowhere to be found in Egypt, liquidation was difficult. Thus, the directors decided to work on a low cost budget and on a different strategy. With the lowering of costs and heightening of resources the company registered a profit in 1941. But due to the conditions of trade brought by World War II, the company was once more destined to suffer financial losses. In spite of the lack of raw material, Studio *Misr* still produced four films in 1942.

Besides its productions, Studio *Misr* used to dub foreign films. Popular Egyptian actors lent their voices to dubbing. Among the most famous American films dubbed in Arabic by Studio *Misr* we find *Mr. Deed goes to town* (1936), whose Arabic version was released in Egypt in 1938. In 1948 Studio *Misr* also became a film distributor, not only for its film productions but also for other independent producers, and for those making use of their facilities. Despite the ravaging effect of the 1951

fire that destroyed several positives and negatives, the studio's activities were not occluded.

The 1952 Revolution toppled the monarchy and the new leaders proclaimed Egypt a republic. In an attempt to control film productions, the new government created the Nile Film Company, thus uniting all film activities. In 1960 Studio *Misr*'s council decided to liquidate the company due to the numerous obstacles it was going through, mainly financial and reorganisation. The laws of nationalising large enterprises approved under Nasser in 1963, pulled down the *Société Misr* which had comprised all the existing studios in Egypt at that time including Studio *Misr*. The *Société Misr* produced fifty-seven features in Studio *Misr* between 1936 and 1956, and a hundred and twenty-five features from 1956 to 1960, when Studio *Misr* was nationalised. The films produced by the *Société Misr* are regarded as the most important films in the history of Egyptian cinema, mainly because the films of the 1930s and the 1940s introduced new genres in Egyptian cinema, such as the historical films (*Widād*, 1936 and *Lāshīyn*, 1939); comedy (*Salāma fī Khayr*, 1937); realism (*Al-^cAzīma*, 1939); and the political genre (*Al-Sūq al-Sawdā'*, 1945). Besides the development of these new genres, Studio *Misr* reinforced the already established genres of musicals and melodrama.

1.10 The birth of Realism

If *Leila* was the first long feature film and Studio *Misr* the birth of the Egyptian cinema industry, then Kamel Selim's *Al-^cAzīma* (1939) may be considered as the first manifestation of Egyptian realist and national cinema, with which the general public could identify. As stated earlier, the majority of Egyptian films produced prior to *Al-*

ʿAzīma were melodramas, comedies, farces or Bedouin films, depicting desert or palace scenes replete with songs and dance while representing aristocratic life styles. When one considers the socio-economic and political problems that plagued Egypt during the inter-war period, one realises that the numerous films produced from the late 1920s to the late 1930s did not reflect such problems. This dichotomy could be attributed to many factors like harsh censorship, shortage of scriptwriters, and instant profits from film-making. It appears that the attention of the intellectuals and writers of that era was more directed towards the establishment and development of the newly born Egyptian literary genres, like the novel, the essay and the theatre, whereas the field of cinema was left open to businessmen, entrepreneurs and technicians. The relationship between Egyptian cinema and the financial world existed since its inception. The film-maker looked at the problems of Egyptians through the eyes of his/her unstable financial sources, an ideological void, washed in striking romanticism of beautiful settings, unreal situations and stereotype characters, accompanied by static camera work and traditional editing work. This factor played an important role in sustaining both the cinema and its dazed audience.

Realism appeared in cinema at the time that is considered as the artistic golden age of Studio *Misr*. The school of realism was discovered for the first time in Kamal Salim's *Al-ʿAzīma*, as well as in the early films of Niyazi Mustafa, particularly *Al-Ṭabīb*, 1939 (The Doctor) and *Maṣnaʿ al-Zawjāt*, 1941 (Factory of Brides). This pattern was further reinforced by Kamel al-Telemsani's (1915-1972) *Al-Sūq al-Sawdā'* (The Black Market) and Ahmed Kamel Mursi's (1909-1987) *Al-Nā'ib al-ʿĀmm* (The Attorney General), both shot in 1943, but were not released before 1945/46. Businessmen regarded the films of the school of realism as "anti-

commercial". The delay in releasing these two films indicates the conflict between the school of realism and the "anti-commercial" attitude.⁷¹ Unlike *Lāshīyn* (1939), *Al-ʿAzīma* had surmounted censorship problems and beaten all obstacles from the commercial quarters. Initially many companies rejected the production of the story simply because it dealt with the problems of the proletariat. When the film was finally shown on 16 November 1939 it was acclaimed not only by the public but also by the critics, amongst them Ahmed Badrakhan.⁷²

The attempt by the author of *Al-ʿAzīma* to show reality in the cinema towards 1938-39 shows a political awareness and knowledge of what was going on. The problem did not lay in the author's enterprise but in that of Studio *Misr* to open a window in its productions and to address the people in a language on the same level with their aspirations and the reality of their lives. *Al-ʿAzīma* was among the early films to depict the Egyptian social class problems, which dealt with the feudal and foreign exploitation of the middle class and the proletariat by the aristocratic or the ruling class. *Al-ʿAzīma* managed to strike a new balance between the political ruling class and the middle class. It is a proposition for a new strategy, for the re-awakening of Egypt. On this popular realistic film Jalāl al-Sharqāwī says:

Kamal Salim is a film-maker who is aware of his message as an artist and sociologist. He realised that the cinema audience consisted mostly of factory workers, artisans and office workers. Salim treats a problem taken from the real life of Egyptian people, put it in a dramatic framework and dealing it with a subtle technicality. The film's striking success was due to several reasons: the author director dealt with a social problem, a solid wholesome subject with no song or dance.⁷³

Thus, the locations chosen by Kamal Salim for *Al-ʿAzīma* were the populated districts of Cairo, turning the alley into a true poetic piece with his professional touches. *Al-ʿAzīma* was to open a whole new horizon of perspectives to Egyptian producers, demonstrating to them that the musical was not the only way to success.

In spite of the compromises with Studio *Misr*, the financial source, and the state censorship, together with the struggle of ideals (fascist or socialist), which accompanied the shooting, and the complacency towards the public, *Al-ʿAzīma* could escape the static situations by including these ‘types’ in the framework of class representation. This class conflict between the two main roles (Adly and Mohammad) is what allowed the film a degree of near truthfulness, but more of a level of realism easily acceptable by social bodies. In the film, Kamal Salim evokes the unemployment of university graduates and has his hero’s problem solved by a converted feudal lord. Likewise, in *Al-Nā’ib al-ʿĀmm* Ahmed Kamal Mursi deals with the contradictions between judicial law and traditional law, ending the film with a compromising solution for both. Not the same can be said of Kamal al-Telemsani. His film *Al-Sūq al-Sawdā’* deals directly with the most serious main issue in Egypt during the shooting of the film, in 1943 i.e., that of the black market and the *nouveau riches* who got-rich-quick through the war. Through a simple plot, he clearly explains how this racket works and what its social and political outcomes are.

The school of realism had sown the seeds for the socio-political awareness of Egypt as though paving the way for the downfall of the monarchy in preparation for the coming of the Free Officers Movement.

1.11 Egyptian Cinema during and after World War II

The considerable growth of the Egyptian cinema was one of the important war phenomena. The established Egyptian cinema industry went through a boom during and after the Second World War partly due to the difficulty of acquiring European or

American films from abroad. One hundred and ten films⁷⁴ were produced between 1939 and 1945, and three hundred sixty four between 1945 and 1952, a rise of 300%. In *The Middle East Motion Picture Almanac (1946-1947)* Jacques Pascal describes at length the expansion of the Egyptian cinema during the Second World War. He states that before the war, Cairo, and Alexandria, together with the main towns, had their screens mostly monopolised by American and French films. But the war had completely changed the situation. In Cairo, out of thirteen cinema halls, seven halls showed exclusively Arab films, five halls American films and one hall showed French films. In suburb areas American films had completely disappeared.⁷⁵

The war brought great economic prosperity to Egypt, not only for film-making but also to other sectors especially the textile industry. The production of cotton material doubled in 1945, rayon multiplied and wool tripled. There was also a boom in oil, cement, sugar refinery, petrol, etc, creating a rich middle class in the main cities, while poverty rose in the countryside and among the urban proletariat. The military bases located on Egyptian territory stimulated business. The liberal professions became more attractive than before the war.⁷⁶ It is from among these mixed sectors of city population that cinema audiences came, some passively, others with a sense of criticism. For the younger generation, cinema was their main distraction and entertainment.⁷⁷

During the war period a rigorous censorship was imposed on Egyptian cinema. The military authorities reinforced the strict rules already imposed by King Faruq (reigned 1936-1952) and even specified further the following measures whereby film-makers could not:

1. Depict the power of God materialistically.
2. Represent religion in a disrespectful manner.
3. Use Qur'ān or Bible verses in a comic fashion.
4. Attack any nation.
5. Undermine Egyptians or foreigners residing in Egypt.
6. Produce subjects or scenes of a bolshevist trait, or any propaganda against the monarchy or the government.
7. Illustrate subjects or scenes that could lead to social disorders like revolts, manifestations or strikes etc.⁷⁸

These seven politically fascist measures were an attack on the freedom of expression and artistic creativity. But despite these harsh censorship restrictions and war tension, great directors like Ahmed Badrakhan, Niyazi Mustafa, Henry Barakat (1914-1997), Salah Abu Seyf and others succeeded to produce good films like *Intiṣār al-Shabāb*, 1941 (Victory of Youth), *Maṣnaʿ al-Zawjāt* (1941), *Rābiḥa* (1941), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī*, 1941 (Saladin), *Al-Shārid*, 1942 (The Vagabond), *Al-Sūq al-Sawdā'* (1945). As already stated above, this period spurred new genres in Egyptian cinema besides having an increase in the popular musicals and melodramas.

During the post war period and up till the 1952 Revolution, cinema in Egypt became the easiest and fastest way of making a fortune. The annual average of long feature films produced surged from twenty to fifty. The average cost of a film production was LE25,000, which made an average of LE100,000 (Stg.19,000 aprox.) at the box office from the Egyptian and export markets.⁷⁹ The post war era was the financial golden age for the Egyptian film industry. During these seven years Egyptian

cinema could be compared to the U.S. Hollywood model, whereby it was characterised by stardom and singer-actor trademarks. Jacques Pascal, in his 1946/47 *Almanac*, characterises Cairo as the "Hollywood of the Orient" due to the numerous film productions and the exportation of Egyptian films not only to other Arab countries but also to India, Turkey, Brazil and America. With regard to production costs he says that a good Egyptian film would cost approximately LE35,000 and that the Egyptian film stars are well paid. As an example Pascal mentions that a star like Abdel Wahab would get an exceptional sum of LE20,000 per film but the average pay for an actor would be LE10,000.⁸⁰

Other Egyptian film stars like Leila Mourad, Umm Kulthoum, Shadia, Samia Gamal or Farid al-Atrash not only became celebrities during this period, but also made great financial profits. The majority of the films of this period were indeed stereotypical, with predictable plots, hindering the progress of budding artists and the pursuit of creative productions, while giving little indication of the personal style of the film directors.

1.12 The 1952 Revolution and the Call for a Committed Cinema

The established Egyptian film industry did not dwindle with the coming of the July 1952 Revolution. On the contrary, the average annual production of feature films from 1952 onwards reached sixty. Just forty days after the July revolution, its leader Mohammed Naguib issued an official statement entitled, "The Art that we want" which spoke of the cinema as being an instrument for entertainment, education, culture and that it should rise above certain things and motivate the youths for better work.⁸¹ Then, in November of the same year, Mohammed Naguib published an

article in *Al-Kawākib* magazine entitled “*Risāla ila al-fannān*” (Letter to the Artist) where he said: “art in Egypt before the revolution of 23 July 1952, and perhaps up to the present time (that is 1952), is still mirroring the image of the era that our revolution came to wipe out.”⁸² By his statements the new revolutionary leader meant that all forms of art influenced people and in order to exploit these forms of art, the artist should embody the mottoes of the revolution since it came to correct the decadent state of affairs. Following Naguib’s declarations a committee was appointed to arrange meetings with cinema people to discuss what the revolution and the new authority wanted. Most of the cinema people agreed to go along with the authority and Mohammed Naguib in January 1953 issued a statement in which he thanked the artists for having come to the support of the new renaissance and the building of the new society according to the revolutionary’s philosophy.⁸³

Nevertheless, the Free Officers Revolution of 1952 did not upset right away the rules and formulas of film production. The same kind of films as before kept flooding the Egyptian and the Arab market. As soon as the revolution took place, those films that had been banned under King Faruq were immediately released, for example, Hussein Sidqi’s film *Yasqut al-Isti‘mār*, 1952 (Down with Colonialism). Then, in November the censorship of the revolution authorised the release of Ahmed Badrakhan patriotic film *Mustafa Kamel*, which had also been banned by the monarchy.

Although the year 1953 saw the appearance of sixty-two films, not a single film blessed or supported the revolution or even mentioned its advent, because perhaps they might have started to be shot before the revolution. When Mohammed Naguib was removed from power in 1954 and was replaced by Gamal Abdel Nasser,

Egyptian cinema began to appease the leaders of the revolution. Consequently, *Allāh Maʿanā*, 1955 (God is with Us) by Ahmed Badrakhan was one of the very first films about the revolution. Its release was delayed for three years. It was censored and allowed to be shown by Gamal Abdel Nasser on condition that the figure of Mohammed Naguib as the revolutionary leader would be deleted. Cinema remained waiting and did not commit itself directly to the new regime after the revolution. But the endings of some films of the post Revolution period were changed to suit the slogans of Nasser's regime. For example, Mohammed Karim concluded the film *Zaynab* with the heroine, who had contracted a disease, instead of dying miserably; she goes for treatment in the new hospital units built by the Revolution. This sheer propaganda for the government was intended to illustrate that the hospitals built after the Revolution proved that the government was taking care of the poor.

From 1954 onwards, a series of films began where the hero was always an army officer, since the army was in power. A good example is Izz al-Din Zulfiqar's *Rudda Qalbī*, 1957 (Give me back my Heart). Then there was a mix between the films which dealt with the Revolution and others that were simply patriotic like *Dahāyā al-Iqtāʿ*, 1955 (Victims of the Feudal System) by Mustafa al-Badawi, or *Sijn Abu Zaʿbel*, 1957 (The Prison of Abu Zabel) by Niyazi Mustafa and *Arḍ al-Salām*, 1957 (Land of Peace) by Kamal Al-Sheykh. The influence of the army officer found its way also in a series of successful comic films known as the 'Ismail Yasin', starring the top comedy star of the 1950s Ismail Yasin. Fatine Abd al-Wahab produced *Ismāʿīl Yasin fī al-Jaysh*, 1955 (Ismail Yasin in the Army), *Ismāʿīl Yāsīn fī al-Bulīs*, 1956 (Ismail Yasin in the Police Force), or *Ismāʿīl Yāsīn fī al-Uṣṭūl*, 1957 (Ismail Yasin in the Navy).

After many years of absence, due to fear of bans, realism in Egyptian cinema reappeared in impressive numbers in 1953. In the changed cultural atmosphere of the 1952 Revolution, based on popular support with objectives to transform reality, the new censorship codes were limited to issues that disturbed public peace and morals, thus leaving room for the interpretation of these general codes to the discretion of the censor. The revolution censorship rules were more flexible, thus giving artists a wider margin of expression. From 1953 onwards many films that premiered can be classified in terms of realism such as: *Al-Uṣṭā Ḥasan*, 1953 (Foreman Hasan) by Salah Abu Seyf, *Ṣirāʿ fī al-Wādī*, 1954 (Blazing Sun) by Youssef Chahine (b.1926), *Jaʿalūnī Mujriman*, 1954 (They made me a Criminal) by Atef Salem (b.1927) and *Ḥayāt aw Mawt*, 1954 (Life or Death) by Kamal al-Sheykh.

The influence of the 1952 Revolution manifested itself quite rapidly in films. Salah Abu Seyf's *Al-Uṣṭā Ḥasan* evoked the fight of the classes among the Cairo population by the symbolic slant of a small bridge joining Boulak, one of the poorest districts in Cairo, to Zamalek, the residential quarters of the upper middle class. This was the first type of film that centred around the urban poor classes. Chahine's *Ṣirāʿ fī al-Wādī* dealt with the exploitation and oppression of the peasants by the feudal landlords under King Faruq, while *Ḥayāt aw Mawt* depicted the humanity of poor ordinary people and their relationship with the environment. The tendency of socio-political realism, often clumsy but sincere, emerged on the screens after the revolution and developed itself in other numerous films in the sixties, thanks to the favourable cultural atmosphere of the Nasser regime. The realist movement declined in the seventies, to resurface in the eighties.

Another trait of Egyptian cinema that re-emerged again in the late fifties is the marriage of literature and cinema. Great national writers like Naguib Mahfouz (b.1911) and Ihsan Abd al-Quddus (1919-1990) contributed to film scripts, which was a blessing in an era where no film scriptwriter of talent came forward in Egypt. In 1956 Egyptian cinema turned its gaze on the novels of Ihsan Abd al-Quddus and adapted his famous novel *Ayna 'Umri?* (Where is my Life?), which blends with the psychological climate of the time. Four years had barely passed from the Revolution and ideas of political independence, social and economical equity were being projected. The confident certitude of power surpassing pessimism, the difficulties of the past in collective self-determination and freedom dominate throughout the film. After *Ayna 'Umri?* fourteen more films were to be based on Quddus's novels, inspired by a breath of freedom and voicing the hopes of the sixties. Among these films we can mention *Al-Wisāda al-Khāliya*, 1957 (The Empty Pillow), *Al-Tariq al-Masdūd*, 1958 (Dead End), and *Anā Hurra*, 1959 (I am Free).

Naguib Mahfouz remains the Egyptian author most attached to the cinema. The number of films for which he wrote either the text or the screen play is over twenty five. While some are adaptations, based on novels written by other authors, he also wrote a number of novels for film-makers. *Futuwwāt al-Husseiniyya*, 1954 (The Tough Guys of Al-Husseiniyyah) was written for Niyazi Mustafa. Films adapted from Naguib Mahfouz's novels, where realism and naturalism mix into a social cocktail, illustrate multi-faced characters who express in an eloquent manner the difficulties faced by the middle class in Egypt from the 1919 Revolution to the mid-1980s. For the first time, the Egyptian middle class found its own voice heard in the

cinema through Naguib Mahfouz's works. *Bidāya wa Nihāya*, 1960 (The Beginning and the End [but known as] Dead among the Living), *Al-Liṣṣ wa al-Kilāb*, 1962 (The Thief and the Dogs), *Al-Qāhira 30*, 1966 (Cairo 30), *Qaṣr al-Shawq*, 1967 (Palace of Desire) or *Miramār*, 1969 (Miramar) are some of Mahfouz's novels adapted to films. Although the marriage between literature and cinema became stronger, especially in the 1960s, it might have been fateful to cinema as the liaison imposed a literary mentality on a number of films, while restricting other themes from being conceived.

The Nasser regime was eager to encourage cinema production and thus established national organisations and cine-clubs to enrich it. In 1956 the Ministry of Culture and Orientation was founded, embracing in it the Superior Council for the Protection of Arts and Letters. In the same year, film clubs were opened all over the country. July 1957 saw the creation of the Organisation of Cinema Consolidation destined to elevate the artistic level of Egyptian cinema and to encourage the projection of national films locally and abroad, giving financial aid to producers who wanted to invest in quality films. The Organisation received LE1.5 million to execute its programme. In 1961 a law was passed giving power to the General Organisation of Egyptian cinema to produce and distribute films as well as to purchase private studios.⁸⁴ From 1956 to 1962 it was common for Egyptian films to be shown at the Cannes Film Festival. In the subsequent years the participation of Egyptian films at international festivals dwindled. 1958 saw the creation of the High Council for sustaining arts, literature and social sciences with the aim of co-ordinating state actions in its different structures and to study ways of improving the level of production. This same year, the Ministry of Culture became associated with the Ministry for National Orientation under the direction of Tharwat Akasha. In 1959

the High Cinema Institute was established in Cairo for the teaching of arts and sciences of film production, direction, editing and related studies. With the creation of all these institutions and organisations, one can surmise that the cultural policies of the Nasser Revolution were close to the French model of the relationship between the state and culture. But later in the 1960s the state's cultural policies were to be transformed when all forms of expression were deployed towards political propaganda, especially by Qader Hatem, the minister of culture after Tharwat Akasha.

In 1963 the Radio and TV companies amalgamated with the cinema branch, and the studios were re-organised. The aim was to upgrade the technical and artistic level of Egyptian studios like Studio *Misr*, Galal, Nahas, Ahram that had been nationalised, whereas Studio Nassibian remained private. For the first time in the history of Egyptian cinema the state started to produce its own films in 1963. State film production was discontinued in 1970, when Anwar Sadat succeeded Nasser.

In 1964 a Centre for Visual Arts was founded to take charge of cinema documentation and publication. In 1968 the Cairo cine-club nursery for cinema critics was founded, while in 1972 the Egyptian cinema critics union was also set up.

Besides the 1952 Revolution the history of Egyptian cinema became entwined with other major political events: the 1956 Suez War, the 1967 June War and the 1973 October War. The 1956 tripartite attack of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel became known as the Suez War gave a boost to the political conscience of the country led by Nasser. Among the films that were made about this war we find

Niyazi Mustafa's *Samrā' Sīnā'*, 1959 (The Dark Beauty of Sinai) and *Sijin Abu Za^ʿbel* (1957), Hasan al-Imam's *Ḥubb min Nār*, 1958 (Passionate love), or Izz al-Din Zulfiqar's *Būr Sa^ʿīd*, 1957 (Port Said) which is the best film about the Suez War. *ʿAmāliqāt al-Biḥār*, 1960 (The Giants of the Sea) by al-Sayyid Badir, portrays the feats of the Egyptian officers who destroyed a French navy vessel. Films of political dimensions began to achieve success with the public as they raised their socialist and nationalist morale.

But the 1967 Arab defeat known as the "six day war" shook the foundations of society and politics not only in Egypt but also in the entire Arab world. The incessant questions about the reasons for the defeat and the quest for answers led all forces in Egypt towards a challenge of the establishment. The 1967 Defeat theme was absent from the Egyptian screen for four years, until it appeared in a commercial film directed by Hussein Kamal in *Tharthara fawq al-Nīl*, 1971 (Chatter on the Nile), which depicted an atmosphere of corruption, merry making and false harmony, elements which led to the defeat. The 1967 defeat was a dominant topic in the 1970s in films such as *Al-Khawf*, 1972 (Fear) which makes a dramatic comparison between the city of Suez that actually lived the bitterness of the defeat and the city of Cairo that remained nonchalant about the war; or *Al-Ikhtiyār*, 1972 (The Choice) which discusses the position of the educated people and directs blame on them for the defeat. But the best film about the 1967 war was *Ughniya ʿalā al-Mamarr*, 1972 (A Song in the Corridor) by Ali Abd al-Khaliq, which showed the Egyptian soldiers' will to fight and defend their country, despite overwhelming odds, while the best film that depicted the intrinsic reasons of the 1967 defeat was *Al-ʿUsfūr*, 1973 (The Sparrow) by Youssef Chahine.

In the aftermath of the war, investigations brought to light a level of corruption and mismanagement in the Egyptian military that disgraced the entire Nasser regime. The Arab public that Nasser had lifted with his promises entered a period of disillusionment and despair. The socio-political atmosphere was ripe for re-evaluation and reassessment. The Nasser regime had suffered a blow and was susceptible. This situation provided film-makers with a margin of action for criticising the policies and the abuses of the socialist regime. In 1969 Kamal al-Sheikh directed Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Miramār*, which ridiculed the revolution and the Arab Socialist Union, criticised its policies and expressed sympathy for the feudal system, whose power and landholdings the Nasser regime had curtailed. Although *Miramār* was banned and later released by Anwar Sadat, it had opened the way for other film productions to criticise and attack the Revolution, Nasser's policies and even the abuses of the Arab Socialist Union with films like *Al-Qadiyya 68*, 1968 (Case file 68), *Tharthara fawq al-Nīl*, (1971) or *Al-Karnak*, 1975 (Al-Karnak).

1.13 Conclusion

In retrospect, one can surmise that while cinema was under the control and domain of private entrepreneurs, after the Nasser Revolution the state intervened to upgrade and organise the cinema industry. For a while, it snatched it from the hands of the get-rich-quick impresarios. This led to the birth of new genres and new themes, basically socio-political and also providing an opportunity to talented film-makers who lacked financial backing.

From the outset, the cinema was considered an extension of theatrical work. The transfer to cinema of foreign plays was a rule scrupulously respected. From the 1920s-1930s the adaptation consisted of Egyptianised foreign works, particularly French, started by 'Uthmān Jalāl. Cinema became a means of asserting the Egyptians' confidence in themselves. Its survival was due to a market conception being the product of a capitalist economic structure and the political project of Egyptian social forces. The birth and propagation of cinema in Egypt had absorbed all the sources of the theatre to such an extent that by 1927 only two companies had remained those of Youssef Wahbi's and Al-Rihani's.

The cinema was introduced in Cairo and Alexandria by cosmopolitan circles, but then was taken over by businessmen looking for fast gains. All one had to do to become a film-maker was to know how to use the camera, editing equipment, sound and lights. Gradually, after the short silent era, the cinema developed itself into an artistic nature and took an Egyptian look by creating its own genres: melodramas, farces, musicals, comedies, historical films, political, realist and thriller films. After the "prehistory" of the silent and early talkies or better the musicals, the 1952 revolution, turned the tables on all cultural, economic and administrative structures of the cinema industry. The 1961 nationalisation scheme reduced private investment to its bare minimum, but permitted the dawning of new genres and the making of a cinema that depicted the socio-political issues.

Before the building of large studios, all Egyptian films were the result of individual efforts. It is interesting to note that among the pioneers of Egyptian cinema were women, whose efforts and productions enriched the cinema. Analogously, just as the

woman gives birth to a new life, so Aziza Amir, a female theatre actress, gave birth to the Egyptian long feature film. Many other female artists followed in her footsteps.

-
- 2 For more details refer to Katz Ephraim, *The Macmillan International Film Encyclopedia* (London: Pan Macmillan, 1994) or Kristin Thompson and Bordwell David, *Film History, an Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1994).
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 Andreas Freund, "Marking 75 years of Movies in France", *The International Herald Tribune* (29.12.1970), p. 14.
- 5 Kristin Thompson & David Bordwell, *Film History, an Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), p. 15.
- 6 Samir Farid, "Naissance et développement du cinéma égyptien (1922-1970)", in *A propos du cinéma égyptien*, (eds.) Khemais Khayati, Tahar Cheri'a, Robert Daudelin [Dossier No. 13] (Montréal: Cinémathèque Québécoise, 1984), p. 23. See also Sa'ad al-Dīn Tawfiq, *Qiṣṣat al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969), p. 9.
- 7 *Al-Ahrām*, 6 January 1896, p. 3.
- 8 Ali Abu Shadi, "Chronologie 1896-1994", in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, (ed.) M. Wassef (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1995), p. 18.
- 9 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimā al-Miṣriyya 1896-1976* (A Short History of Egyptian Cinema 1896-1976) (Cairo: The General Egyptian Organization for the Book, 1976), p. 10.
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 *Al-Muqattam*, 1 December 1896, p. 5.
- 12 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, pp. 13-14.
- 13 Ali Abu Shadi, p. 18.
- 14 *ibid.*
- 15 *ibid.*
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍarī, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Cinema Club Edition, 1989), p. 107.
- 18 Samir Farid, p. 24.
- 19 Aḥmad Yusuf, p. 58.
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 *ibid.*, p. 54.
- 22 Hamdane Gamal, *La Personnalité égyptienne*, volume IV (Cairo: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1984), p. 132.
- 23 Aḥmad Yusuf, pp. 54-55.
- 24 Gurgus Fawzi, *Dirasāt fī al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsī al-Miṣrī* (Studies in the Egyptian Political History) (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Dār al-Miṣriyya, 1958), p. 69. See also the weekly journal *Al-Muṣawwir*, no. 3545, (Cairo, September 1992), p. 1.
- 25 M. M. Badawi, *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993), p. 11.
- 26 J.M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1958), pp. 67-69.
- 27 *ibid.*, pp. 156-157.
- 28 For example the famous review *Evolution* (issued from 1920 to 1950).
- 29 Aḥmad Yusuf, "Une genèse cosmopolite" in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, pp. 58-59.
- 30 *ibid.*
- 31 J.M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, p. 157.
- 32 Ali Abu Shadi, "Chronologie 1896-1994", p. 18.

- 33 Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍarī, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr* (The History of Egyptian Cinema in Egypt) (Cairo: Cinema Club Edition, 1989), p. 84.
- 34 *ibid.*, p. 119.
- 35 Ali Abu Shadi, p. 19.
- 36 Aḥmad Yusuf, p. 60.
- 37 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, p. 15.
- 38 *ibid.*
- 39 Samir Farid, p. 24.
- 40 Saʿad al-Dīn Tawfiq, p. 11.
- 41 M.K. Al-Kalioubi, “Mohamed Bayumi, le pionnier méconnu”, in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, pp. 44-45.
- 42 *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 46.
- 44 Ramzi Kamal, “Des pionnières qui ont enrichi le cinéma égyptien”, in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, p. 77.
- 45 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, p. 25.
- 46 Saʿad al-Dīn Tawfiq, pp. 18-20.
- 47 Aḥmed al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 257.
- 48 Ali Abu Shadi, p. 22.
- 49 Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 257.
- 50 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, p. 28.
- 51 Khemais Khayati, “Les fondements culturels du cinéma égyptien”, in *A propos du cinéma égyptien*, [Dossier No. 13] (Montréal: Cinéma Québecoise, 1984), p. 6.
- 52 Mary Queeny, “My Souvenirs”, *Revue Internationale du Cinéma* 16 (1953), pp. 42-43.
- 53 Jalāl al-Sharqāwī, *Risāla fī Tārīkh al-Sīnimā al-ʿArabiya* (Cairo: Al-Sharika al-Miṣriya, 1970), p. 29.
- 54 Aḥmad al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 320.
- 55 Samir Farid, p. 24.
- 56 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, p. 52.
- 57 *ibid.*, p. 53.
- 58 Samir Farid, p. 25.
- 59 Mary Queeny, p. 43.
- 60 Jalāl al-Sharqāwī, p. 58.
- 61 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, pp. 55-56.
- 62 Mary Queeny, p. 43.
- 63 For further socio-cultural traditions in Egypt see Lane E.W., *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians 1833-1835* (London: East-West Publications 1989), pp. 351-377.
- 64 Khayati Khemais, *Cinéma* 73, 182 (1973), p. 53.
- 65 Jacques Levy, “L’age d’or de la comédie musicale”, in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, p. 160.
- 66 For more details see Sherifa Zuhur, (ed.), *Colours of Enchantment: Theater, Music, Dance and the Visual Arts of the Middle East* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002).
- 67 *Banque Misr* was founded in 1920; when its companies and subsidiaries were nationalised, in 1960, Studio *Misr* became part of the public sector. In 1980, ownership of the studio was transferred to the Cultural High Council, and in 1994, administration of the studio was transferred to the Receiving Company for Housing, Tourism and Cinema, one of the companies of the Ministry of the Business Sector.
- 68 Ahmad Yusuf, p. 71. We can mention some of the studios that existed before Studio *Misr* and others that opened after it, for example Studio SITCIA (1918), Studio Alvisi (1927), Studio Heliopolis (1928), Studio Togo (1929), Studio Lotus (1932), Studio Katsaros (1934), Studio Lama (1936), Studio Nassibian (1937), Studio Al-Ahram (1937), Studio Galal (1946), Studio Ramses (1947), Studio Nahas (1948), Studio Rami (1949), etc.

-
- 69 Aḥmed Al-Ḥadarī, "Les Studios Misr", in *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, p. 90.
- 70 *ibid.*
- 71 Samir Farid, p. 26.
- 72 *ibid.*
- 73 Jalāl Al-Sharqāwī, p. 75.
- 74 Georges Sadoul, *Histoire Générale du Cinéma, L'Epoque Contemporaine (1939-1954)* (Paris: Denoël, 1955), p. 303. In a footnote Sadoul says that this figure is often repeated in various Egyptian articles and it seems exaggerated. He believes that before 1946 the production could not have exceeded 65 films. When I counted the number of films produced between 1939 to 1945 as indicated in Ali Abou Chadi's chronology: *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, I came up with 140 films, in pp. 25-26.
- 75 *ibid.*, p. 304.
- 76 Raoul Makarius, *La jeunesse intellectuelle d'Egypte après la deuxième guerre mondiale* (Paris: La Haye, 1960), pp. 28-29.
- 77 *ibid.*, p. 65.
- 78 Georges Sadoul, p. 305.
- 79 Samir Farid, p. 28.
- 80 Georges Sadoul, p. 306.
- 81 Duriyya Sharaf al-Dīn, *Al-Siyāsa wa al-Sīnimā fi Miṣr 1961-1981* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992), p. 13.
- 82 *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
- 83 *ibid.*, p. 14.
- 84 Yves Thorval, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien 1895-1975* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988), p. 31.

Chapter Two

The Egyptian Feminist Movement from historical, social and legal perspectives

2.0 Historical Perspectives

The Ottoman Literary Age of Depression⁸⁵ in Egypt led to a cultural and literary stagnation. When Egypt came into contact with the French culture, as a result of Bonaparte's invasion in 1798, it was rudely awakened from its torpor. The successive political events that followed in Egypt created an environment favourable to the literary, social, political and economical revival. During the nineteenth century, Egypt underwent a continuous process of economic growth mainly due to the cotton industry and the European industrial revolution. Thus, two major developments occurred in the Egyptian economy between 1880 and 1914: one was the spectacular rise in agricultural income, and the other was the great increase in the investment of private capital in Egypt. These economic changes together with the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 brought about great changes in rural and urban family life. Judith Tucker explains how social change in the mid-nineteenth century adduced to the decline of the extended family pattern as a semi-autonomous unit, which in turn, weakened the status and security for women of the lower classes.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, one has to keep in mind the various levels of social classes, as not all the classes were equally interested in the struggle for women's rights and emancipation. It is not the aim here to analyse the debate on feminism or the class conflict strategies that evolved during this period. It is intended however, to delineate some important aspects, especially those of urban women.

Besides the indigenous social change, it appears that the whole issue of feminist emancipation in Egypt was ignited by the western impact and promulgated by the upper middle class. The debate for women's emancipation concerned mainly the education of women, the veil and the seclusion of women, polygamy, divorce, and engagement practices. Not all of these questions were equally relevant to all classes of women in Egypt. For instance, veiling and seclusion were not practised by working class and peasant women. But the majority of women were married to the bridegroom according to their father's choice, regardless of their class.

Under British colonial rule, the power of the Turko-Circassian elites in the countryside began to recede and the centre of gravity swung to the main cities. The impact of western capitalism was often advantageous to existing middle and upper classes, which usually led to the creation of new classes involved in foreign trade or professions that closely connected them to westerners. Thus, they would be more disposed to emulate and imitate western values and customs. These westernised middle and upper class elements were generally characterised by government officials, large landowners, foreign investors, entrepreneurs and thinkers who advocated moderate political reformism along western ideologies, and who often spoke out for women's rights. On the other hand the indigenous lower middle class, which consisted mainly of families who had lost their land, shopkeepers, artisans, bazaar merchants, clerks and '*ulamā*' (religious thinkers), felt disadvantaged under western capitalism due to their western competitors. The lower middle class regarded the "modern" western values and traditions as a threat to the "ancient" Islamic ones. With the European dominance in Egypt it appeared culturally natural for the upper classes to maintain their high status, by imitating the west rather than

the old Turko-Circassian trends emanating from Istanbul. The upper and middle-class urban Egyptians regarded European values and lifestyle as modern, progressive and appropriate for their socio-economic requirements, while those of the old Turko-Circassian class were deemed to be outdated and inadequate. Qāsim Amīn (1865-1908), a pro-feminist figure and a modernist, preferred the British rule to that of the Khedives. He pointed out that “We today enjoy a justice and a freedom the like of which I do not think Egypt has ever witnessed at any time in the past”.⁸⁷ He describes the former ruling class as despotic and unjust, pillaging the village headmen of their wealth and then permitting them to make up for their losses by usurping and exploiting the poor villagers.⁸⁸

It is against this socio-historical background that the feminist controversy, entwined with that of nationalism against the British rule, erupted towards the end of nineteenth century Egypt. Those who condoned women’s emancipation usually came from the upper middle class, who had received a western education or were familiar with European culture. Among the Muslim pro-feminist speakers of nineteenth century Egypt we find Rifa‘a Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-1873), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), Qāsim Amīn and Sa‘d Zaghlūl (1857-1927). Scholars like Juan Ricardo Cole or Robert Tignor credit men with the founding and leading of the women’s movement in Egypt. Cole writes that the “feminist literary debate among Egyptian Muslims in the years 1899-1902 was conducted by men”⁸⁹ until Muslim women like the prominent Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif (1886-1918) joined later.⁹⁰ Although Tignor recognises the participation of some women in the feminist debate before World War I (1914-1918), he says, “the majority were men from the urban areas.”⁹¹

But Yvonne Haddad justly notes that the Arab feminist debate had been most prominently advocated to men “who took up the cause of women.”⁹²

Since the early nineteenth century, the role of women in active life has been presented as a parallel condition to the development of society. Rifa‘a Rāfi‘ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, an Azhari Sheikh, recommended in two successive works published in 1860 and 1872, the need for education and even work for women. He also suggested that the minimum age of marriage for women should be 25 years, thus allowing them to learn and develop their knowledge. Then in 1898 Qāsim Amīn’s essay *Tahrīr al-mar‘a* (The Liberation of Women) appeared. Education, work, gender equality, were, according to him, necessary for social evolution. He urged the abolition of the veil arguing that Islamic law allows women to bare their faces and hands.⁹³ In 1908, Qāsim Amīn published *al-Mar‘a al-Jadīda* (The New Woman) in which he answered criticism to the ideas he promoted in his first essay (The Liberation of Women), and refused to submit to the precepts of Islam in improper interpretations on polygamy, repudiation etc. He insisted on a female work force and their education aiming at a European level. He pointed out that by depriving Egyptian women from the labour force was a waste of human capital and a drawback on national development; thus, Egyptian women are not on the same scale as their European counterparts. He said that one of Europe’s secrets of success was giving their women a more active role,⁹⁴ arguing that the European bourgeoisie values about women should be fostered by the Egyptians. In a society as traditional and socially conservative as Egypt, these were exceptionally radical ideas.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the debate on the status of women in society spread out in all intellectual circles. The participation of women on this issue found fertile soil in the press. Between 1892 and 1920 nearly thirty Arabic periodicals by, for, and about women were produced in Egypt for circulation in the Arab world.⁹⁵ This flourishing women's press provided a forum for debating issues such as veiling, seclusion, marriage, divorce, education, work and women's rights. The women's press offered a mechanism for disseminating new ideologies and domestic instruction. Through this means of communication, women could voice their opinions in their journals, which again were initiated by the middle and upper classes that had the funds to invest in the printing press. The literary expression became a means to promote women's cause, especially among the literate circles. The same cause was to be later contested on the screen whence it would reach a wider audience. Two cultures had emerged in Egypt by the turn of the century: an urban one, comprising seventeen percent of the population, which was partially literate, and a rural one, representing most of the population, which was predominantly illiterate.⁹⁶

Besides the growth of the printing press, the emergence of women's periodicals, and the introduction of the cinema in the main cities, the turn of the century saw the birth and development of the Egyptian nationalist movement. This movement was divided into two parties: the Egyptian territorial nationalist *Umma* party led by Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid (1872-1963) and the national *Waṭanī* party led by Muṣṭafā Kāmil (1874-1908). The former followed the western model with all it entailed like the changing of social structures, and launching the slogan "Egypt for the Egyptians". It revitalised Egypt's ancient history especially the Pharaonic period.

The second party fought for Egypt's independence from the British occupation while accepting dependence and allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. This party's Islamic inclinations led it to oppose women's liberation and thus became regarded as conservative. Though al-Sayyid's liberal ideologies had some supporters, his party lacked a substantial support prior to World War I. Most Egyptians still preferred Islamic unity to a secular polity based on principles associated with the British occupation. It was only after the Ottoman defeat of World War I that the Egyptians turned toward the territorial nationalism of the liberals.

As indicated earlier, the feminist debate in early twentieth-century Egypt had a varied meaning among the lower, middle and upper class women of rural and urban regions. This issue also had a different aim for female Muslims and other non-Muslim female minorities. Certain issues, such as veiling and seclusion, were class and region specific while others, such as marriage and divorce, transcended class and region but not religion. Nationalism served as a platform and a collective cry to quash some of the differences between the classes. Egyptian nationalism became entangled and linked to the emancipation of women. Egyptian liberals and conservatives had conflicting views on the "explosive question of the emancipation of women," reflecting splits on the issue of Islam and modernism.⁹⁷ As nationalism became linked with the question of women all existing parties were compelled to comment on it.

In 1911 Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif known under the pen name of Bāḥithat al-Bādiya (Searcher in the Desert) presented in her famous speech to the Egyptian Legislative Assembly, a request of ten point programme for the improvement of the position of

women.⁹⁸ In the first instance it was suggested that education should be religiously oriented, and elementary schooling was to be opened to female students. Special fields to be taught included hygiene, childrearing, first aid, and household management; and a limited number of girls should be trained in the medical and teaching professions to fulfil the educational and physical needs of women. Other points concerned the restriction to the right to polygamy, the invalidity of divorce in the absence of the woman and unveiling. Although these points were revolutionary for her time, they show that the educational demands were still oriented toward the traditional sectors of the house and the family, where the woman is regarded as a social unit and not as a human individual who would obtain total economic independence by taking up a profession. Nonetheless, despite the shortcomings of Nāṣif's programme, her claims were unanimously rejected in parliament. The advocates of women's emancipation continued to insist on the need for women's education. The call to education for all the girls reached its climax in the Egyptian Constitution of 1924, where it was explicitly declared that free elementary education should be extended to female children.⁹⁹ Higher education and university professional training were not regarded as necessary yet, and although girls' elementary education had been included in the 1924 Constitution, it was not before 1928 that the first entry of women students in Cairo University took place.

Historians highlight the 1919 revolt as an important event, where women involved themselves directly in national politics. Besides the demonstrations, veiled women organised boycotts of British goods and sent petitions to the foreign embassies protesting against British actions in Egypt.¹⁰⁰ But, the 1919 revolt was not the first time that women took to the streets to protest; in 1814 middle-class women had

staged street demonstrations to protest against the Pasha's policies for abolishing the *multazimāt* (tax-farming). The 1919 revolution, however, was a national cause and also a crucial shift from nationalist to feminist activities.¹⁰¹ Yet, one must not overlook the women's nationalist and feminist initiatives that preceded 1919. As early as 1908, a group of Muslim women led by Hudā Sha'rawī (1879-1947) founded the organisation *Jam'iyat Tarqiyat al-Mar'a* (The society for Women's Advancement). During this period middle and upper class women founded a network of charities. When these women took up public functions, they made social work respectable. They distributed food, sewed clothes, set up orphanages, clinics and raised funds or gave donations to the needy. These activities had brought the women out of their *harems* into the public arena, while on the other hand their associations served as outlets for the energies of middle and upper class women who also assisted the working-class and peasant women. By starting these philanthropic organisations, Egyptian women cleverly provided their nation with social services. The government welcomed their initiative, as the country was not wealthy and could not afford social services. By helping the less fortunate, these women, whether Muslim, Coptic or Jewish, all joined forces to create national awareness of their power and capabilities. However, when the 1919 revolt was over and women had demonstrated their loyalty to the nation, they directed their claims and talents into other channels. Women activists hoped that their demands would receive redress.

After their demands for education and work, they started to voice their concern about the growing number of mixed marriages between Egyptian men and European women.¹⁰² Egyptian writers and conservative politicians used nationalist arguments to condemn these marriages. The trend of Egyptian men marrying European women

alienated Egyptian women, as they felt that European women were better wives for their men. Their bitterness at foreign marriages is depicted in early films such as *Leila* (1927) and *Awlād al-Dhawāt*, 1932 (Sons of the Aristocrats). In the former we find Aḥmad, the Bedouin interpreter, who falls in love with an American tourist, whom he follows to the United States, and abandons his beloved village girl, Leila. The rest of the film is an account of Leila's miseries. The theme of *Awlād al-Dhawāt* is the relationship of a rich Egyptian man and an emancipated French woman. The film ends with a showdown condemnation of the foreign woman's behaviour, considered as loose and light among the Egyptians. This film triggered a polemic debate in the Egyptian press between the Egyptians and the French, the latter representing the opinion of all foreigners living in Egypt. The Europeans claimed that this film was sheer propaganda inciting Egyptians' hostility toward foreign women, portraying them as home wreckers who lead men to their doom.¹⁰³ Was it a coincidence that these films illustrated the Egyptian women's concern about mixed marriages, or was their claim being purposely delineated on the screen as another means of their protest?

The impact of the women's 1919 demonstrations, backed by their journals and philanthropic movements was a great one and public opinion started accepting the active participation of women in society. As indicated earlier, the first concerns of the women's organisations were education, new regulation laws relating to marriage and divorce and not their political rights or their equality with men, which prior to 1919 had not been discussed. Here one notes that Egyptian women, in the early stages of their emancipation, were still subjected to subordinating roles, appealing to

men for reforms, rather than trying to implement more of their own original ideas and act as autonomous human beings.

Until the 1930s the emancipatory movement was restricted to women of the middle and upper classes¹⁰⁴ and addressed women of the same social background. This class restriction is accepted when considering that a certain level of education combined with western exposure was required to compare the Egyptian traditional position of women with their European counterparts. Women's awakening was mainly an urban phenomenon initiated among the upper and middle classes and affecting the lower ones. It created immediate ripples beyond these strata and its influence spread further over time.

The claims of the Egyptian emancipation movement can be summed up as follows:

a) the right for education, b) the right for work (especially in the public domain), c) the right for improvement of personal status in marriage and divorce, d) the right for participation in national politics, albeit the right to vote. The last demand began in 1935 and it was only in 1956 that Egyptian women obtained the right to vote. On these four points Egyptian women advanced immensely in the subsequent years. They acquired all these rights mainly during the Nasser period (1952-1970) and later under the Sadat government (1970-1981).

The urge for the improvement of the status of women, equality to men or the emulation of western styles can be seen in various Egyptian films such as *Shajarat al-Durr* (1935), *Fatāt Mutamarrida*, 1940 (Rebellious Woman), *Al-Afūkātū Madīha*, 1950 (The Lawyer Madiha), *al-Ustādha Fāṭima*, 1952 (Dr. Fatima), *Nisā' bilā Rijāl*,

1953 (Women without Men), *al-Zawja al-Thāniya*, 1958 (The Second Wife), *Anā Hurra*, 1959 (I am Free) or *al-Bāb al-Maftūh*, 1963 (The Open Door).

After going through the historical background and the women's issues in urban Egypt, we can perceive a continuous nexus in the works of Rifa'a Rāfi' al-Taḥṭāwī, Qāsim Amīn, the women's press, the emancipatory movements and a substantial number of Egyptian films. Although the film industry during its early phase was oriented toward entertaining the audience, mainly the foreigners and upper/middle classes in Cairo and Alexandria, the women's debate that emerged in the press was perpetuated later in the cinema.

Marc Ferro rightly observes that "as [a] fundamental source for analysis of societies in the twentieth century no one doubts the value of films."¹⁰⁵ Films are in fact, cultural and sociological products. They witness their era, its mentality and ideological system. In the light of this, we will examine the condition of women, mainly in the city, as revealed in the films chosen for our analysis.

2.1 Social and traditional perspectives

Although Egypt is an agricultural country whose rural population makes two thirds of the total inhabitants, the majority of Egyptian films portray an urban life. In Egypt, films dealing with the rural world are a tiny percentage of the total film production. Out of the 2,000 full-length features produced between 1927 and 1980, only thirty films (produced in the 1960s) deal with the peasant world. In fact, the appearance of the peasant films corresponds with the policy of Nasser's regime. The farmer, long misunderstood and forgotten, started to share the limelight with the

urban dweller. There are no features that deal with the problems of the peasants and their socio-economic conditions prior to the 1960s, except for *Du'ā' al-Karwān*, 1959 (The Call of the Curlew) produced by Henry Barakat.

Since 1896 film shows appeared in the main cities, while film-making was born in the cities and addressed a cosmopolitan audience in the early twentieth century. The illiterate peasants were indeed too poor to afford movie tickets. The 1937 government census shows that 85% of the Egyptians were illiterate. This vast majority would have completely ignored the existence of cinema, even though there were a few cinema halls in the countryside. Cinema tickets, four or five piastres, an equivalent to a two-day wage, were an inaccessible luxury for the poor peasant.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the Egyptian industry would not have survived had it been dependent on a peasant audience. Films are the product of city life, and therefore are concerned with the world of the city. Film producers and impresarios preferred to address the urban population, which perhaps explains why from the 1930s to the 1950s the majority of the films depicted middle and upper middle class urban life style. There were, however, other reasons for producing mainly urban films: a) the tight censorship laws, during the monarchy, that prohibited the portrayal of poverty, peasant life, calls to revolt or even the questioning of traditional customs; b) the Egyptian film was particularly vulnerable to American and French imports in its domestic market; c) although the countryside provided idyllic love situations, or beautiful landscapes, it was too expensive to shoot on location.

In an interview conducted by Khemais Khayati with the Egyptian director Kamal al-Sheykh, the latter estimated that 60% of the Egyptians "do not know Egyptian films

or refuse to know them.”¹⁰⁷ He contended that the audience for Egyptian films was largely limited to the urban population of Cairo and Alexandria. Egyptian cinema is a city cinema both by level of production and by location. Cinema follows the prodigious concentration of the urban phenomenon due to a rise in demography, an impoverished agricultural society and a rural exodus. In the majority of the films covered in this research, the action, plot and solutions are found in the cities, where the only signs of modern civilisation lay.

Therefore, it focuses on the women’s problems in the city, which is often Cairo. Unlike the peasant woman, the city woman is stratified into various social classes. Each class has its own traditions and roles. While the peasants are on an equal basis, the urban society is divided into classes and encounter complex situations, which the peasant is not even exposed to. Thus, when examining the urban women one has to bear in mind the social class differences. Urban women of Cairo are stratified as: *bint al-balad* (daughter of the country), *bint al-ḥitta* (daughter of the domicile), *fallāḥa* (peasant), *bint al-dhawāt* (daughter of the upper-class), and non-Muslim women.

Bint al-balad is thought of as a preserver of local traditions and values. She is often referred to as *baladiyya* (folk) woman, who observes folk remedies, believes in evil spirits, saints’ miracles and participates in traditional rituals that ward off the evil eye.¹⁰⁸ *Banāt al-balad* (daughters of the country) usually live in the Cairene quarters of al-Darb al-Aḥmar, al-Jamāliyya, Bāb al-Sha’riyya, Būlāq and Miṣr al-Qadīma. Janet Abu Lughod describes *bint al-balad* as “traditional urban”; she classifies the Cairene dwellers into three main types: the rural, the traditional urban and the

modern or industrial urban. By traditional urban she means those who maintain economic activities, forms of social relationships and systems of old values, typical of Cairo that date back to the nineteenth century, but which "since the advent of the twentieth century at least, have been increasingly challenged by several ways of organising production and sale, regulating identity and behaviour, and setting definitions for the good life".¹⁰⁹ The old Cairene quarters where the *bint al-balad* comes from are the major pockets of population density in the city. These quarters take most of the rural migrants of Cairo. In 1947 the population of these quarters was 37% of the total population of Cairo and in 1960, despite the decrease, their population still accounted for 30%.¹¹⁰ The most typical occupations of the *bint al-balad* are merchants, shop assistants, nurses, dressmakers, factory workers, vendors or government employees, depending on their education.¹¹¹ The *bint al-balad* connotes and associates herself as *bint al-ḥitta* (daughter of the domicile) meaning that she belongs to a community within a quarter. Within the *ḥitta* women are not secluded from men, and there is interaction between the two sexes. Besides the occupations outside the home, some *banāt al-balad* hold traditional jobs such as the *ballāna* (a woman who bathes other women and carries out depilatory work) or the *dallāla* (a retailer or a mobile vendor who makes house calls. She often serves as a confessor for the house-confined women). Another role associated with *bint al-balad* is the *mu^callima* (a powerful leader within her community). She is usually a butcher, a merchant or a coffeehouse keeper. The *mu^callima* has a serious and man-like attitude. She enters into disputes like her male counterparts and controls the undisciplined ones with a beating. Yet, she is very helpful and generous to the dwellers of her *ḥitta*. She prides herself on reconciling foes or financially assisting those who go bankrupt.¹¹²

Bint al-balad regards herself superior to a *fallāḥa* (peasant), whom she considers narrow-minded, backward, ignorant, naive, inarticulate, physically unclean and with crude tastes in styles or house decorations. One would never see a *bint al-balad* carrying a load or pots on her head, or working as a servant or in the fields like the *fallāḥa*. The popular term *fallāḥī* in Cairo denotes an uncouth taste, but on the other hand the term *baladī* used by the upper-class women denotes a bucolic or mediocre taste. Thus, here one notices a class distinction between the upper, the middle and the peasant classes. However, conservative modesty is shared by all.

Like the peasant, the *bint al-balad* has social and moral codes to follow, although the city codes are not traditional and conservative as among the peasants. *Bint al-balad* is required to safeguard her honour, not only her virginity, but married women are not expected to be unfaithful to their husbands.

Nawāl al-Sa^cdāwī, an Egyptian psychologist and champion of the feminist cause in the Arab world, defines the importance of virginity in Egyptian society as such:

The concept of honour is tied to the girl's virginity before marriage and her fidelity and obedience to her husband after marriage. The loss of virginity for no matter what reason (even rape) equalled loss of honour. The men of the family must wash their honour in blood or else keep the secret and ask the man responsible to mend things by marrying the girl.¹¹³

This taboo anchored in Egyptian tradition is not merely characteristic of the countryside, or among Muslims alone. However, it takes a more violent form in the rural areas as dishonour brings about the woman's death, again this is not restricted to Muslim women alone but is a general feature of Egyptian society as a whole.¹¹⁴

Another aspect of conservatism is reputation. In the *ḥitta* everybody knows all the women, and their actions are always monitored. *Banāt al-balad*'s behaviour must be in accordance with the *ḥitta*'s expectations and moral orders. For example, a woman's pride and reputation are lost, if she dates a man before marriage. (In the countryside she might be shot, like the attempt on Amna in the film *The Call of the Curlew* (1959). Thus the *bint al-balad* does not appear in the streets with a man who is not her father, brother or uncle. Also walking hand-in-hand with the man who is the *bint al-balad*'s fiancé is scorned, if they are not formally engaged. With such strict social codes, one cannot help noticing the importance and focus given to lengthy telephone conversations between couples in city films. A lengthy or a discreet telephone conversation is always present in city films, especially between lovers, as if to remind the viewer that the traditional social restrictions can be defied by means of modern telecommunications.

It is highly nefarious for a woman to visit a man by herself in his residence when he is alone, or if the woman receives men at home in the absence of the husband, brother or either parents.¹¹⁵ It is also improper for a woman to be left alone for private lessons with a male teacher in his or her house.¹¹⁶ A typical *bint al-balad* is expected to be of a strong character, honourable and capable of protecting herself physically and her reputation in the *ḥitta*, also dependable and capable of helping others and serving them.

A *bint al-balad* may also be an educated woman, who through college or university training would have climbed the social ladder to the middle-class. According to the *bint al-balad*, an educated woman becomes snobbish and looks down on the *ḥitta*,

which she prefers to leave. Thus, she is no longer regarded as a real *bint al-balad*, because after being formally educated she denies her original identity. A typical *bint al-balad*, however, considers herself on an equal status in knowledge to the educated middle-class woman. Amīna in the film *Anā Ḥurra* (1959) is a typical educated middle-class woman who resents her *ḥitta*. Nevertheless, despite the educated women's sentiments of superiority, the *banāt al-balad* still aspire to formal training, as they regard it an amelioration of their instinctive and acquired knowledge. Thus, illiterate *baladī* parents would prefer their daughters to undergo formal education, like Iḥsān and her four younger brothers and sisters in *Al-Qāhira 30*, 1966 (Cairo 30).

Bint al-dhawāt belongs to the upper class and aristocracy. She usually resides in Garden City or al-Zamalek, and regards herself superior and above the *bint al-balad*. The upper class woman acts and dresses like a European, and is modern in material possessions, attitudes and customs. She very often codemixes French or English with Arabic, as she is usually educated in European languages, literature, art or music in European private schools. *Banāt al-dhawāt* are sophisticated and keep themselves aloof from the habits of the *bint al-balad*. As they come from wealthy and powerful families, they do not need to earn a living and they are usually confined to their luxurious homes. But, they also organise women's gatherings, engage themselves in philanthropic activities, attending cultural evenings, sports clubs or travelling to Europe. They identify themselves with a *bey* or *pasha*, two Turkish titles to signify a prominent male member of the family. Unlike the *bint al-balad*, the seclusion and pride of the *bint al-dhawāt* makes her appear hostile, impersonal and unsociable in her neighbourly relations.

In the cosmopolitan cities of Cairo, Alexandria or Port Said, various non-Muslim communities resided. For centuries foreign communities have settled on Egyptian soil, mainly from Italy and France. The Greeks and the Syrians were there before the arrival of the wave of immigration of the nineteenth century. The immigrants, of course, played an essential role in commerce and trade. Ethnic mixing overturned the legal order of the country, because of the multitude of laws each community introduced. Mixed courts were set up for cases involving foreign nationals between 1876 and 1949. In 1907, the foreign population amounted to 143,671 of which 62,913 were Greeks, 24,454 Italians, 19,563 British and Maltese, 14,172 French, 7,708 Austrians, 2,410 Russians, and 1,817 Germans, at a time when the Egyptian population was less than 11 million.¹¹⁷ These Europeans were highly privileged and enjoyed a high level of freedom among the Muslim population.¹¹⁸ Besides dominating the trade, they occupied professional jobs. Of Egypt's 8,000 lawyers, pharmacists, engineers, architects, veterinarians or physicians in 1907, more than half of them were foreigners.¹¹⁹

With a huge influx of non-Arab inhabitants into Egypt's main cities, it is only natural that these foreigners would have a social, cultural and political influence on the urban Egyptians. For example, in Alexandria, Port Said, or Cairo as early as 1875, one could see straight avenues, European style houses, hotels, and banks, horse-drawn carriages instead of the donkeys or camels, restaurants serving *coq au vin* instead of *kebab* or *kufta*, teas and fine liqueurs instead of Turkish coffee or other local drinks.¹²⁰ This "westernised" life style is also evident in numerous films based on modern urban life-style when compared to rural films. For example, the smoking of the cigars instead of the argyle, the playing of the violin or piano instead of the

qānūn or the *'ūd* (lute), the inclusion of foxtrot, tango or waltz dancing among the upper and middle classes besides the oriental dancing, even in the interior decoration of the houses one can easily see a European taste. The European versus the Arab or Ottoman influences can be seen in films like *Ana Ḥurra* (1959), *Al-Wisāda al-Khāliya* (1957), *Lā Anām* (1957) or *Al-Khā'ina* (1965) in contrast to traditional films like *Widād* (1936) or *Danānīr* (1940), *Nisā' bilā Rijāl* (1953) or *Rayya wa Sikkina* (1953). Just like the European socio-cultural effects were seeping through the upper or middle Egyptian urban communities, so was the influence of the non-Muslim women on their Muslim counterparts. In the film *Al-Khā'ina*, we come across Ilhām and her friends who attend to French designers' fashion shows, nightclubs, cinemas and cabarets.

Muslim women mixed with their non-Muslim counterparts. Their religious differences did not prevent them from befriending each other, though Muslim women were prohibited from marrying non-Muslims. In *Ana Ḥurra* we see Amīna, the main character, visiting and going out with her friend Vicky. At times Amīna finds herself in conflict with her socio-cultural background, and that of Vicky's family and friends. *Fāṭma wa Marika wa Rachel*, 1949 (Fatima, Marica and Rachel) is another film which clearly indicates the spirit of tolerance and coexistence between Muslims, Christians and Jews, that had been a feature of the Egyptian society for centuries.

The various educational institutions also provided an opportunity for the young females to learn of different cultures. Besides the Muslim state schools or the mosque schools, there were several European or American private schools for girls,

where the migrants' children or the rich Muslims' offspring could attend. The Copts and the Jews also handled the education of their children. Private Coptic groups started and sponsored free schools for boys as well as for girls.¹²¹ The Jewish community also maintained its own school system, which was mostly co-educational in the main cities with the aim to halt the flow of Jews to non-Jewish schools. The Syrians in Egypt also created a network of communally based educational and philanthropic institutions, as did the Greeks, the Jews, the Armenians, the Italians, the Maltese and other communities, who resided in Egypt.¹²²

The Copts are descendants of the ancient Egyptians, but they have intermarried with Greeks, Nubians and other foreigners and they speak Arabic. The traditional Coptic women of the upper and middle classes used to blacken the edges of their eyelids with kohl; and those of the lower classes tattooed blue marks upon their faces or hands. The blue tattoo of a cross on the hands is still practised today. Till this day, Coptic women are separated from the male congregation by a wooden partition in their churches. Their Church prohibits them from marrying persons of other religions, but some of them do through a civil marriage.

As to the veil, before the famous feminist Hudā Sha^crāwī deliberately removed hers in 1922, it was worn in all respectable middle and upper middle class women, Muslim, Jew or Christian alike. By 1935, however, veils were a comparative rarity in Egypt. Copts tended to be more socially conservative than Syrian Christians. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Coptic women still veiled. As the number of Coptic girls in schools increased, women started to unveil, and men and women began to meet before marriage.¹²³

There has been a comeback of the veil in recent years following new political and religious waves of fundamentalism going back to the late 1970s owing to the Iranian revolution. Among the reasons favoured by many young professional women, is that the veil tends to discourage male advances, physical or verbal, and wearing it is a sign of non-western conformity.

Following the Arab-Israeli conflict in the region, the Jewish community decreased in Egypt, and today they only amount to a few hundreds. Traditional Jewish women dressed modestly like other women of Egypt. They were known to be conservative but active in their charitable networks and schools.

European women, especially the British, the French and the Italian, still practised their social codes, attended the theatres, and the cinemas. Europeans introduced to Egypt sports clubs with swimming pools, tennis courts, roller-skating and football.

Due to the great cultural, political and economical developments in Cairo at the turn of the century, the inhabitants of the main cities were exposed to the different lifestyles of the numerous ethnic communities. Each religious community followed its religious and social codes. Also as European communities grew, it was more possible for them to lead a separate life, similar to that in their home countries. Travel, education and the influx of foreigners, all helped to create a shared world of tastes, ideas and attitudes. Different ways of furnishing a room, eating habits, entertaining friends during weddings, different modes of dressing, particularly for women whose fashions reflected those of Paris, clearly indicated a shift from oriental tastes.

The phenomenon of bilingualism was common; French and English were used in business and in the homes of upper and middle classes. Rich Egyptians used to go to Europe for their holidays; French or English reading material was abundantly available in Egypt; thus a reading knowledge in these languages was needed besides Arabic.

All these non-oriental attitudes are found in Egyptian cinema of the period in focus. Although some film critics claim that the Egyptian cinema of the 1930s to the 1960s is a sheer imitation of the West, these critics totally neglect the major socio-cultural transformations that were taking place in Egypt at that time. One has to consider that cinema, besides being a means of entertainment, like other forms of art, is a reflection of society. Marc Ferro claims that we need to study film and see it in relation to the world that produces it.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, Peter Bächlin postulates that “the popularity of a film, indeed the very reason for its existence, arises on the whole from the adaptation of its contents to the dominant thoughts, conceptions, and instinctual wishes of the contemporary society.”¹²⁵ Thus, it is within this framework that one needs to analyse the socio-historical perspectives together with the Islamic moral codes, in order to understand and appreciate fully the role played by female Egyptian pioneers in cinema and the plight of women in Egyptian films.

2.2 The social and legal status of Muslim women

The legal and social conditions of Muslim women seem to amaze non-Muslims as much as Muslims themselves, albeit for different reasons. The West seems to have lately replaced the political vacuum of communism by Islamophobia as a threat to the West. On the other hand, Muslims are concerned with the rising of extreme fundamentalism and its effect on the role of women in society.

In any discussion involving Muslim women, quotations from the Qur'ān are constantly referred to. Both Muslims and non-Muslims produce Qur'ānic citations, either to prove that Islam gave women certain rights, or that it did not give women such rights. What is clearly spelled out in the Qur'ān is that women are equal to men in religious duties. They have the same obligations and will receive the same rewards or punishments. But, in practice, implementation or interpretation of the *sharī'a* in one Muslim country differs from the way it is, in another, since local societies have chosen to accentuate that element of religion (Sunnī, Shi'ite or other) that was most compatible to their way of life and belief. Thus, social differences in the Islamic community led to different developments in each Muslim country.

Islam and the patriarchal system have had an esoteric impact on the status of women wherever they have been applied. Feminists point out that Muslim women are abused and in a subordinate position to men. The advocates of Islam have always argued that Islam improved and supported the rights of women and saved them from the oppression of the *jāhiliyya*. It is said that in the pre-Islamic era women were sold in marriage, the tribe's honour depended on the woman's fidelity and virginity, female new borns were buried alive, and men enjoyed polygyny. But, as little evidence is available for the situation of women in pre-Islamic times, and what is available has been compiled by male Muslim believers, one cannot easily believe that women were deprived of some prestige or privileges. For example, we know of several Goddesses who were held in considerable esteem by the pre-Islamic Arabs, such as al-⁶Uzza, Manāt and al-Lāt. This indicates ancient female-dominated religious cults, which in turn suggests that society was organised on a matriarchal system. It also was the case with the Maltese neolithic civilisations¹²⁶ and that of the

Pharaohs. In Pharaonic times women were the “focus of the house,”¹²⁷ the house ruler was the female rather than the male and heredity in the royal families went through the female line. It also appears that pre-Islamic women, especially those of high positions, enjoyed a more independent role, like the Prophet’s first wife, Khadija, a wealthy woman and a merchant who lived well before the advent of Islam.

The Qur’anic rules in matters that concern women are: inheritance, marriage, divorce, child custody and the dress code, which discriminate against women when taken at face value. By reviewing the major passages, which deal with the position of women, one discovers that they contain contradictions and create mixed messages for the reader if they are studied in isolation from the historical and social context of the Qur’an.

Throughout the Qur’an the term *zawj*, a pair, is used to emphasise the equality of both genders. Women have the right to inherit property from nine different relatives such as parents, grandparents, offspring, spouse, brothers etc, although their share is half that of an equivalent male. The woman has the legal right to own property and to dispose of it without her spouse’s consent. Since the woman inherits only half the amount of man, the apparent discriminatory condition is mitigated by the fact that “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.”¹²⁸

In a Muslim society, therefore, men are to oversee the maintenance of all the women and children in their family, and their mandatory obligations of expenditure are far

higher than those of women. Any money or property, which a woman owns or any business, which she runs, is entirely hers and her husband has no right or say to any of it. Implicit in the Islamic code therefore the woman is free to control her financial life, but shares in that of her husband.

Both genders are enjoined to dress modestly (Qur'ān XXIV: 30-31) only the wives of the prophet Muḥammad are ordained to seclusion and to talk to men from behind a veil, *ḥijāb*, because they “are not like any of the (other) women.” (Qur'ān, XXXIII: 32). The issues of veiling and seclusion have always been at variance in different Muslim countries through the ages. All the interpretations of the Qur'ān have been produced by men, who held politico-judicial positions in their societies, with the result that different interpretations were accentuated at different periods. The Qur'ān does not specify the exact dress code neither for men nor for women except that both of them are to cover their pudenda and dress modestly. What was good enough for the Prophet's wives was interpreted as good enough for other women, whereupon the Prophet's wives were taken as role models.

Religion sets out moral codes for society to follow. How society applies and interprets these guidelines is a function of economics, politics, social behaviour, demographics and culture. These elements determine religious interpretations and that is why women have been treated differently at different historical eras.

According to Islamic law, marriage is a contracted deed. A normative Islamic marriage pattern emerged in the early centuries of Islam that allowed men to marry up to four wives, have unlimited concubines and made divorce easy for men but

quite difficult for women.¹²⁹ By this Qur'anic law the woman is at a disadvantage, for while the man is permitted to enjoy polygyny while married, the woman is prohibited from polyandry. Ardent Muslims argue that marriages in the West are afflicted with infidelity, but Muslim men's polygyny is religiously lawful. The Muslim husband reverts to polygyny only under certain circumstances, and he has legal obligations to all his wives and acknowledged children.

But, this legal marriage structure may discourage strong marital bonds, putting the patriarchal norm rather than the couple at the centre of the family. While a man can easily divorce a wife, a divorce requested by the woman is granted only on limited grounds, and not without rigid procedures, unless she is clever enough to take the precaution of inserting her right to divorce in the marriage contract. In the marriage contract it is stipulated that the groom is responsible for the bridal money, *mahr*, paid directly to the bride, with some portion deferred in case of divorce or death. The *mahr* constituted the wife's legal property. In general, it defrayed the expenses of furnishing the conjugal house.¹³⁰ Once married the husband is obliged to provide adequate maintenance for his wife and their children. In return, the woman promises obedience, fidelity and care of the family's welfare. She may express her views and make her suggestions concerning all matters. But the best role she can play in keeping the marital tie intact and strong, is to recognise her husband as the person responsible for the running of the family affairs, and thus obey him even if his judgment is not acceptable to her, provided he does not go beyond the limits of Islam. Thus, the woman accepts the husband as the head of the family unit.

In the past, marriages were arranged through negotiations between families who bargained over the bridal money and other details. According to Islamic law, an arranged marriage cannot take place unless the woman gives her consent. Nowadays, arranged marriages are dying out, as couples prefer marriages based on mutual affection. Andrea Rugh's research in Egypt in the 1980s indicated that rational and romantic approaches to marriage were still frequently at odds among the urban lower classes, but the concept of companionate marriage was well spread among the urban middle and upper classes.¹³¹ However, the parents' opinion of their daughter's future husband is still of great importance, and it is rare for a man or woman to marry against their parents' wishes.

In Islam, rights over child custody favour the man. When a couple divorces, a male child remains with his mother till the age of seven, and a female child till nine. Thereafter, they go back to their father's household. But if the divorced mother remarries before the period of legal custody, she loses her siblings immediately. Undoubtedly, this regulation leaves a devastating psychological effect on the mother and the children. The only logical argument for the father retaining the child's custody is that as the man's inheritance is double that of the woman's, therefore children should be cared for by those who could provide for them in this patriarchal setting.

After having glanced at the status of women in Islam, one thinks that Islam puts the woman at a disadvantage. But perhaps a better suggestion would be that the woman is treated and regarded as a minor, reduced to the state of a child. Women are highly protected and economically provided for by the men, but if they disobey the moral

and social codes, women are punished. A woman's testimony is only half as credible as that of a man's. Male supremacy is evident in Islam, and in today's modern world Islamic laws, which regulate the woman's life are unacceptable. On the other hand, one must point out that other cultures and religions like Christianity or Judaism have not outgrown patriarchy, sexism and misogyny. To date, no society treats men and women equally in practice. It is not a question of different gender treatment but the degree of inequality. Unfortunately, Islam and Arab culture, like other Western cultures or beliefs, are also responsible for the plight of women. Esposito argues that the Islamic laws that concern the woman reflect the social mores and the economic realities of the time when enacted.¹³²

The *‘Ulamā* insist that everything in the Qur’ān is eternally applicable and unchanging. However, the present researcher prefers to perceive the Qur’ān through its historical and social perspectives. During the Prophet's times, women and children were the most affected by the insecurities impregnated due to the disruption of the old tribal order, and provision had to be made for their care.¹³³ Since tribal life was disintegrating as a result of the Islamic wars, the Prophet transformed the social structure by creating the *umma*, where the new Muslim converts paid allegiance to it. With the creation of the *umma* a patriarchal type of family was enhanced. Hence, the status of women as found in the Qur’ān was a response to the socio-political situation of the seventh century Arabia. But, can the seventh century Islamic tenets be reinterpreted in a less pejorative way to women in present times? In other words, can the Islamic family law be reformed according to modern exigencies? *Ijtihād*, interpretation, is an Islamic thought, which allows this process, and theoretically there is no objection to it. Unfortunately, the major doctrines of Qur’ānic family law,

which discriminate against women were subjected to very little *ijtihād*. This is not to suggest that reforms have never been legislated in Arab Muslim countries. For example, in Tunisia polygamy has been totally abolished, but in general little has been done to reform the family law.

It has been indicated that the Qur'ānic dogmas on the status of women were operative in seventh century Arabia, but they should not have been perpetuated to the present times. It is sad to note that in many Muslim countries, while *sharī'a* laws concerning aspects of life have been withdrawn (such as the *ḥadd*) the laws which affect women have hardly been modified. Is this a question of negligence, reluctance or patriarchy? But, can Islam be held fully responsible for the plight of Muslim women?

Urban and peasant women find themselves confronted by certain laws and norms that dictate their conduct. These laws or standards are not made by legislators. They are largely the expression of moral order handed down from one generation to another. The weight of tradition is such that laws, which try to change existing social structures are vividly opposed and often remain in white paper state. For example, in education the enrolment of females in schools is still below that of males at all levels of education. In this sector, one cannot blame the state or the Qur'ān. Education in Egypt has been free for all levels since 1961. Female enrolment is particularly low in rural schools and among the lower classes. These families are reluctant to send their daughters to school, as the traditional belief is that a woman's future lies in marriage and not in a career. The application of the law on compulsory elementary education is quite defiant and the teaching itself is of mediocre quality.¹³⁴

According to the 1960 Egyptian census 70% of the population over ten years old was illiterate, of which 83.9% were women. In 1976, 77.6% of the adult female population was illiterate, while only 46.4% of the male population fell into this category. By 1986, the rates were 61.8% for females and 37.8% for males.¹³⁵ These statistics show that adult illiteracy is substantially higher among females than males in spite of the government's illiteracy programmes, and thus, the parents are mostly to blame. The belief in traditional knowledge instead of modern formal education has a powerful effect on the Egyptian mentality. The opposition to formal education of women is mostly the result of the traditional knowledge, which digs a moat between men and women in order to keep women under total submission to men. In a world where ignorance and illiteracy reigns till this day, we still encounter families who refuse to use contraceptives, who recur to excision on women and who venerate the Sheikh's decisions or advices.

The first act which awakens the girl's feeling of belonging to the weaker sex is excision in areas where practised.¹³⁶ Then, since puberty the girl starts resenting the menace of losing her virginity. This fear is strengthened by her environment since this dishonour brings about the woman's death, whether she had consented or not, out of the shame she has brought upon herself and her family. This type of murder is known as "crime of honour" or "honour killing". The honour of the family is very dependent on a woman's virginity, as Fatima Mernisi, an active Arab feminist, puts it, "the prestige of a man lies between the legs of a woman."¹³⁷

Crimes of honour are still practised in many Arab countries. The Egyptian family Code in cases of crimes of honour states that if the husband's honour had been

violated and he catches the woman in the state of adultery, and he kills one or both of them instantly, he will be exempt from the death penalty. But if he killed one of them or both two hours later, then he does not benefit from the excuse.¹³⁸ By perpetuating the crimes of honour these Arab families are continuously reproducing a tribal mentality and violating the International Charter of Human Rights. On the other hand, Arab states whose laws or judicial practices legitimise or sanction these crimes have not yet abolished them.

Another factor that oppresses women is their social and financial condition, which if not improved would render them dependent on the males of their families. The Arab family structure is highly patriarchal where the old males have authority over the young and the females. The role of the sexes in an Arab family is polarised: the man should be strong and dominant, while the woman is weak and dependent. Man's domination obtains its strength from the various Qur'ānic interpretations. We cannot, however, attribute all the misfortunes of Arab Muslim women to Islam. It is not the only religion, which promotes male superiority, and one must not neglect the weights of old traditions and cultural taboos as indicated earlier. Thus, Islam cannot be held fully responsible for the plight of Arab Muslim women as Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī justly says:

We, the women in Arab countries, realise that we are still slaves, still oppressed, not because we belong to the East, not because we are Arabs, or members of Islamic societies, but as a result of the patriarchal class system that has dominated the world since thousands of years.¹³⁹

The oppression and sufferings of Arab Muslim women due to traditional beliefs come out clearly in numerous Egyptian films.¹⁴⁰ What they claim is of no surprise, on the contrary, it is reassuring for the cinema audiences' norms and values.

- 85 A terminology used to indicate stagnation in literature during the Mamluks era in Egypt. See John A. Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), p. 26.
- 86 Judith Tucker, "Decline of the Family Economy in Mid-nineteenth Century Egypt", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 1: iii (1979), pp. 245-271.
- 87 Muḥammad ʿImāra, (ed.), *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila li Qāsim Amīn*, 2 (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1976), p. 71.
- 88 *ibid.*, p. 16.
- 89 Juan Ricardo Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in the Turn-of-the-century Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13 (1981), p. 401.
- 90 *ibid.*
- 91 Robert Tignor, *Modernization and the British Rule in Egypt (1882-1914)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 341.
- 92 Yvonne Haddad, "Islam, Women and Revolution in Twentieth-century Arab Thought", *The Muslim World* 74, (1984), p. 160.
- 93 Muḥammad ʿImāra, pp. 46-51.
- 94 *ibid.*, p. 220.
- 95 Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 1.
- 96 Daniel Panzac, "The Population of Egypt in the Nineteenth Century", *Asian and African Studies*, 21 (1987), pp. 11-32, esp. 30.
- 97 Panayiotis J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Egypt* (London: Weidenfeld, 1985), p. 231.
- 98 Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 235ff.
- 99 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāfiʿī, *Fī Aʿqāb al-Thawra al-Miṣriyya*, volume I (Cairo: n.p., 1969), p. 93.
- 100 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Rāfiʿī, *Thawrat Sanat 1919*, volume I (Cairo: n.p., 1955), pp. 185ff.
- 101 Hudā Shaʿrāwī, *Harem Years: Memoirs of An Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, trans. Margot Badran (New York: The Feminist Press, 1987), p. 20.
- 102 Fāṭima Munib, "Ilā Matā wa antum lāhun", *Tarqiyat al-Mar'a*, I, ix (1908), p. 134.
- 103 Ahmed Youssef, "Une genèse cosmopolite", in *Egypt 100 ans de cinéma*, p. 52.
- 104 Duriyya Shafīq and Ibrāhīm ʿAbduh, *Tatawwur al-Nahḍa al-Nisā'iyya fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Maktabāt al-Tawwakul, 1954), p. 117, say that even up to the 1940s the emancipatory movement still belonged to the upper classes.
- 105 Marc Ferro, *Analyse de film, analyse de sociétés* (Paris: Hachette, 1975), p. 5.
- 106 Georges Sadoul, *Histoire générale du cinéma*, volume VI (Paris: Denoël, 1955), p. 313.
- 107 Khemais Khayati, "Interviews d'Abou Seif et de Kamal el-Cheikh", *Cinéma* 73, 182 (December 1973), p. 65.
- 108 Sawsan al-Messiri, "Self-Images of Traditional Urban Women in Cairo", in *Women in the Muslim World*, (eds.), Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 522.
- 109 Janet Abu Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 219.
- 110 *ibid.*
- 111 Al-Messiri, pp.525-526.
- 112 Al-Messiri, p. 527.
- 113 Nawāl al-Saʿdāwī (ed.), "Les femmes et la névrose", in *Etudes et Publications Arabes* (Beirut, 1977), p. 59.
- 114 This fate is encountered by Hanadi who came from a Bedouin family in *The Call of the Curlew* (1959), by Jamila a Copt and Mariam in *The Postman* (1964).

- 115 Such behaviours are performed by Nadia in *Lā Anām* 1957 (Sleepless Nights), and by Ilhām in *Al-Khā'ina* 1965 (The Traitor).
- 116 Like Leila and her piano teacher Fathi in the film *Lā Tutfī al-Shams*, 1961 (Do not extinguish the Sun).
- 117 *Al-Muṣawwir*, no. 3545 (Cairo, September 1992), p. 1. See also Krämer Gudrun, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), pp. 8-11.
- 118 Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 561.
- 119 Gabriel Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), p. 224.
- 120 Arthur Goldschmidt, *A Concise History of the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 165.
- 121 Malaka Sa'ḍ, "Jāmi'at al-Maḥabba", in *Al-Jins al-Laṭif*, 9, ii (1916), pp. 68-70.
- 122 See for example Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985); and Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989).
- 123 Beth Baron, "Unveiling in Early 20th Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1989), p. 379.
- 124 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), p. 29.
- 125 Peter Bächlin, *Der Film als Ware* (Basel: Burg, 1945), p. 15.
- 126 E.V. Borg, "Landmarks in Maltese Art", in *Malta: an Intimate Survey* (Blata l-Bajda: Merlin Library, 1993), pp. 1-3.
- 127 Joachim Wach, *The Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: n.p., 1944), p. 62.
- 128 The Holy Qur'ān, trans. Yusuf Ali, (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), IV: 34.
- 129 See Leila Ahmed, "Women and the Advent of Islam", *Signs* 11 (1986), pp. 665-91.
- 130 Jack Goody, "Bride wealth and dowry in Africa and Eurasia", in *Bride Wealth and Dowry*, (eds.), Jack Goody and S.J. Tambiah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 1-58.
- 131 Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), pp. 107-147.
- 132 John Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 48.
- 133 See M. Watt, *Muhammed at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953); and *Muhammed at Medina* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).
- 134 These opinions have been formed and found out following my fieldwork visits to Egypt in 1996 and 1998.
- 135 T. Neville Postelthwaite (ed.), "Egypt", in *International Encyclopaedia of National Systems of Education* (Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd., 1995), pp. 290-291.
- 136 Excision was officially banned by the ministerial decree No. 74 of 1959. Meanwhile this operation is still practised in Egypt. In the countryside it is nearly 100% in practice. In cities it is practised among the lower and poor classes. No religious precept dictates this practice. It is tied to an old tradition. This data was compiled during my fieldwork visit to Egypt in 1995.
- 137 Fatima Mernisi, "Patriarcado y la virginidad", in *Woman*, 144 (20 October 2001), p. 1. See also <http://www.webislam.com/>
- 138 Egyptian Court Cassation Decision No. 409, 1935. This is interpreted as crime of passion due to honour.
- 139 Barbara Stowasser, "Women's Issues in Modern Islamic Thought", in Judith Tucker (ed.), *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 15.
- 140 For example the fate that befalls Hanadi in *The Call of the Curlew*, or Jamila and Mariam in *The Postman*, because they "dishonoured" their families and transgressed the moral order.

Chapter Three

Women and the Egyptian Cinema

3.0 Introduction

The first long feature film in Egypt was produced by Aziza Amir, thus making her the pioneer in film-making. She played an important role in the history of Egyptian cinema, mainly as an actress, a film producer and director, and also for her innovative cinematic themes. The title of Amir's first film was *Leila* (1927), a female name that was to become a popular and frequently used name in Arab films, embodying the legend of mythological love. Ever since Amir's film *Leila* appeared, the woman has been the main subject of many Arab films. Like Alice Guy in French cinema, Arab women, like Assya Dagher, and Mary Queeny were pioneers of Egyptian cinema, and female film-makers have played an eminent part, especially after the national movement for independence appeared. Western exposure in the mid nineteenth century brought about a revival in the economic, political, social and cultural domains of the Egyptian society.

This chapter endeavours to show how the growth and evolution of the film industry in Egypt coincided with the growth and development of the upper and middle classes' feminist movement. It also attempts to explore the role taken by the female pioneers, not just as actors, but also as film-makers in the newly emergent Egyptian cinema.

In spite of the patriarchal traits, Islamic constraints and traditional taboos, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, some Egyptian women were brave enough to challenge their society and plunge into cinematic projects or other similar entertaining business, even though public performance was associated with vice, prostitution or undignified public display.¹⁴¹

The development of commercial entertainment in Egypt during the early twentieth century offered new opportunities for women to prove their artistic talents. This, they readily accepted as it was another means to voice their presence in a male dominated environment. As media developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Cairo and Alexandria, female professional singers, dancers and theatre actresses assumed roles in commercial recording, musical theatre, public concerts and coffee houses. Ali Jihad Racy noted the “expanding role of women after World War I in Egyptian urban music” whereupon during the first decades of the twentieth century, women’s activities spread into all venues of commercial entertainment, even into management, which was generally known as the area of men.¹⁴²

In the 1830s and 1840s, Italian and French theatrical companies performed in Egypt, bringing European actresses before Cairo audiences. Trends toward Western entertainment became more pronounced in the 1860s and 1870s during the reign of Khedive Ismā‘īl. From then on, adaptations of European plays could be seen in the new halls. Meanwhile, Arab troupes started to produce local theatrical performances, indigenous traditions of entertainment, such as folk singing and oriental dancing, continued alongside the new forms.¹⁴³

In Egypt, Syrian women played an important role in transmitting new ideas to their Egyptian counterparts. From the 1870s onwards Christian Syrian women were the first to appear on the stage instead of men performing female roles,¹⁴⁴ the first to train in medicine and the first to take jobs as teachers and administrators.¹⁴⁵

The last quarter of nineteenth century Egypt up to the 1930s was marked by industrial development and revivalism in various domains. It was from this ambience that Egyptian female singers, dancers, actresses, producers and directors emerged. During this period entertaining and artistic careers flourished for women, especially when Najīb al-Riḥānī (1887-1949) and Yūsuf Wahbī (1898-1982) opened theatrical companies.

In 1923 Ṣafiya Zaghlūl welcomed her husband, the *Wafd* party leader Sa'ad Zaghlūl (d. 1927), on his return from exile in Malta by lifting the veil that covered her face. The women who accompanied her did the same. This did not just mean that she adhered to the emancipation of women, but it symbolically meant the liberty of her nation. Five years later Aziza Amir stood in front of a camera for the first time. She was followed by Bahija Hafez, Fatima Rushdi, Amina Rizq, Assya Dagher, Munira al-Mahdiya, Mary Queeny and other female artists. They all pursued their careers in spite of the conservative ideas prohibiting women from appearing unveiled in public,¹⁴⁶ let alone on the screen.

Without minimising the roles of other women in Egyptian cinema, this section focuses on three female pioneers: Aziza Amir, Assya Dagher and Bahija Hafez. In the present researcher's opinion they should be considered as the three pioneering female figures in Egyptian cinema, due to the impact they left on Egyptian and other

Arab audiences. None of these three came to the cinema by chance or by some whim. It was a deliberate choice enforced by a great will power, thus each of them merits careful consideration.

3.1 Aziza Amir (1901-1952)

Aziza Amir, whose real name was Mufida Muḥammed Ghanym, was born in Damietta on 17 December 1901. As her father had died when she was still a child, her family moved first to Alexandria and then to Cairo. There, she learned reading and writing and lived together with her mother, brother and four sisters. Mystery surrounds her first twenty years of life, which has given her slanderers and critics a free hand. For example, *Al-Masrah* magazine, which was the most influential magazine in Egypt, attacked her personal life and accused her of being a prostitute, until fate dropped her in the hands of a Jewish stock-broker in Alexandria through whom she became rich and then abandoned him.¹⁴⁷ Amir always remained silent about such personal attacks. She neither protested against, nor denied the reports.

In 1919 Amir was already exposed to the cinematic world, as some Italians had arrived in Alexandria to shoot some scenes, which were later shown in cafes and restaurants. Her biographies recount how she accompanied a relative of hers, a rich politician who was never named, on his trips to Europe. There, she saw numerous theatrical plays and visited cinemas. At the age of 19 she met Kellini Pasha in Paris and spoke to him about her idea to work in the cinema. Kellini Pasha introduced her to the Pathé Company manager who asked her to undergo a test, which she passed, and offered her a contract for the first film,¹⁴⁸ since she spoke French. But she was obliged to return to Egypt, where she joined the Ramsīs theatre troupe as a stage

actress in 1924. It was Yūsuf Wahbī, the founder of this theatrical troupe who gave her the name 'Aziza Amir', though she called herself 'Isis'.¹⁴⁹ Her first play was *al-Jāh al-Muzayyif* (False Reputation)¹⁵⁰ then she worked with Al-Rīḥānī, but always thought of becoming a cinema star and of having her own cinematic company, an ambition that she always wanted to fulfil before joining theatrical companies.¹⁵¹

Amir's dream materialised when she married Aḥmed al-Sharīfī, the mayor of Samalut in Upper Egypt in early 1927, whereupon she resigned from theatre acting. Soon after, Aziza Amir directed her efforts toward the cinema industry and established a company under the name 'Isis Film'. This ambitious and determined woman plunged into the cinematic experience, despite the entire premonition she heard about getting involved in this adventure. Her husband gave her financial and moral support and backed her effort with every possible means; as film studios were still a rarity in Egypt, she used the basement of her villa in Garden City as a studio, in which she stored film-making equipment she had purposely bought from Germany.¹⁵² As she needed a story for her film, she approached the Turkish artist Widad Orfi and entered into an agreement with him.¹⁵³ The contract stipulated that Orfi should direct her first film, write the script and play the main male role with her in the film entitled *Nidā' Allāh* (The Call of God). Nonetheless, after three months of shooting, disputes flared up between Aziza Amir and Widad Orfi.

Notwithstanding, the numerous problems that Amir faced during the shooting of her first film, she succeeded in completing it under a new name *Leila* (1927). The mishaps which she experienced during the productions of *Leila* and *Bint al-Nīl*, 1931 (Daughter of the Nile) did not discourage her from engaging in more cinematic

ventures, especially when she knew that her films were well received by the public and the press.

Aziza Amir produced the majority of her films, and 'Isis Film' was her creation and her accomplished dream. She formed a formidable duo with her third husband Maḥmud Zulfikar, who starred in half of her films and produced a third of them. Amir had divorced her first husband in 1933 and married his brother Muṣṭafa al-Sharīfī. A few years later she left the latter to marry Maḥmud Zulfikar, actor and director whom she had discovered and worked with in *Bayyāʿat al-Tuffāḥ*, 1939 (The Apple Vendor). This marriage lasted until her death on 26 January 1952.

Following the premier of *Leila*, lengthy articles praising the film and in particular Aziza Amir's own performance, and her valiant efforts, appeared in the magazine *Rūz al-Yūsuf*. The film was also elaborately advertised in the same magazine describing Amir as "the first fully fledged Egyptian actress and film producer."¹⁵⁴ Other magazines such as *Al-Nāqid*, *Al-Sitār* or *Al-Ṣabāḥ* lavished praise on Aziza Amir, and lauded her for her pioneering role in the history of the Egyptian cinematography.¹⁵⁵ The art critic Aḥmed Salāh al-Dīn Nadim in *Al-Ṣabāḥ* urged the public and the government to spare no effort in giving Aziza Amir all the support and encouragement they can give for her great sacrifices and admirable dedication in the field of cinema.¹⁵⁶

Most of the praise to Aziza Amir revolved around her personal courage and enterprising spirit. Edward Said, for example, recalled that she was a theatre actress before she ventured into the cinema world. She is unique in that she succeeded in

both arts. Said compares her to Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) who was “one of the most capable theatre actresses in the world, but when she attempted to enter cinema she fell from her artistic pedestal quite miserably, but Aziza Amir did indeed succeed most gloriously.”¹⁵⁷ Besides Tal‘at Ḥarb who praised her for *Leila’s* premier, as mentioned in chapter one,¹⁵⁸ there was also the famous Egyptian poet Aḥmed Shawqī, who congratulated Amir for her achievement by saying: “I hope to see this crescent grow until it becomes a full bright moon.”¹⁵⁹

Aziza Amir began to work on her second film *Bint al-Nīl*, in June 1928. The story of the film was adapted from the play *Iḥsān Beg*, in which Amir played the main role. The plot tackled the problem of Egyptian youths, who upon returning from their studies abroad looked down upon Egyptian women, and considered them backward and inadequate when compared to foreign women. The film closes with a tragic ending with the heroine committing suicide. After the many mishaps similar to those which plagued her first film, *Bint al-Nīl* was finally viewed by the public on 25 April 1929.

Aziza Amir was also the first to have introduced the Palestinian question into Arab cinema, with her film *Fatāt min Filasṭīn*, 1948 (A Palestinian girl), directed by Maḥmud Zulfikar, and again in *Nāḍya* (1949) directed by Fatine Abdel Wahab. In this film, Amir plays the role of a primary school teacher who dedicates her life to her pilot brother and her younger sister. Her brother’s death at the beginning of the 1948 war throws her into despair. Thanks to her martyr brother’s friend, she regains her strength and becomes a war nurse, and is imprisoned along with other Egyptians. They manage to escape with the help of a group of Palestinian nuns.

Whatever criticism the film received, the audacity and courage of Aziza Amir to produce a film dealing with a subject altogether new in the cinema, must be recognised. Once again, she had earned the reputation of a pioneer on the Palestinian issue.

One cannot help noticing the strong roles played by female characters in Amir's films. For example in her first two films, Amir was already depicting the Egyptian woman's plight against various odds, mainly the woman as a victim of male oppression, but also in line with the socio-political situation of her time. As early as 1927 Aziza tackles one of the major themes in Egyptian cinema: the seduction of the Egyptians by the West and the misery it entails. *Leila*, produced in 1926-27, when Egypt was under the British occupation, carried a harsh criticism of foreigners: tourists' mockery of Egyptian customs, Ahmed being seduced by a tourist and driven away from his beloved Leila only under 'foreign influence'. Leila's love and honesty had been abused by Ahmed, who abandoned her in critical moments, and Leila was left to suffer and shoulder all the responsibility by herself as though her out of wed-lock pregnancy was only her fault.

The basic theme of the foreign woman being preferred to that of the Egyptian Arab woman by Egyptian men appears again in Amir's second film *Bint al-Nīl*. This recurrent theme in Amir's early films fuses with the same issue under discussion by feminists like Malak Ḥifnī Nāṣif and Hudā Shaṣrāwī in the first quarter of the twentieth century, manifested in numerous press debates as described in the previous chapter.

Thus, Amir's first cinematic productions, even though in their embryonic stage, reinforce Ferro's and Bächlin's film theories: that is revealing the non visible, where films find their relationship to society in oblique symbolisms, and that films serve as another means of representing socio-historic elements.¹⁶⁰

3.2 Assya Dagher (1908-1986)

Assya Dagher entered the cinema world for the first time at age nineteen, when she made her debut in *Leila* as an extra. Her real name was al-Māza Dāgher, born in Tannūrīn, a small Lebanese village, when Lebanon was still part of Syria. Assya went to Egypt in 1922, where she lived in a learned milieu at her uncle's house. Her uncle As'ad Dāgher was a renowned author and journalist of the Dār al-Hilāl group, which welcomed in it numerous scholars of the time.¹⁶¹ Like Aziza Amir, Assya knew French, and read French literature. In 1924 her sister also went to Egypt together with her daughters Mary and Hind Yūnis. Her niece Mary was later to become a famous film actress under the name Mary Queeny,¹⁶² who also played an important part in the history of Egyptian cinema.

Assya's ambition was too great to be content with just an appearance in the film *Leila*, whose initial director, Widad Orfi convinced her to produce her own film and employ him as screen director. In 1927 she formed the Arab Film Company later known as 'Lotus Film'. She made a contract with Widad Orfi and gave him three hundred Egyptian pounds to shoot and present the film in its complete form.¹⁶³

The first film produced by and starring Assya Dagher was *Ghādat al-Ṣahrā*, 1929 (Desert Maiden) premiered on 1 May 1929 at the Metropole theatre in Cairo. The

story, written by Widad Orfi, centred around the love of two Bedouin men, for the same woman. Salma (Assya Dagher) and her cousin were in love and about to get married, when an old Sheikh from another tribe set his eyes on the former, whom he kidnapped and forced to marry him. Although, Salma gave birth to a son, she finally manages to escape and return to her tribe. During her journey across the desert a man tried to rape her, but she succeeded in killing him before he got what he wanted. Salma is finally found by her cousin, and they leave together with their tribesmen to exert revenge from her old husband. Ashamed of his act, this latter surrenders to Salma's tribe and throws away his sword begging for pardon. He is forgiven and Salma and her cousin are rejoined in marriage.

Whatever the artistic level of this film, it was well received by the public and acclaimed by the press. *Ghādat al-Ṣaḥrā'* gave Egyptian cinema its first laurels overseas. It received the best award at the Damascus Industry Exhibition in 1929. Dagher was awarded a gold medal together with one hundred Egyptian pounds in appreciation for her efforts in Arab cinema.¹⁶⁴ The Damascus Industry Exhibition was a national manifestation to the French coloniser that Arabs were capable of industrial achievement, production and organisation. This achievement was won by an Arab female, proving that women were also capable of acting and producing films like their non-Arab counterparts.

In the press, the popular magazine *Miṣr al-Ḥadītha al-Muṣawwara* said that *Ghādat al-Ṣaḥrā'* was "the only film that depicts truly the Bedouin Arab life in the desert."¹⁶⁵ Assya was congratulated on her acting debut and this magazine also praised her nieces Mary Queeny and Hind.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, Widad Orfi found no support

or praise in the press, and was criticised for his poor acting and unskilful shooting.¹⁶⁷ Once again, in this film we have a female protagonist who suffers under male tyranny and experiences rape, but as is always the case with Orfi's story line, the woman is brave and triumphs in the end.

Two other films produced by Dagher, in which she played the main part, were also landmarks in Egyptian cinema *'Uyūn Sāḥira* (Eyes of the Sorceress) and *Shajarat al-Durr*, both directed by Aḥmed Jalāl in 1934. Critic Sa'ḍ al-Dīn Tawfīq, classified the first one as "science fiction,"¹⁶⁸ while Munīr Muḥammed Ibrāhim called it a "black-magic film of a rare genre, non-existent in Egyptian cinema."¹⁶⁹ *'Uyūn Sāḥira* capitalises on Assya's fascinating magic eyes. Her lover dies in a car accident, but thanks to witchcraft and to blood infusions from another woman she brings him back to life. Assya never renewed this film genre and it remained unique in Egyptian cinema, due to censorship and negative criticism, though one journal did praise Assya's unique provoking idea as most remarkable.¹⁷⁰

The other pioneer film, *Shajarat al-Durr*, is considered to be the first historical film in Egyptian cinema. It is the story of a heroine who possessed two powers: the soul and the spirit. The film, however, was a pale rendition of the story of the great Egyptian queen who acted wisely, courageously and confidently during one of the most difficult periods in Egyptian history when the enemy was at the outskirts of the city of al-Manṣūra during the crusades of the thirteenth century.¹⁷¹ The historical personality of *Shajarat al-Durr* had become for Egypt a symbol of female alternative power to male power. But Assya's film was more a vehicle for promoting herself than to relate the story of the famous Egyptian queen.

In spite of Assya's personal beauty portrayal, one should evaluate this film in its own background and time, in order to perceive it as a reflection of the socio-political situation. *Shajarat al-Durr* was shot during the monarchic regime and oppressive prime ministers like Isma'îl Şidqi. The 1930s were marked by political unrest, boycotts, protests, women's imprisonment and strikes against the British and the monarchy. Negotiations eventually led to the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty. A number of novels and films, particularly historical ones, speaking of kings and palaces, appeared to reflect this political climate. While the country was occupied by the British, the producer, Assya Dagher, and the director, Aḥmed Jalāl, of this first Egyptian historical film, illustrated the past glories of the Arabs. A messenger is seen in the film arriving from the battlefield and announcing the news "Our army has subdued the enemy" an echo of the Egyptian nationalists' slogan "Egypt for the Egyptians". *Shajarat al-Durr* dominated the scenes and the Egyptians saw their ancient queen at her greatest, as if she has come back to life, strong and brave to face the enemy.

The feminist movement of the period concerned had been seeking women's right to vote, to be elected in parliament and to participate in the political arena. In the early 1930s the Egyptian Feminist Union intensified its demands for gender equality and political rights.¹⁷²

Shajarat al-Durr had implied that as in the past, the Egyptians were able to rule themselves and that women were equally brave and intelligent in the political sphere. By producing *Shajarat al-Durr* Assya Dagher was reinforcing the political demand for national sovereignty and voicing the feminists struggle for political equality.

The formidable trio Assya-Jalāl-Queeny lasted till 1940, when Mary Queeny and Aḥmed Jalāl got married and formed their own company, while Assya Dagher went into an association agreement with Henry Barakat.¹⁷³ Contrary to other pioneers, Assya renounced in time the job of an actress when new young talents like Na^oima Akef (1929-1966), Tahiya Karioka (b.1915) or Faten Hamama (b. 1931) appeared. Unlike Aziza Amir, Assya Dagher was shrewd enough to realise that it was difficult to out rival the new talents. Instead, she played a key role in their discovery, which was one of her greatest successes. She gave numerous young directors and actors their debut and through her, they all made it to fame. Having made Aḥmed Jalāl known in 1934, Barakat in 1942 with *Al-Sharīd* (The Vagabond) she launched Ḥasan al-Iman in 1948 with *Al-Yatīmatayn* (Two Orphan girls) and as Henry Barakat says “Assya was like a mother to all those she discovered.”¹⁷⁴

3.3 Bahija Hafez (1908-1983)

Female film actresses like Aziza Amir, Assya Dagher, Fatima Rushdi, Mary Queeny or Tahiya Karioka were typically of middle-class origins, whereas Bahija Hafez was the most cultured and educated of the cinema pioneers. She came from an Egyptian aristocratic family, rich and well connected to the monarchy. Her father, Ismā^ol Muḥammad Ḥāfez was a *pasha*, like his ancestors.

Unlike her female contemporary film artists, Hafez was born in an intellectual milieu, where she had the opportunity to undergo formal education. She did her primary and secondary education at the Franciscan's and the Mother of God's in Alexandria, and obtained a diploma in music in 1930.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Hafez's attempts to become affiliated with the Egyptian Conservatory of Oriental Music

established in 1927, failed and she was more successful in film acting. Hafez was unable to acquire the instruction she sought in composing Arabic music because the Conservatory rejected her request informing her that there were no funds for musical composition,¹⁷⁶ while there were other underlying reasons for her rejection, mainly because the Conservatory did not admit women and also due to the fact that the musical work submitted by Hafez was not in line with the classical rules for Arab music as it contained western rhythms,¹⁷⁷ which indicates that she was trying to be original and break free from staid musical traditions.

In his memoirs, Muhammed Karim, film director for *Zaynab* (1930), writes that he was introduced to Bahija Hafez at a banquet. At that time he was searching for a female artist to play the leading role of Zaynab. Karim had already chosen Amina Rizq (b. 1910) but she was too busy with the theatre, so he sought someone else. When he met Bahija Hafez, Karim immediately saw her in the role of Zaynab, he liked her, though she seemed a spoiled child coming from an aristocratic background. Karim discovered that she was a qualified musician, spoke French fluently and much better than her broken Alexandrian Arabic dialect.¹⁷⁸

Hafez played the leading role in the first film production of Moḥammed Ḥusayn Haykal's 1914 novel *Zaynab*, based on a true story. Zaynab, a farm worker, is forced to marry a man she does not love, after having had to leave Ibrahim her beloved. She endures morally and physically the worst trials at the hand of her severe husband and his strict family. She falls ill and returns to her family to die without ever seeing Ibrahim again. It is a sad and tragic story, which rouses one's sympathy for Zaynab. Haykal's novel and Karim's film portray a poignant attack on

the tradition of arranged marriages, which still exist in Egypt today, especially in the countryside.

Besides acting in *Zaynab*, Hafez was in charge of inserting music for some scenes and also of changing the musical records during the showing of the film.¹⁷⁹ Hafez was not just a talented musician or an actress but also a qualified film editor. She had studied film editing in Paris and even had an editing counter at her home.¹⁸⁰ Among Hafez's other artistic talents she was a qualified dressmaker of historical costumes, and had knowledge of dubbing.¹⁸¹

Hafez founded Fanar Film Company in 1932. She produced *al-Ḍaḥāyā*, 1933 (The Victims), which she thought of making into a talking film in French, but then refrained and made it with French sub-titles. This was the first Egyptian film to appear with translated sub-titles.¹⁸² Thus, she was a pioneer in producing an Arab film in translation. Then, she reproduced *Al-Ḍaḥāyā* in 1935 with sound by dubbing it.¹⁸³ Other productions were *Al-Ittihām*, 1934 (The Accusation) and *Layla Bint al-Ṣaḥrā'*, 1937 (Leila, Daughter of the Desert) for which Hafez also wrote the script and played the leading role.¹⁸⁴ *Layla Bint al-Ṣaḥrā'*, her major film, was premiered on 18 February 1937, and the first film to be banned from showing by the monarchy, following Iran's protest against it.¹⁸⁵

The film talks of the poetess Layla al-Afifa who lived in Arabia in the fifth century A.D. She was known for her exceptional beauty, kidnapped by the King of Persia Khusrau Anushirwan. He proposed to marry her but her refusal led the king to torture her. Layla kept refusing him obstinately at which stage she wrote the poem

which began: "Ah, if only al-Baraqa could witness the torture." Al-Baraqa was her beloved, who eventually leads an army and comes to her rescue. The film excelled in its magnificent natural settings, which proved Hafez's artistic talents and capabilities, not only in its musical composition, costume design or acting but also in the film direction. Due to its great success, the film was chosen for participation in the Venice Film Festival in 1938. But, then it was banned by the Egyptian monarchy nationally and internationally, on account of the fact that it attacked a "friendly government whose Shah was about to marry Fawziya, the King of Egypt's sister."¹⁸⁶

Bahija Hafez often said that her love for music was the backbone of her work in the cinema production. "I would have liked to present musical comedies, but I have not been able to exploit my musical ambitions to the full. At least in my films music has an important role."¹⁸⁷ In an interview with Saiza Nabarawi, Bahija Hafez told her that:

many have criticised me for having chosen this profession, calling it a great scandal! But have they ever considered the difficulties of all kinds thrown in the way of a woman alone, who is without resources but wishes to remain independent? What pushed me toward cinema therefore was not mere chance, nor a simple desire to appear in front of the camera or the people, but my need to create a condition that would guarantee my freedom. I took this decision only after I had despaired of receiving any encouragement or support from my compatriots.¹⁸⁸

As an upper class woman with gender or class conflicts, Hafez was determined to develop her artistic skills and to pursue a career in the film industry. Like the early female stars in entertainment domains, or those in the nascent cinema, she was courageous enough to defy the conventions. In her own way, Hafez had joined the current chorus of female issues, namely that women were equally competent to men even in cinema production.

Although the *Hadith* forbids the representation of the human image, the modernist Azhari Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abduh published a *fatwa* in *Al-Waqā’ir* in 1891 to justify the introduction of cinema by saying: “It is necessary to recover the Europeans’ sense of the aesthetic.”¹⁸⁹ In 1928, Rashīd Riḍā wrote in *Al-Manār*, that “Islam was never against the moving picture which expresses the beauty of man in motion.”¹⁹⁰

It is a matter of dogmatic interpretation. Cinema is undoubtedly an art of pictures, and as such it is liable to be condemned, as are all picture arts in the eyes of the strictest rites like the Hijra and Takfīr Islamic movement. But, cinema is also a game of shadows. It is in itself a theatre of shadows (the shadow play existed in Egypt during the Pharaohs) the only theatre admitted in Islam,¹⁹¹ though this in itself is not enough to make cinema legitimate. Yet, cinema had less trouble gaining ground in Islamic countries than simply the theatre. Perhaps the cultural and economic aspects proved to be, not only favourable, but also more powerful than any theological interpretation when cinema appeared in Arab Islamic countries.

3.4 Conclusion

After having dealt with the biographies of three female forerunners in cinema, one cannot help observing that in the nascent period of Egyptian cinema, despite the social taboos, Egyptian women of the middle or upper classes enjoyed the opportunity to establish their own cinematic or song companies, to appear on the screen and to direct or produce their films. These Egyptian women ventured forth in the cinema realm, succeeded and made a name not only for themselves but also for their country.

Twentieth century Egypt saw new departures in entertainment, and careers for women as singers and actresses evolved at a time when theatrical companies opened and film making was in demand to emulate the West. Successes notwithstanding, careers in entertainment were not considered suitable for respectable women of the middle or upper strata of society. Women entertainers performed in front of men and earlier in the century women had been criticized for unveiling. In the 1920s and 1930s feminist activists worked to change negative attitudes and to promote careers in entertainment for women of any background who wished to perform and exploit their artistic talents. The Egyptian Feminist Union supported women who pioneered on the stage and the screen.

Aziza Amir, Assya Dagher and Bahija Hafez should be considered as the three female pioneers of Egyptian cinema not only for initiating further interest in film making, but also for the innovations that they introduced. While other famous actresses like Firdous Hasan, Amina Rizq or Fatima Rushdi preferred the theatre, others had a passion for cinema, not only as actresses but also as producers. The three of them looked for talent, set up their own studios and film companies. Each one of them became an institution in itself due to their perseverance, and their seriousness in their work. Interestingly, all three shared several common elements: they all studied or spoke French fluently, and had travelled to Europe, mainly to France. They were city dwellers coming from middle or upper classes, literate, cultured and aware of the current political issues especially the feminist debates. The films they produced or directed had a heroine or a female victim as a protagonist

and all three invested their efforts and capital in cinema. They were not only the first female film-makers but also innovators or pioneers in some cinematic aspects.

As we have seen Egyptian cinema was born in the city and fostered by the Europeans. The female pioneers not only emulated the foreigners but also introduced their own Arab traits and made cinema popular. Yet, it was from among their own people and situations that they found suitable themes for film making.

-
- 141 Karin van Nieuwkerk, "Changing Images and Shifting Identities: Female Performers in Egypt" in *Images of Enchantment*, (ed.) Sherifa Zuhur (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1998), p. 21.
- 142 Ali Jihad Racy, "Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt, 1904-1932", University of Illinois, Ph.D. Thesis, 1977, p. 193.
- 143 Virginia Danielson, "Artists and Entrepreneurs: Female Singers in Cairo During the 1920s", in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, (eds.) Keddie and Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 292-309.
- 144 Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, p. 74.
- 145 Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 117-18; see also J. Heyworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt* (London: Luzac, 1938), p. 375.
- 146 Woman segregation was highly practised up to the 1920s to the extent that in the Opera House or theatres, loges were fitted out with screens reserved for women. See Shaʿrāwī, p. 62.
- 147 *Al-Masrah*, 58 (31 January 1927), p. 11.
- 148 Ali Shalash, *Al-Naqd al-Sīnimāʿī fī al-Ṣahāfa al-Miṣriya*, (Cairo: The General Egyptian Organisation for the Book, 1986), p. 264.
- 149 al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 209.
- 150 *ibid.*, p. 210.
- 151 For Aziza Amir's memoirs and interviews see *Rūz al-Yūsuf*, 101 (13 October, 1927), pp. 15-17; *Al-Ṣabāḥ*, 63 (12 December 1927), pp. 10-12; *Rūz al-Yūsuf*, 111 (22 December 1927), pp. 22-23.
- 152 Saʿd al-Dīn Tawfīq, *Qiṣṣat al-Sīnimāʿī fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969), p. 22.
- 153 Ilhāmī Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimāʿī al-Miṣriya, 1896-1976*, *op. cit.* p. 37.
- 154 *Rūz al-Yūsuf*, 103 (30 October 1927), p. 25 and 106 (17 November 1927), p. 15.
- 155 See *Al-Nāqid*, 8 (21 October, 1927), pp. 3, 10; *Al-Sitār* 9 (31 November 1927), p. 3, and 8 (28 November 1927), pp. 14-17.
- 156 *Al-Ṣabāḥ* 61 (28 November 1927), pp. 6-8.
- 157 Shalash, p. 122.
- 158 See Chapter One, p. 26.
- 159 *Rūz al-Yūsuf*, 107 (24 November 1927), p. 14.
- 160 Ferro, p. 30.

- 161 Al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 317.
- 162 Mary Queeny in her memoirs says that it was Widad Orfi who nicknamed her 'Queeny' which in Turkish means future star. Mary Queeny, "My Souvenirs", *Revue Internationale du Cinéma*, 16 (1953), p. 42.
- 163 Al-Ḥaḍarī, p. 317.
- 164 *ibid.*, p. 322.
- 165 *Miṣr al-Ḥadītha al-Muṣawwara*, 6 May 1929, p. 768.
- 166 *Al-ʿArūsa*, 15 May 1929, pp. 15-16.
- 167 *ibid.*, See also *Al-Jadīd*, 13 May 1929, p. 43.
- 168 Tawfiq, p. 39.
- 169 Ramzi, p. 80.
- 170 Anon, *Sīnimā, Al-Malāhī al-Muṣawwira*, 21 (20 February 1934), p. 29.
- 171 Shajarat al-Durr (d. 1257) was the slave-wife of the mediaeval Ayyubid ruler of Egypt Al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. During a crusader onslaught, she hid her husband's death from his troops to prevent demoralization and she issued edicts in his name until Turanshah, his son by another wife, arrived from Iraq to succeed him. As Turanshah alienated his father's slave soldiers, they killed him and gave their backing to Shajarat al-Durr. She then ruled as a queen, issuing coins and signing proclamations in her own name. But some factions were unhappy at having a woman ruler and forced her to marry a leading Mamluk, 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak. Thus, Shajarat al-Durr linked two dynasties that ruled Egypt for centuries, the Ayyūbids (1171-1249) and the Mamluks (1250-1517). See Stephen R. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193-1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), pp. 301-4, and pp. 329-30.
- 172 Saiza Nabarawi, *Majallat al-ʿUsbūʿ*, 29 (13 June 1934), p. 9.
- 173 Queeny, p. 43.
- 174 Ramzi, p. 82.
- 175 *ibid.*
- 176 Saiza Nabarawi, "Le Conservatoire de musique orientale", *L'Egyptienne* (December 1930), pp. 6-10.
- 177 *ibid.*,
- 178 Mohammed Karim, *Memoirs*, I, pp. 97-105.
- 179 *ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
- 180 Ramzi, pp. 82-83.
- 181 *ibid.*
- 182 Ilhami Ḥasan, p. 61.
- 183 Anon, "Bahīja Ḥāfez, *Akhbār al-Yawm* (2 November 1996), p. 11.
- 184 Saiza Nabarawi, "Une nouvelle étoile du firmament égyptien", *L'Egyptienne* (September 1928), pp. 5-9, and Bahīja Ḥāfez, "Al-Āthār al-Miṣriyya fī al-Sīnimā wa Nashāṭātī lahā", *Al-Miṣriyya* (1 June 1937), pp. 33-34.
- 185 Ilhami Ḥasan, p. 79.
- 186 *ibid.*
- 187 Ḥāfez, pp. 33-34.
- 188 Saiza Nabarawi, "Une nouvelle étoile du firmament égyptien", *L'Egyptienne* (September 1928), p. 7.
- 189 Yves Thorval, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien, 1895-1975* (Paris: L' Harmattan, 1988), p. 2.
- 190 *ibid.*
- 191 Salah Stétié, "L'Image et l'Islam", in *Cinemas des pays arabes*, (ed.) Georges Sadoul (Beirut: Film and Television Centre, 1966), pp. 22-23.

Chapter Four

Feature Films as Reality

*"Cinema is primarily realism, way of life, concreteness, justifiable conduct, the rational gesture. Theatre is 'to show', cinema is 'to be'.
Abram Room (1925: 444)*

4.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse feature films as reality from three different approaches: historical, socio-cultural and literary criticism combined with the gender issue in the background. The relations which make this possible, between the film and the audience, the narrative and the culture of the society in focus, are among the main aspects for examination in this study. However, the major premise for this chapter is to analyse feature films as a cultural expression and representation of reality in the socio-historical parameters of the Egyptian cinema. The purpose of this qualitative study is to interpret the plight of the Egyptian woman as depicted in Egyptian popular films. This chapter will also look into some film theorists' approaches and see how they relate to the Egyptian cinema. The last part of this chapter endeavours to specify the theoretical approach for the case studies, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

4.1 The Film text and its role

There are diverse critical approaches to the study of film, which emanate from different film schools. For Walter Benjamin, the German critic who in 1936 wrote his essay "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction",¹⁹² a film is a

unique experience among the arts. Film addresses the world, and cuts through the realities of life like "a surgeon's knife".¹⁹³ Benjamin was of the opinion that film uncovers the perceptions of the ordinary to the many, and has the potential of engaging an audience in a social and cultural discourse, a mass engagement unlike any other form of arts. He was also aware of the fact that film runs the risk of forging an authoritarian popular belief in the dominant ideology.¹⁹⁴

Thus, the textuality of film is different from that of a novel, or a painting, because it is less of a personal level or an individual creativity. Film is easily accessible, even to the illiterate or those with low financial means, since it has aspects, events or themes from the world most of us live in. By watching any feature film, we are being exposed to different conflicting structures of imaginative, cultural, economic and ideological events, elicited from a social context. One must also keep in mind that the majority of feature films are a collective work, made for profit and their producers' objective is to make them appeal to the trends, norms and common acceptable beliefs of a potential audience. On the other hand, at times, audiences respond in ways quite different to the film producers' expectations. But, the audience's response usually serves as a demarcation for future film-making. A film is made by actual people for an audience and will survive only as long as an audience finds the film text acceptable. The textuality of a film, thus, becomes part of a recurring stimulus of creation and response. By analysing the film textuality and/or the internal structure of film narrative, the way images are put together to tell us stories, one can discover a great deal of information about what films want to illustrate. But, analysis of the form of the cinematic text involves the complex interaction of the film and audience, structure, content, authenticity, reality, social,

cultural and historical aspects. None of these formal elements are simple or uncontested. On the contrary they are the cores of film theoretical debates.

4.2 The Pioneers of Realism

Since the birth of cinema, film has impressed us by its seeming capacity to reproduce reality transparently, instantly and directly. Because of this realism, serious analyses of film led to debates and theories of realism in cinema. Among the pioneers or proponents of realism in film theory were the formalists Béla Balázs (1884-1949), Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and Rudolf Arnheim (b.1904), who defend cinema as an art form, which goes beyond realism. Among the realists were Siegfried Kracauer (1889-1966) and André Bazin (1918-1958) who appreciate cinema just because it provides an exact representation of reality. These traditional film theories were committed to a reflectionist view, that the text was to be assessed against some prior notion of the real.

Other film theorists developed their approach on realism in different areas and perspectives. Marc Ferro, perhaps the most notable social historian, acknowledges the importance of cinema as another source or means for analysing society.¹⁹⁵ Ferro remarks with a lot of exactness that “as a fundamental source for analysis of societies in the twentieth century no one doubts the value of films.”¹⁹⁶ In his other book *Cinema and History*, Ferro emphasises the above idea: “Every film has a value as a document, whatever its seeming nature. This is true even if it has been shot in the studio... every film posits a relation between its author, its subject matter and the viewer.”¹⁹⁷ Thus, Ferro strongly believes that films, even if they are feature films,

are to be considered as equally reliable sources as the written documents, and even in its fictional imaginative element, a film is still depicting an element of reality.

Hence, given their double archival existence, films have withstood two different types of historical investigations, namely that of social historians and film historians. The former use films for the direct visual evidence that they provide about social behaviour and existence, while the latter refer to films for the indirect testimony that feature films convey regarding prejudices, moods or cults. Ferro remarks that just as historians consider the relevance of oral traditions and folklore for the study of history and society, so should the feature film be considered as a relevant source for analysing periods of history and society.¹⁹⁸ Ferro rebuts the arguments that cinema is hard to understand, and that cinema is difficult to analyse, like dreams.¹⁹⁹ The argument that films are difficult to use in understanding societies is not relevant when one considers the frequent change of minds of many historians. He argues further that the works of historians like Voltaire, Polybius, Ernest Lavisse, Tacitus, or Mommsen were not written innocently, but to serve the state, the king, a class or a system that was in power, and adapted their sources or writings depending on the effective ideology required in their time.²⁰⁰ "Every film acts as a historical agent,"²⁰¹ is what Ferro believes in, and asks that if the historian's documents or their other unwritten material are accepted as reliable and true sources (despite the historians' shifting positions), then why should not cinema also be accepted as an historical source to analyse society?²⁰² What Ferro probably implies here is that those who consider films as subject to editing, montage or modification to serve some ideology, are the ones who believe that films are not reliable sources for analysing history or societies. Then again, what about the written or unwritten material as reliable

sources in history? After all, with exactly the same sources and situations at their disposal, historians have written various different accounts of one same event, say the Crusaders (1099 - 1270) or World War II (1939-1945).

Ferro claims that historians, without mentioning any particular names, may prefer to side with Jean-Luc Godard's (b.1930) opinion, when he legitimately queries the existence of the cinema "to camouflage reality from the masses?"²⁰³ But, regarding this argument, Ferro replies that just as films may be serving some state controlled ideology, to hide reality, he justly asks, "of what reality is cinema really the image?"²⁰⁴ He reiterates that films are fascinating, but also frightening to the institutions, for even when they are censored or exaggerated, they still bear witness of some truth, a "latent truth".²⁰⁵ Film uncovers secrets and shows the underside of a society and its blunders. This is best exemplified in Kuleshov's film *Dura Lex (By the Law, USSR, 1926)*, which is replete with latent content. Russia is hidden behind Canada and victims of repression behind Dennin's trial, one of the protagonists. Through close analysis and other forms of knowledge related to the film, one discovers an area which Ferro calls a "non-visible reality."²⁰⁶ In *Dura Lex*, Kuleshov shifted, consciously or unconsciously, a story by totally inverting its key point without saying it. According to Ferro seeing the "visible" through the "non-visible" is still an area of reality even though it is not conveyed directly or explicitly.²⁰⁷ Therefore, the film's images help to discover, define and demarcate reality.

4.3 Ferro's film analysis

Ferro's critical approach to film analysis is that we should not search in films simply the depiction of images, their "confirmation," or their "contradiction of another

knowledge,”²⁰⁸ but there are other points to be considered. According to Ferro we should regard images as they are, at the risk of using other forms of knowledge and understand them even better. Moreover, it is mostly important that “we need to study film and see it in relation to the world that produces it.”²⁰⁹ This means, film analysis should not be limited to the film itself, but it should integrate the film into the world that surrounds it and with which it necessarily communicates. Film is to be observed as a product, an image-object whose meanings are not only cinematographic. It is clearly understood that Ferro considers film as being relevant not only because of what it reveals, but also because of the socio-historical approach that it justifies. This is very true in Egyptian films like *al-Sūq al-Sawdā*’ (1945) by Kamal al-Telemsani and *al-^cAzīma* (1939) by Kamal Selim. In the former film we witness the hardships caused by the black market created as a result of World War II, and its concomitant shortages of food and other goods. Greedy merchants stocked necessities and sold them at exorbitant prices to the already over-burdened working class. This resulted in the creation of the new war - rich merchants, as a new social class. *Al-^cAzīma* exposes the backward social and economic conditions just before the Second World War. It depicts the people’s sufferings arising from unemployment, corruption and class divisions. Economic difficulties determine most of the characters’ actions and decisions. Both films are products of their socio-historical situations and in direct relation to their era and world.

Furthermore, Ferro explains that film analysis does not necessarily have to involve the totality of a work: it may be based on parts of the film or on similar series.²¹⁰ In order to understand the reality that the film represents, he recommends that in film analysis it is also important to study the film’s scenario, its setting, its language, and

the relations between a film and what is “extrafilmic,”²¹¹ by which he means the author of the script, the film producer, the audience and reviews. This is the ideal way to understand not only the work but also the reality that it depicts. Moreover, Ferro, like his contemporary film theorist Paul Monaco, agrees that film reality is not conveyed directly. Analogously, Ferro says that even writers are not fully proficient or competent in words or language, and he sees no difference with the cameramen, who involuntarily film many aspects of reality.²¹² The phenomenon of indirect reality is found even in newsreel images. For example, the camera was there to shoot the arrival of say President Sadat (d. 1981), but when assassins turned up in the crowds, the camera recorded not only the events but also the assassins’ behaviour.

The methodological problem, in Ferro’s opinion, is how to detect reality by means of fiction and the imaginary. The viewer should observe the significant signs that may characterise a film or a series of films and place them together with the film’s relationship vis-à-vis society: “Discovering them, seeing how they agree or disagree with ideology,” he notes, “helps to discover what is latent behind what is apparent, helps to see the non visible by means of the visible.”²¹³

4.4 The Representative Theory

Ferro states that cinema, albeit fictional films, is to be seen in relation to the imaginary and not to knowledge only: it should not be seen as an “expression of reality but as a representation of it.”²¹⁴ Although this is an interesting statement, he fails to explain further the clear distinction between cinema as an “expression of reality” and a “representation of it.” As this is an original argument, the researcher will attempt to define the difference between cinema as both an “expression” and a

“representation” of reality by taking a philosophical approach. There are various expression theories which offer different views about what counts as expressing feelings or emotion:

- (1) Expression as communication: this requires that the artist has the feelings that are expressed, when they are initially expressed and embodied in some external form, thereby transmitted to the perceiver directly;
- (2) Expression as intuition: an intuition is “in the mind” like any work of art. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) held this view, arguing that the unity of an intuition is established by feeling;²¹⁵
- (3) Expression as clarification: an artist starts out with vague feelings and expression is a process of coming to clarify, specify and understand them. In this way Croce’s opinion²¹⁶ is that expression is in the artist’s mind, as well as his view that we are all artists to the extent that we articulate, clarify and understand our emotions;
- (4) Expression as a property of the object: for an artwork to be an expression of emotion is to have a given structure or form. Thus, we can say that any form of art that is exhibited or expressed is a structure of feelings in general. The concept of expression is briefly illustrated in Figure 4.1 on the following page.

Many Egyptian films convey emotional hardships, and usually have a tragic ending. Expression as communication, intuition or clarification is expressed for example in *Du‘ā‘ al-Karwān* (1959), and *Bayna al-Aṭlāl* (1959). Notwithstanding the complexity of the theory of expression, it appears that the Egyptian cinema is based on both the expression and representation of reality.

The representational theory is an old concept and is derived from ancient Greece, better known as mimesis, the modelling of one thing on another, or the presenting of one thing by another, such as representing an image through the medium of a picture,

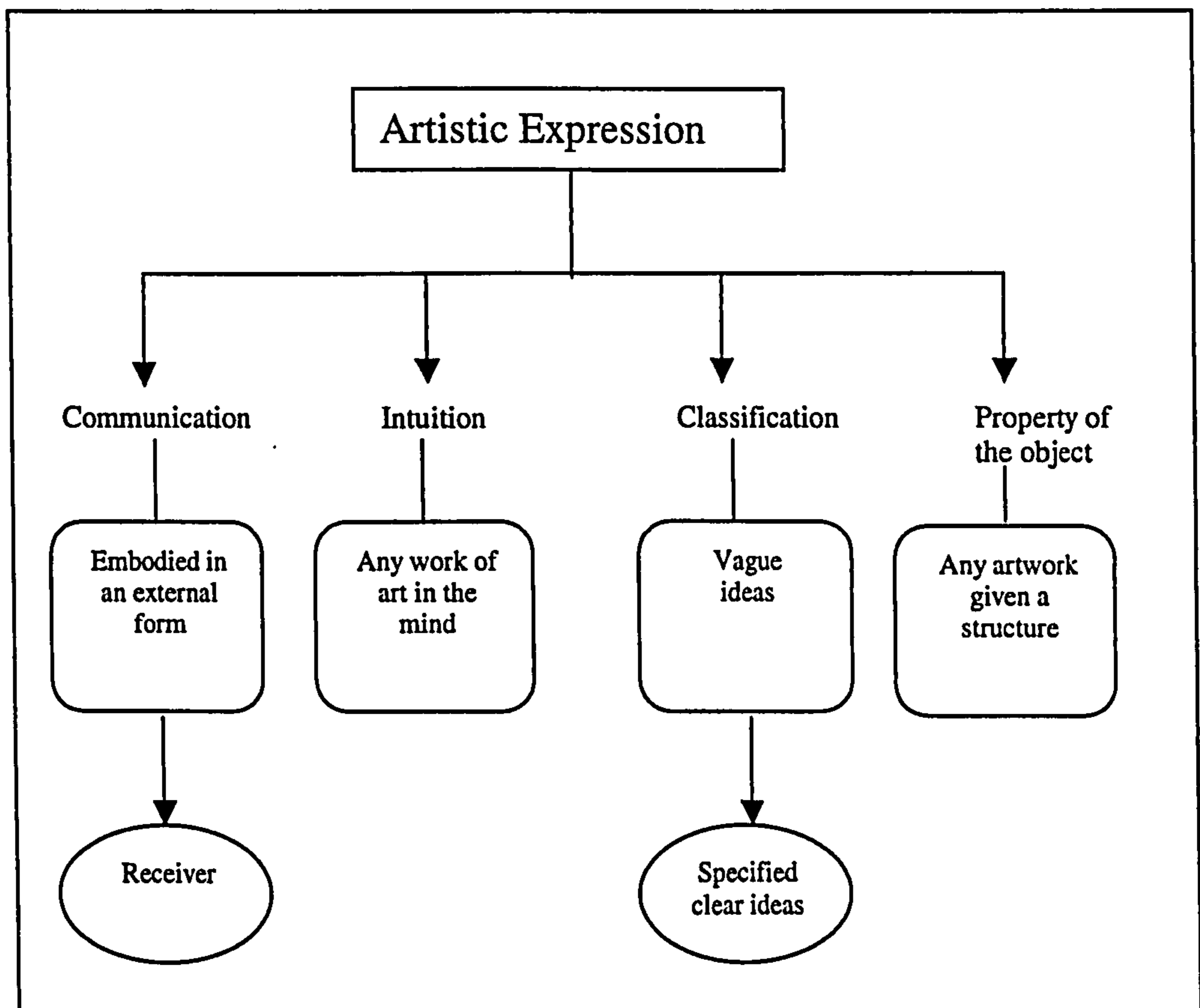


Figure 4.1 Artistic Expression

music or something else. Mimesis was formulated by Plato (428 - 347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384 - 322B.C.) in all types of arts including drama. Mimesis means imitation, in the sense of representation rather than of copying. Plato and Aristotle spoke of mimesis as the representation of nature. According to Plato, all artistic creation is a form of imitation: that which really exists in the “world of ideas”,²¹⁷ while Aristotle, speaking of tragedy, stressed the point that mimesis is an “imitation of an action”.²¹⁸ Thus, an artist, who has an intuition, by expertly selecting or

presenting his/her material, may purposefully or involuntarily seek to “imitate” the action of life. Since cinematic conventions were influenced by the theatre, the idea of representing the physical reality was also applied to cinema. In Egyptian cinema, the theory of representation was perpetuated by film-makers, since the latter depended heavily on Egyptian novels for thematic material and often for structure for their films. For example, the Egyptian nation and its problems were usually represented by a female character or a specific symbol as in *Tharthara fawq al-Nīl* (1968) or *Miramār* (1969).

In Ferro’s opinion on the importance of cinema as a relevant document of reality, he points out that because the beliefs and customs of written tradition have been “transposed” to images, little trust is placed in the testimony of fiction films, which appear similar to novels.²¹⁹ By comparing the film to some extent to writing, men of science, politicians or administrators, tend to accept, if pressed, the testimony of the documentary film but not the film itself as a document. For these learned people, the film works only with dreams, as though dreams were not part of reality, or as though the imagination was not one of the objectives of human activity. His argument is then focused on the important distinction between a documentary and a fiction film, giving more weight to the importance of fiction film than the documentary.²²⁰ His approach is that by analysing a fiction film, one is analysing society and its ideologies. Contrary to popular belief, fictional films offer (aside from any comparisons concerning their essence) a practical advantage over newsreels or documentaries. This is a result of the analysis of critical reactions to the study of the number of viewers who see them and to what we know concerning the conditions of production and socio-historic situations. Nonetheless, Ferro says that there are “grey

zones” in these two types of films, even where the nature of the social reality presented by fictional films or documentaries is not the same.²²¹ These two types of film coalesce and the distinction between them is less absolute than it might appear. As an example he mentions Jean Luc Godard’s film *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her, 1966), which is as much reportage as it is fiction. This is also true of a good number of the films of the English school of the 1970s.

Every fiction film has a value as a document, Ferro believes, whatever its seeming nature, even if it has been shot in the studio, or even if it neither narrates nor depicts,²²² it influences people’s imaginary universe, and by the imaginary universe it communicates. Every film assumes a relation between its author, its subject matter and the viewer. He acknowledges further the importance of cinema by indicating that if the not-said and the imaginary have as much “historical value as History”, then the fictional film “opens a royal way to psycho-social-historical zones never reached by the analysis of documents.”²²³ By this Ferro means that even a fiction film offers us a total cross-section of the society, and films like documents cannot be ignored. Fiction films are also to be regarded as important criteria for socio-historical analysis. This is one reason why the present researcher will be following Ferro’s theory for film study.

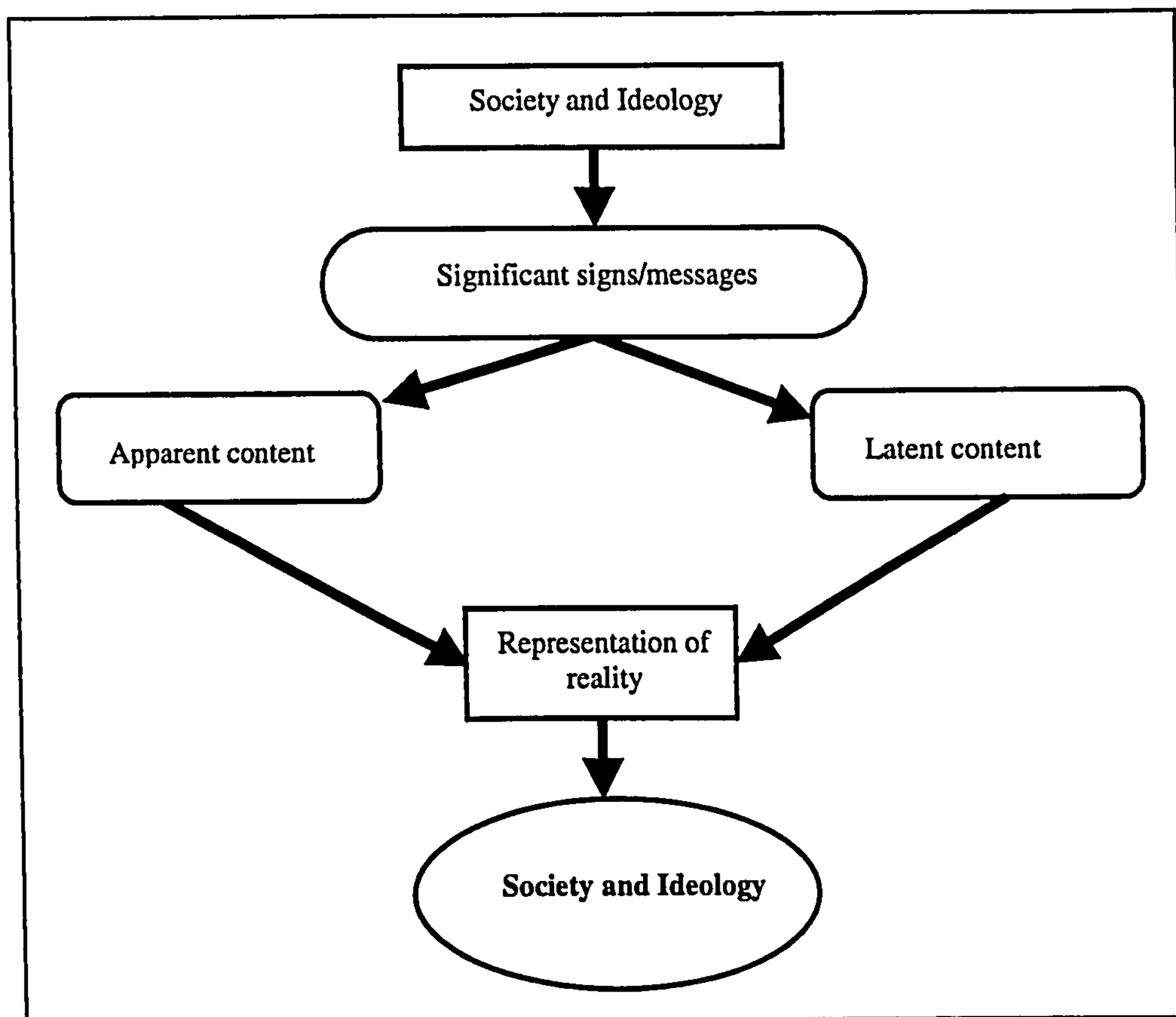


Figure 4.2 Ferro's representative theory of reality

In view of the fact that Ferro regards cinema as a “representation of reality” rather than an “expression of it”,²²⁴ the present researcher prefers to analyse cinema by combining Ferro’s separate notion into one. In this way, Ferro’s theory that cinema is both a representation of reality and an expression of it, without excluding one or the other, will be considered. See Figure 4.2 above.

Like Ferro, K.R.M. Short shares the opinion that fiction films can be utilised as a reliable source of history, and that historians can use films as evidence in their study of political, economic and social history.²²⁵ He admits that only recently have historians begun to accept films.²²⁶ Just as historians work as mouthpieces for their governments or institutions to manipulate history and events, Short notes, so does the

new medium of cinema, in addition to the printed material, governments, political parties or pressure groups.²²⁷ All of these attempt to shape public opinion and use its potential force either to secure or to retain political, social or economic power. The cinematic revolution brought with it the possibility of thought control. He regards the newsreel as a film source akin to history's traditional written and published sources. In as much as the political powers used to control the historical writings and production, the power elite even nowadays seeks to use the newsreel to achieve their own ends.²²⁸

At this point it is worth mentioning that in Egypt the film productions of the 1930s and 1940s were all private initiatives and private investment. Although King Faruq (r.1936-1952) had imposed harsh censorship measures, the monarchy never requested any film-maker to depict specific themes that would convey the monarchy's policies. Thus, the Egyptian films before Nasser's era were more autonomous. As Egypt lacked film script writers, so directors reverted to classic and famous novels by Naguib Maḥfouz, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1888 -1973) or Iḥsān ʿAbd al-Quddūs, whose novels deal with the true socio-political issues of the day. Sharaf al-Dīn says that in Egypt forty days after the 1952 revolution, its leader, Mohammed Naguib issued an official statement entitled "The art that we want" which spoke of the cinema as being an instrument for entertainment, education and culture.²²⁹ Mohammed Naguib stated that "art in Egypt before the revolution till the present time (1952) is still mirroring the image of an era that our revolution came to wipe out."²³⁰ Thus, the revolutionary regime's intention was to have the artists' embodying the mottoes of the revolution. Following this official statement and the appointment of a special government committee to oversee that the revolution's philosophy is conveyed, many film-makers started seeking to appease the 1952 regime, the very

first film shown being *Yasquṭ al-Istīṣmār*, 1952 (Down with Colonialism) of Hussein Sidki.

4.5 The Content Analysis Approach

For the historians or film researchers, Short suggests that, ideally, one should also look into the documents and shooting scripts of the directors, though these are usually not available to the public. In this respect, memoirs, contemporary documents, and shooting scripts are the sources of which film history is only partly made, whether they testify to the movie-making process before, during or after. Nonetheless, Short insists that the most meaningful document is the film itself, because whatever the director or producer intends the film to be, it is the final product which depicts the realisation of the creative effort.²³¹ Films cannot be considered as reliable sources for many reasons, with some because of cut out parts of the film due to censorship, or inadvertent damage, or the film is shortened to fit in a particular transmission schedule. Short recommends that in order to establish the “completeness” of a print, it is usual to check the running time as reported in the trade press of the various countries where the film was shown.²³² Film timing is one good method of finding out whether the film was shortened or censored.

By taking the content analysis approach, the historian or the film researcher will be looking at what characters in the film say and do and not particularly what the aesthetics and the semiotics of it represent. In effect, the message of the film or group of films is contained therefore not only in the dialogue and the skilful direction but also in the visual symbols that present themselves to the viewer. (See Figure 4.3 below).

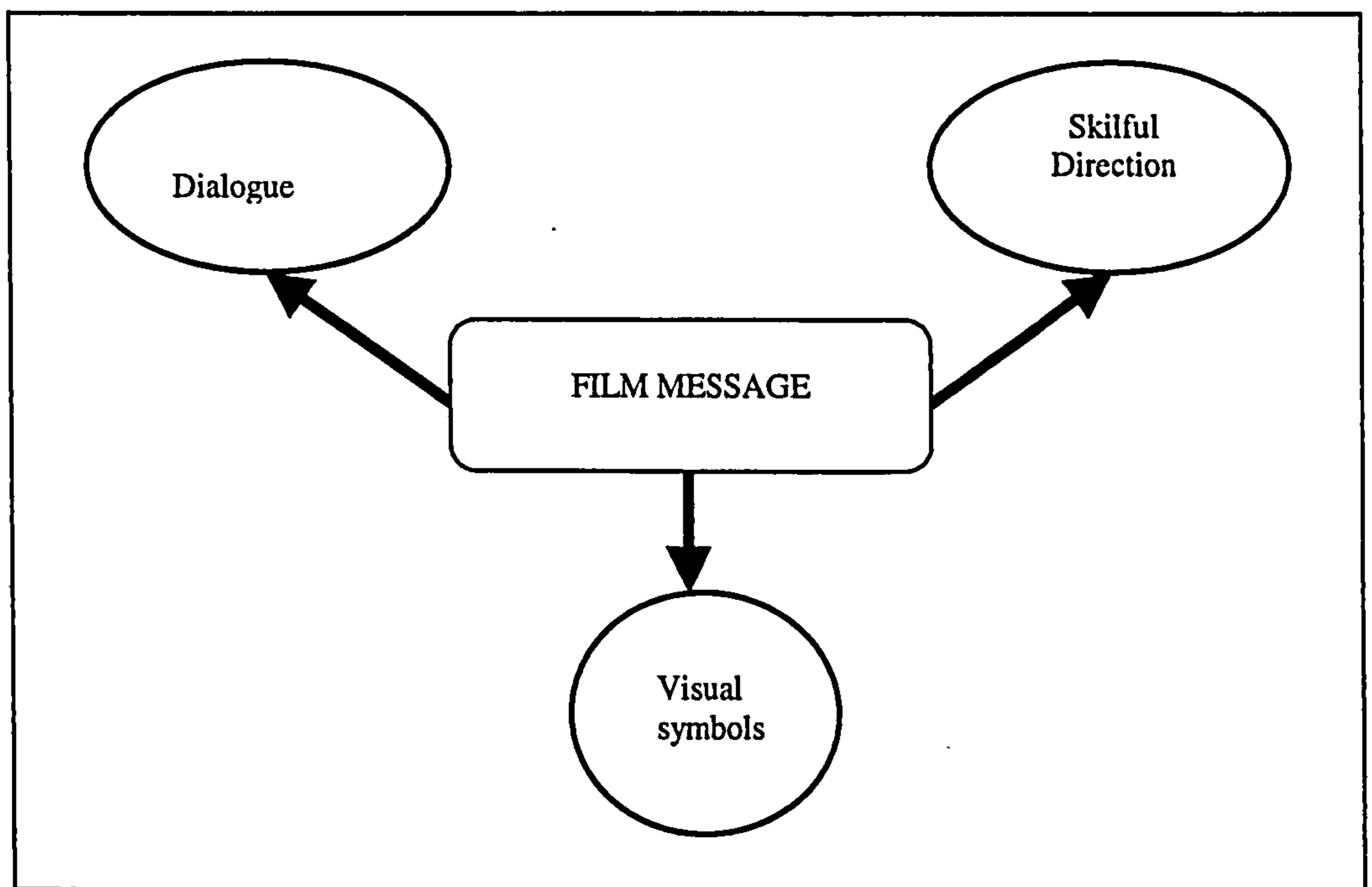


Figure 4.3 Film message in content analysis

Often these symbols are so deeply part of a particular social and historical context that the ‘foreign observer or viewer’ may be unaware of their emotive value. A film which stands out in this respect is *Since you Went Away* (USA, 1944) by Selznick, while in Egypt’s case one can mention the film *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn* (1966). Its director, Salah Abu Seyf, applies well the colour contrasts to stress the differences in the standard of living between the rich and the poor of the 1930s. Another visual symbol in action was the horns on the groom’s head in the hall where the wedding took place to the mistress of his boss.

After the film researcher has seen the film, studied its visual symbolism, its dialogue and the context, s/he begins to have some idea of what actually the film means. But this depends on how effectively one is able to study the period historically and culturally, that is the era the story of the film is made. The question is: how does the

film researcher gain a valid impression of the effect of the film on its audience? Naturally, the researcher is not a person of the period to the extent that s/he looks at the film with eyes unclouded by his/her knowledge of the events, which have taken place since the film's production. The answer to this is to turn to the film reviewers in the national and local press, where the film was distributed and if possible refer to the "clipping files" of the films in analysis. Short, however, is also aware that this approach is not very satisfactory since the film reviewers or critics are not typical representatives of the audience, but rather professional film watchers with all the prejudices of their caste.²³³ In view of Short's observation, the present researcher endeavoured to seek a feedback from some Egyptian viewers on certain films of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.²³⁴

Feature films, despite being almost fictitious in nature, still have the ability to reflect social, cultural and historical realities in a useful if not unique manner. Its corollary is that they have a significant impact upon their audiences either in confirming an existent value-system or in contributing to its modification with political, social or economic ramifications. This is found in Egyptian cinema mainly between the 1940s and the 1960s, with films like *Al-Ustādha Fāṭima* (1952), *Ana Ḥurra* (1959), and *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn* (1966).

In *Al-Ustādha Fāṭima* the director defends women's rights and emphasises that career women should be treated equally with their male counterparts, something which was quite rare at that time in Egyptian society. *Ana Ḥurra* concentrates on the struggle of women against the stifling constrictions of Egyptian social conventions.

The present researcher believes that the director of this film and the author of the same novel depicted their female protagonist, hence the Egyptian woman, not as she really was but as they wished to see her. In *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn* we find a gloomy picture of a changing society seriously suffering from moral and political corruption and desperately searching for values. This film also confirmed the severe poverty that Egyptian society was facing in the 1930s.

Paul Monaco believes that films are a mirror of history and society, though not of a clear silver finish;²³⁵ they have distortions, like funny glass mirrors. Studies on the social significance of films deal with one distorted image, i.e. a distortion of the time and place in which films are made; the distorted image is then reflected through a second distortion, our contemporary perceptions of the meanings of these films. These can be illuminated first by clarifying the notion of what is cinema. Monaco regards cinema as a popular art, which is produced by a group of people and considers films as collaborative creations.

Films are both a creative and an interpretative art. The thinking in them is 'surface', associative or non-linear thinking. Films transmit images in motion but different from that creation, which transmits data in the computer.²³⁶ In films, signs and images inform us directly about a society. We can observe what certain places looked like in a particular period, a good example is styles in dress, social manners and gestures; all this reveals topologies of a society that is its 'surface' values.

4.6 Fantasy and Reality

Feature films are fictionalised; they are 'fantasy'. Fiction and fantasy are not the same argues Monaco. Films create worlds, their styles are their worlds, he states, "motion pictures are realities which relate to other levels of reality."²³⁷ In order to understand the connections to other levels of reality it is important to explore the world the films themselves create, and the relationship of films to "historical reality" since it is hard to have a feature film reflecting contemporary political or economic issues. How to pursue the relationship of feature films to "historical reality" relies on how to conceive the composition of that reality that may be blended with fantasy. Monaco concludes that films offer an insight into the psychic state of the time and place in which they are created. One can assume, therefore, that psyche is a reality, even though its appearance in the world is displaced. Monaco's notion of combining fantasy with reality, that would lead to other forms of reality, relates very much to Youssef Chahine's scheme for his film making, that of injecting a measure of fantasy into a kernel of reality.²³⁸ To illustrate Monaco's approach to film reality, one can mention Tawfik Saleh's feature film *Darb al-Mahābīl*, 1955 (Alley of Fools). In this film, reality is not merely a show of what it is, but of the director's sophisticated analysis of why it is as such. The setting of the plot is in a poor neighbourhood of Cairo. Saleh presents his characters in a way that transcends the neighbourhood and talks about the whole nation. The poor neighbourhood is not just a background prop for the events or a folkloric presence; it is a manifestation of the relationship between people and place, at a specific historical moment. The moment when a winning lottery ticket is found, that is the liberation of Egypt. The situation before the lottery draw shows the relationships in the quarter as egalitarian and

strong, but after the lottery ticket worth a thousand Egyptian pounds is acquired, the contradictions of the neighbourhood emerge, conflicts of interests surface, and backwards relations of patronage become visible. The struggle for wealth reaches its climax when the neighbours fight each other and a father dies at the hands of his son. Fantasy here is illustrated by the dream of winning the lottery, a hope to become rich and free, which symbolises the liberation of Egypt. Reality is portrayed with the problems of the *ḥāra*, the neighbourhood of the quarter, which also symbolises the conflicts within the Egyptian society.

Another film which depicts socio-historical reality in a fictitious manner is *Al-Mutamarridūn*, 1968 (The Rebels) again by Tawfik Saleh. The plot evolves in a sanatorium where rebellion and revolt are the main themes in the story with its patients being the protagonists. They revolt against the institution's administration and form an alternative administration, which fails owing to lack of experience and know-how. The old administration returns with the support of the police. The director is implying that the patients of the sanatorium, a microcosm of the nation, have to come up with an alternative leadership among themselves and cannot rely on outside leadership, because it will oppress them, referring to the British occupation (1882 - 1956) of Egypt. Despite the censorship and controversy that surrounded this film, it is a powerful film that attempted to analyse the political and social conditions of Egypt before and after the 1952 revolution.

For Monaco a motion picture creates what film aestheticists often call "off-screen space".²³⁹ The major problem is the "off-screen" meanings. When regarding films as objects, it is necessary to recognise that they bear social meaning only as a group.

To a certain degree films are stereotyped by genres and the genres do not strive toward originality. The purpose of each genre film is to reiterate and elaborate a point over and over again, but at the expense of other relevant under represented issues. Film audiences have general concepts of the different genres. When it comes to “worlds” of reality they cannot be understood in an hour or two; symbols leading toward the unknown emerge through a body of repetitious expressions and plots. It is important to look at feature films through their symbols. That symbolism refers to time, nature, life and death, and these themes are found in all the arts including the popular arts. In Monaco’s words: “it is through symbols that psychic energy and society are connected; symbolic functions relate to movie content only peripherally”.²⁴⁰ One could say then that films can be studied as objects or popular art that symbolise the transformation of collective psychic energy within themselves. For example, modern socialism in Egypt is mythic, but this does not mean it is unreal. Its reality, while quantifiable, is of immense power. One fact needs to be remembered, namely that in post-Nasser era, themes of socialism became extremely popular. Among the Egyptian films that are consistent with this pattern we find *Nasser '56* (1994), directed by Muhammad Fadil, which deals with the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, the Suez war and Nasser’s political victory; or Henry Barakat’s *Fī Baytina Rajul*, 1961 (A Man in our House), which shows the nationalist sentiments of an Egyptian middle-class family when they accept to hide a young man from the resistance.

Monaco concludes ²⁴¹ his arguments by saying that the historical realities realised in any period ensue on the ways in which the flow of psychic energy is symbolically transformed into images of “collective consciousness”. Thus films portray the

“collective consciousness” at a given period through symbols. In other words the reality of films is not conveyed directly.

4.7 The Communication Theory

The conventions of film can be described as consistent patterns employed by film-makers to communicate meaning to audience. By conventions John Carey means any element in the control of film-makers such as the position of the camera, editing techniques, sets, plot and structure.²⁴² His discussion attempts to deal with such questions as to how do audiences know what is going on when they watch a film and where does meaning come from; this is known as the ‘communication theory.’²⁴³ Carey lists two distinct points of views about this theory: one belief is that film has innate universal properties that dictate the structure of conventions, and the other is that film conventions are largely created by film-makers (as a group, production team) over time and then learned by audiences. The heart of the issue whether film-makers create or discover or make use of conventions can be correlated for instance to David Wark Griffith’s (1875-1948) technique of parallel montage, a technique to communicate that two simultaneous actions are occurring in different places. One can argue that he discovered a characteristic innately related to the film medium, or, alternately, that he created a convention that audiences had to learn. Carey’s notion of film meaning is succinctly shown in Figure 4.4 infra.²⁴⁴

Similar to Carey’s approach to film meaning, Sol Worth²⁴⁵ argues that meaning is rooted in social-communication processes and the relationships between those who use images to convey meaning and those who view and interpret those images. From this point of view, film-makers may be said to create cinematic conventions, which

audiences learn. Both, however, share a body of knowledge and experiences based upon other films, or paintings, and visual elements in everyday life, as well as conventions rooted in the novel, theatre and many other media. This combination of collective knowledge and experiences provides the core material and also sets limits upon the conventions that are likely to emerge in a given period. Within this perspective one must understand audiences as well as film-makers to account fully for film conventions and their meanings. In addition, Sol Worth believes that conventions change, viewers vary and multiple interpretations of a convention are possible.

Summing up, film conventions according to Carey, may represent: (a) artistic styles that can be looked at but not fully comprehended; (b) usage from other genres like theatre or novel; (c) a system of rules determined by the visual reality to which viewers innately respond; (d) mechanisms created by film-makers and learned by audiences depending on their cultural and social knowledge that may change over time. To these, one can add that visual conventions are social pacts negotiated between those who create communications and those who receive them. These conventions can be consistent patterns at a given point in time, but with changes over space and time. Carey defines this arrangement as "temporal and spatial transitions".²⁴⁶ In *Planet of the Apes* (USA, 1968) directed by Franklin J. Schaffner, the camera pans up to the sun during a scene. There is a cut to another shot of the sun from a different angle. The camera pans down to another scene at another point in time and space. In both scenes the visual object (the sun) and the camera movement serve a role in the ongoing action. They also communicate additional meaning by virtue of their structural relation to each other. Film-makers and

audiences know that this pattern signals a “temporal-spatial transition”. However, one can indicate that film conventions can also be attached to or associated with certain genres of film, Westerns, musicals or comedies for example. These film conventions, which the present researcher prefers to call, repeated formulas or moulds, are important for film producers and directors for success and to attract large audiences. As has been discussed earlier, certain conventions will change over many generations and in different national cinemas. Film-makers will bring about improvements, innovations and variety within the conventions of genres, in order to satisfy new tastes and trends and respond to social changes and expectations.

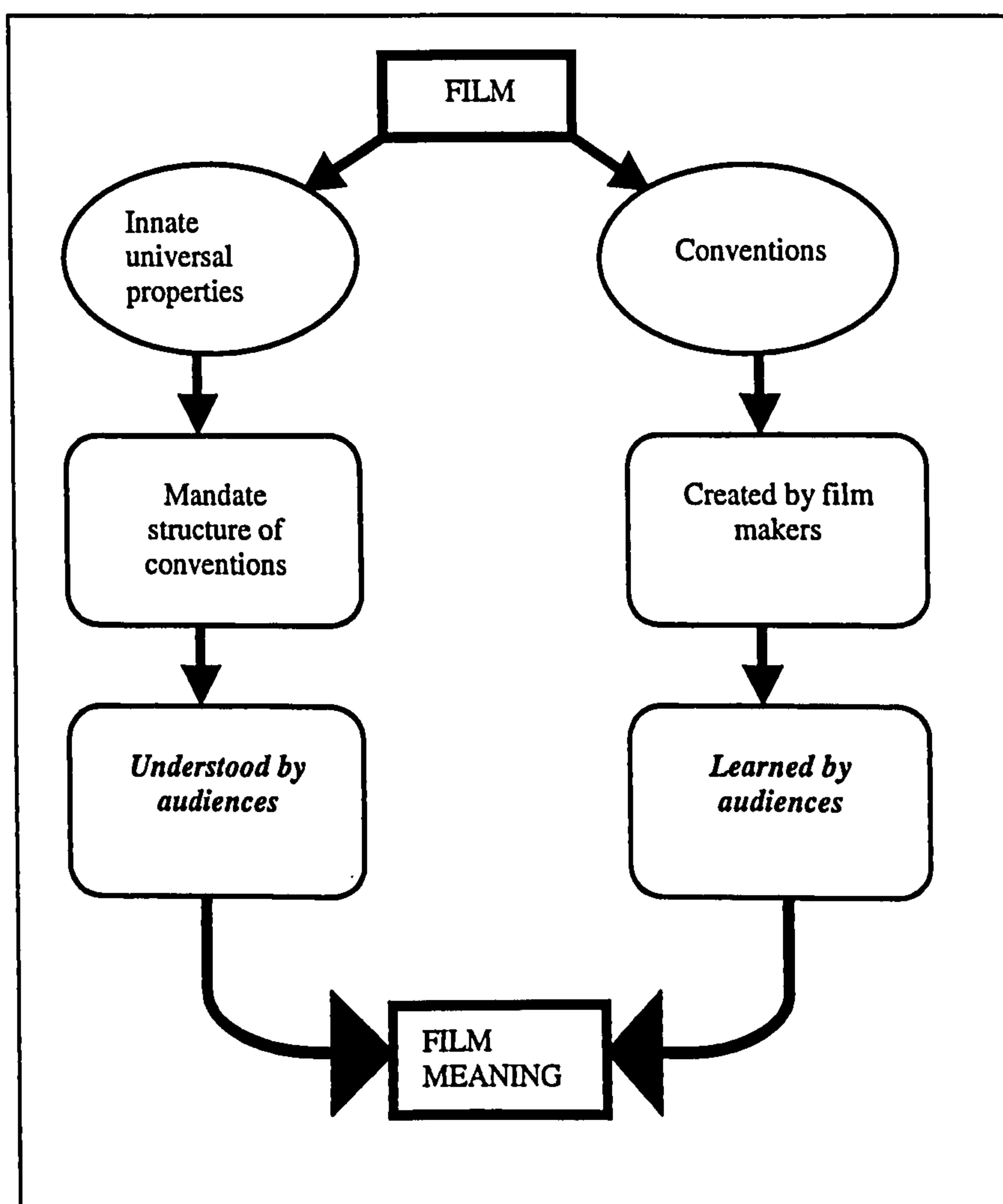


Figure 4.4 Film conventions and their meaning

As regards Egyptian films produced between the 1940s and the 1960s, they relied on genres from the novels and the theatre especially the films of the 1920s and early 1930s as already explained in Chapter One.²⁴⁷ Egyptian comedy and farce in films relied on and developed from the comedy theatre. *Al-Baḥr Biyidḥaq līh?* 1928 (Why Does the Sea Laugh?), directed by Istephan Rosti and starring Amin Atallah, the well-known theatre comedian, had three short comedy sketches. Between the three different sketches, Rosti applied the fade-in and fade-out technique to indicate that another sketch is appearing, a method to which the audience would instantly respond, since they were already accustomed to it from the theatre between the change of the scenes. In *Būr Saʿīd*, 1957 (Port Said), a war film genre based on the Suez Canal, the director Izz al-Din Zulfikar makes use of the collage formula whereby he mixes newsreel footage, fictional scenes and animation to make his film more realistic.

A widely accepted opinion is that those who make films share a large body of knowledge and experiences with those who watch them. Most shared experiences, however, are part of the social world: speeches by politicians, family dinners, cultural and national celebrations, and gossip among friends. Clearly, these shared experiences and the knowledge that flows from them are not homogeneous for all film-makers, or for all members of all audiences, because of different cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, these fluid and variable schemata, together with all of the elements available in the film medium, provide components for the construction of meaning in a film convention. Like Ferro, Carey²⁴⁸ shares the idea that generally it is not the whole presentation of the film which is a true and exact correspondence to something in the real world, but it is a construction that may contain some elements from the real world. These elements however, are arranged according to patterns

that are related to film conventions. The patterning transforms them and gives them meaning in a film context. When people watch films, they can treat what they see as part of the real world and interpret it accordingly. It might appear chaotic if meanings in a film were open to broad interpretations, this depending on each viewer's real-life experiences. For example, a Vietnam War veteran might give a different meaning to the Russian roulette scene in *The Deer Hunter* (USA, 1977) than the one that was intended by its director Michael Cimino. Film conventions are a powerful means of transforming elements from real-life and make them part of the film world. Carey indicates that audiences would learn to understand and employ the film conventions and limit the range of film interpretations by watching other genres of films that would have made use of the same conventions. These learned processes of limited film interpretation are defined by Carey as "signal" and "referent".²⁴⁹ To convey a meaning, a film director must use a "signal" for example, a wipe which is a transition between shots where a line passes across the screen, gradually eliminating the first shot and replacing it with the next, and a "referent," which guides viewers where to go in their brain of stored knowledge about films to understand its meaning. Therefore, film-makers must communicate with their audience through film conventions, which are various, such as camera angles, lighting, sound, specific music, methods of continuity, shooting techniques, film genres etc., but in a way that they are adhering to the viewers' consistent expectations for the era and place when the film was made. One can conclude that according to Carey, world reality is present in the film world, but it is not clear-cut since the viewers have to become familiarised with the conventions implied. For example in *Saving Private Ryan* (USA, 1998), Spielberg not only succeeds in reproducing the most violent and atrocious images of war, but he also made use of the collage, the hand-held camera,

mostly used in documentaries, and aural sound, among other techniques to give the viewers the most realistic heart-wrenching scenes of war. Spielberg's use of graphic match realism is a sobering observation that war is hell. His intention was not to present a history lesson of the D-Day invasion (6 June 1944) at Normandy, but to show us visually and explicitly what war is really like. In *Back to the Future Part I* (USA, 1985) the director Robert Zemeckis came up with an exuberant invention: the flash forward formula, applied in this film and its sequels to alter the plot and the events that would affect the present life situations. The aim was to rewrite history and improve the present social conditions of Marty McFly and his suburban multicultural neighbourhood, a microcosm of the American society.

In the Egyptian film *Du'ā' al-Karwān* (1959), Henry Barakat not only applies certain film conventions to communicate meaning to the audience to understand the film, but also borrows codes from the novel style. The tragic events of the female characters in the filmic representation by the director are fairly close in content to the novel. In the novel, events and characters are portrayed by the younger sister Amna, the narrator-protagonist. In the film, her voice-over performs the same function as it comments on the course of events and on her own feelings throughout. This voice-over technique was a very popular cinematic convention during the 1950s. In both the film and the novel, Amna recounts her story in flashback. Youssef Chahine's adaptation of al-Sharqāwī's novel *Al-Ard*, 1969 (The Earth) has been praised as one of the best literary adaptations to reach the screen,²⁵⁰ and acclaimed for combining the many episodes of the novel into a compact and cohesive film.²⁵¹ Both the novel and the film adaptation were produced at two different crises in Egyptian history. The novel was written in 1953; a year after the Nasser revolution, and Chahine's film

was released two years after the defeat of 1967. The film reflects the different historical and ideological context within which it was produced. Chahine, like al-Sharqāwī, aimed at a realistic, rather than a romantic, portrayal of the Egyptian village. Like the Italian neo-realist technique, Chahine also used real locations that would provide an authenticity of the setting, and he used local extras in the film to heighten the realism of the village characters.²⁵² Among the film conventions applied by Chahine to emphasise the reality of the context and the environment we see that the characters cross the screen at a tangent and not from right to left or vice versa. The director also avoids the use of voices or sounds emanating from outside the frame. He shows a concern for the natural sounds of life: background noise can be heard like the hustle bustle of the open market place, the din of the railway station where two characters have to raise their voices to be heard. Chahine avoids the use of montage sequences and keeps to natural time within sequences. The *mis-en-scène* of group scenes shows figures crowding the foreground and so the actors sometimes have to lean forward to be seen by the camera. Use of deep focus puts the characters in their social context. Chahine's camera does not avoid or go around obstacles, but collides into them. The camera is set at the characters' eye-line, as though it were another participant in the scene. Teshame Gabriel justly notes, "films that hide the marks of production are associated with the ideology of presenting film as reality."²⁵³ *Lā Anām* (1956) was Salah Abu Seyf's first colour film, and his first adaptation of Iḥsan 'Abd al-Quddus' novel. It was one film that excelled in communicating meaning to audience by using cinematic skills to highlight certain dramatic aspects. For example, the scene where the husband confronts his new young wife over allegations of her adultery in the presence of his own daughter who had purposely fabricated these allegations, shows Abu Seyf's awareness of the use of colour

together with sharp cutting. The director placed the husband on the top of the staircase, the wife in the middle and the daughter at the bottom. Then, as the husband shouts three angry words, each word accompanies a different shot. Three words and three consecutive shots: the husband, the wife, then the daughter from a high angle with the colour of the red carpet surrounding her. The sharp cutting with three shouts, ending with the colour red, is dynamic and succinctly established the relationship between the three characters and their attitudes towards each other.

4.8 Analogy and Interpretation of Film-meaning

Paul Messaris relates a story quoted from Béla Balázs about an English colonial officer, who had lived for many years in countries cut off from Western technological developments in the first quarter of the twentieth century, one of which was films.²⁵⁴ Although he had read about them in press, the English officer had never seen one. When he returned to his homeland he went to see a film during which he struggled to follow the events, while some children sitting next to him had no trouble at all in following and understanding the story.²⁵⁵ This story and many others like it, have been used to prove that unless the audience is exposed to film conventions and codes, the audience would not be in a position to understand and interpret the film. Messaris contends that film content can be interpreted by “analogy” and this through “identification of what the film represents.”²⁵⁶ Film interpretation, therefore, depends on human perception, which does not rely on completeness of available visual information.

4.9 The Language and Culture of the Image

Graeme Turner in the introduction of his book *Film as Social Practice*²⁵⁷ underlines the reason to examine films as a “source of pleasure” and “significance” in Western culture. The main topics that Turner analyses are the relations between the image and the viewer, the industry and the audience, narrative and culture, and form and ideology. Turner argues that film is not a language but the film generates its meanings through systems (e.g. cinematography), which work like languages. Images, as well as words, carry connotations. A filmed image of a man will have a denotable dimension, it will refer to the mental concept of ‘man’. But images are culturally enhanced; the camera angle employed, the man’s position within the frame, the use of lighting to highlight certain aspects, any effect achieved by colour or contrasts etc. would all have the potential for social meaning. For instance in *Du‘ā’ al-Karwān* (1959), during each desolate journey, the camera emphasises the dark silhouettes of the three lonely women as they hastily trudge across the high hills, a visual technique, which magnifies the force of their exile and isolation. When we deal with images it is especially apparent that we are not only dealing with the object or the concept that they represent, but we are also dealing with “the way in which they are represented.” Thus, there is a ‘language’ for visual representation too, sets of codes and conventions understood by the audience to make sense of what they see.

4.10 Binary-Opposition Theory

Turner believes²⁵⁸ that feature films are narratives because they have stories to tell. Even films based on true events will fictionalise them in order to produce drama and be more entertaining. Films may differ from other kinds of narrative in the medium

used, however, they share with literary fiction the basic structure and functions of narrative. Some societies may have no equivalent to the novel, but all societies tell stories in different forms, such as myths, legends, ballads, epics, dance, drama or folk-tales. It seems that story telling is part of our cultural experience. It is clear that the world “comes to us” in the shape of stories. This is not to say that all our stories explain the world. Rather, a story provides us with an easy, unconscious and involving way of constructing our world; narrative can be described as a means of “making sense” of our social world, and sharing that ‘sense’ with others. Its universality, according to Turner, underlines its intrinsic place in human communication. He lists two possibilities regarding the universality and the function of the narrative: (i) narrative, like language, might be a property of the human mind; (ii) narrative might serve an essential social function, which makes it indispensable to human communications.²⁵⁹

To sustain the above arguments and the importance of the narrative, Turner referred extensively to Lévi-Strauss’s theories of the relationship between myth, legends and narratives. In 1955, Lévi-Strauss, the French anthropologist, tried to examine the nature of myths and legends in primitive and ancient cultures so as to understand the structures of meaning and whether this significance varied from one culture to another.²⁶⁰ He discovered common structures in myth that crossed cultural frontiers. One common aspect which he discerned in all cultures and ancient narratives was the function they served for the society, mainly the understanding of man and the environment.²⁶¹ He later suggested that one of the ways in which humans perceive the world is through “binary oppositions”, a two-term conflict, that is dividing it into sets of mutually exclusive categories: land and sea, man and woman, good and

bad.²⁶² These binary opposites are one way of determining meaning in narratives. Meaning is a product of the construction of differences and similarities. In most narratives we see a systematic pattern of opposites in the stories. See Figure 4.5 below:

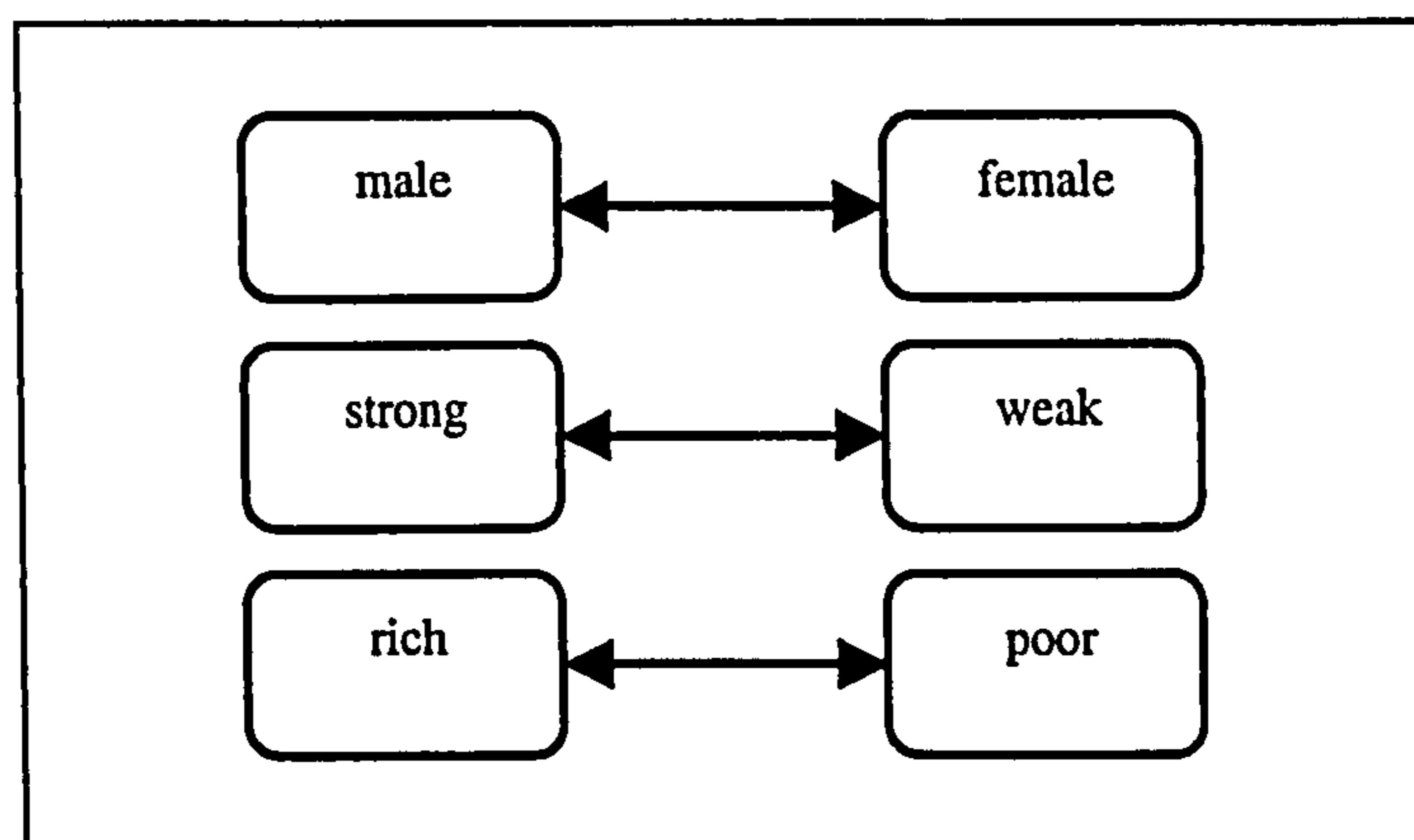


Figure 4.5 Binary opposites

In Egyptian films, for instance, the character of Layla is the opposite of Jamīla in the film *Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ* (1963) where the former is strong and determined while the latter is weak and complacent. In *Al-Zawja al-Thāniya* (1967) we find two sets of binary opposites in the same two protagonists: Fāṭima who is a poor but a very rational peasant, and ʿUthmān, the rich and emotional village mayor. We come across two other contradictory characters in *Al-Liṣṣ wa al-Kilāb* (1962) where Shaykh ʿAlī, the mentor at the mosque, is an extremely pious character, while Raʿūf ʿAlwān is a rich journalist devoted to Marxist revolutionary doctrine, thus, in this film we see religion as opposed to secularism. But, meaning in film is not elicited solely by identifying the binary opposites; one should also take into consideration the story or the narrative itself.

4.11 The Narrative as a Social Product

According to Turner,²⁶³ at the basic level, film narratives are viewed within a social context. From the social context, connections can be implied between a film and various social movements, Superman and Reaganism,²⁶⁴ for example. We need to be aware, though, that the myths, beliefs, and practices preferred by a culture or group of cultures will find their way into those cultures' narratives, where they can be reinforced, criticised, or simply reproduced in novels or films. It is possible to understand or recognise social change through shifts in thematic or formal trends in narrative over time. In the nineteenth century English novel, narrative closure was often provided through the use of marriage, as a mechanism, which symbolised the education of the characters and the final achievement of their lives. Usually, this marriage indicated that all the problems within the relationship were solved. That all stories end up by the marriage theme does not necessarily reflect the social attitudes of the era, though marriage was ideologically central in Victorian times and up to the 1950s. As we know today, Western films are unlikely to use marriage as an uncomplicated mechanism for closure, since the meaning of marriage, and thus its ability to happily close off a narrative, has been altered by shifts in traditional attitudes to gender relations and in the ideologies which support them. This shift is seen for example in the film *Desperately Seeking Susan* (USA, 1985, by Susan Seidelman), which is a departure from the customary resolutions of its classic precursors. As for the Egyptian cinema, one finds that the concept of marriage as a solution to problems was equally used with films that do not offer marriage as a solution to the social problems; for example *Bayna al-Aṣṣlāl* (1959), *Al-Ustādha Fāṭima* (1952), and *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn* (1966) project the marriage theme as a

solution to the social and emotional problems of the film characters. On the other hand *Du'ā' al-Karwān*, *Bidāya wa Nihāya*, and *Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ* do not end with the marriage theme as a solution to their characters' numerous social problems. Nonetheless, both themes depict the reality in Egypt, especially during the era in which they were produced. These films show a transitional phase in the Egyptian ideology of marriage, as a closure of the narrative and as a solution of their problems.

From the above sections, one can surmise that from the narrative that society produces, there is social influence on film, an influence which is most active in establishing the sets of codes and conventions which make communication possible. At the simplest level viewers understand the societies portrayed in films through their experience of their own society. As we watch a film and understand it, we look at gestures, listen to accents, or scan a style of dress, in order to place characters within a particular class, or subculture, for instance. And if the gestures, accents and styles are not those of our society we understand them through our experience of them in other films, or by way of making analogies between the film's society and our own. Turner believes²⁶⁵ that all of these "clues" are "codes" that is, methods by which signs are arranged and accepted within a culture. These narrative events become "coded" in film. Coding communication and representation of events with binary opposites, as explained earlier, are a complex and conscious system best defined as "conventions" by Turner. Like Carey, Turner²⁶⁶ is of the opinion that conventions are like codes, systems which we all agree to use, even if they are imported from other cultures. In the cinema, we have learned to use a wide range of conventions, which organise the film and which greatly assist the film-maker and

his/her attempt to communicate. For example, it is conventional for us to accept ellipsis in film, the omission of non-essential parts of the story in order to avoid matching screen with real time. So, when a character rides off in an aeroplane in one shot, and in the next has arrived at his/her destination, we understand that this is a convention, a shortcut method for getting a character from A to B without wasting screen time. Turner argues²⁶⁷ that it is conventional that films are only realistic within certain unspoken limits; they do not try to imitate the full complexity of life if this would hold up the narrative unnecessarily. When we talk of popular films as 'realistic', then we do not necessarily mean they are like 'real life'; we mean that we have, in a sense, agreed to respond to their codes and conventions, their established formulas of narration, as if they were like real life. Thus, the viewer learns to distinguish between actual reality and a depiction of reality.

4.12 The Film Reality

Hugh Gray²⁶⁸ defines film reality as an element of reproduction or investigation depending on its correspondence to truth. The old significance of truth was a relationship of equality or as Gray says "adequation", between the mind and the world outside. As regards the question of whose truth is the film representing, Gray believes that it is a matter of choice, which entails subjectivity, perception and interpretation. He maintains that in feature films there is reality but it is not in the same sense, it does not have the same reconstruction, as it were. Gray says that "the artist looks at the world outside, and according to his own vision, according to his own interpretation, according to what it means to him, he reproduces it".²⁶⁹ Furthermore, for Gray "film reality" means the putting of the camera in front of life. He sees a strong parallel between dramatic reality and film reality. The reality of the

theatre is intense and near to the soul of man; although there is a stage, and an artificial set up, one still arrives at the ultimate truths of life.²⁷⁰ In the same measure one confuses oneself too much by insisting on the mechanical processes that are involved in the cinema, in the camera that produces these true-to-life films. There is a parallel with plays and films, in the sense that both are attempts to get at the truth, irrespective of which aid or mechanism (the stage or the camera) one uses, as long as there is a “common denominator” between the film-maker and the audience.²⁷¹ The “common denominator” can be the shared knowledge, conventions, ideologies, experiences, political and socio-historical events that a given society goes through.

Film viewers would argue that a particular film was a great film, because it captured reality. But what is reality in film? Granted for a moment that there is a reality to be captured, ‘war is hell’ for example, the attempt to capture it may or may not be based on the philosophy of realism. In *The Burmese Harp* (USA, 1956, directed by Kon Ichikawa) we hardly see any combat, but in *Saving Private Ryan* (USA, 1998, by Stephen Spielberg) we see a great deal of gruesome scenes. Both films strive to capture the reality of the experience of war, the first indirectly, the other by direct realism. In feature films, to convey that war is hell, it is not necessary to simulate war as hell. Another alternative would be to ‘show it as it was’, to show actual occurrences, unedited newsreels are of this kind. But this is referred to as naturalism and not realism. Realism does not simply consist in a recording and observing camera. As Sergei Eisenstein²⁷² noticed by editing, reality could be selected and emphasised or “overtone”. The function of selection and emphasis is to reproduce the feeling of the moment and to reveal what is not visually apparent. For example the overthrow of established institutions could be shown by the collapse of statues

and a shot of a church upside down. As the film director edits and changes the film footage or script s/he would still be representing, magnifying, criticising or even aspiring to a true-to-life situation.

But, the so-called 'real world' is infinitely large and varied and so the problem of reproduction becomes: 'which parts of it to select as sufficient to convey it all?' Obviously none is, thus it can never be fully conveyed. Marc Ferro's²⁷³ overall idea that film is a unique historical document that records events as they actually happened has to be qualified by the realisation that film is a document, like any other, which captures only an aspect of an event, not the whole event or the whole truth. That is why truth in a feature film is not necessarily the whole film, while its reality may not always lie on the surface layer.

Another issue in film content and reality is the social content and structure of what is seen on the screen. Questions arise: is there a relationship between the societies that produce films and the societies created in films? And do films represent accurately or inaccurately the societies they spring from? If we acknowledge the interplay between cinema and society, we can say that films serve, portray or attack the socio-historical conditions. A film-maker is forming a world fused from elements in the so-called real world as s/he sees it and the selection and photographing of such parts of it as s/he chooses. That any creator presents people and society as s/he sees them and that her/his vision will almost certainly be shared by some party or group in the society, cannot be disputed. A film-maker would produce a microcosm of the socio-culture that s/he is familiar with. To a certain extent the world of cinema must be connected with the self-images or aspirations of a group. An occidental audience

may take a long time to come to terms with the social norms of say Asian or Arab films, since it has no background to which to anchor to.

In our case we shall be analysing Egyptian cinema of a certain era, which was based on popular novels adapted for the screen. Thus, in such a situation, it would be interesting to find out whom from the novelist or the film director was reproducing reality with more accuracy. To explore this view it will be necessary for us to look in detail at the relationship between a film and what it shows, and at the notion of reality itself in a given time and place.

The next aspect we need to look into is the reality behind the realism. When we demand that the film be realistic, there is a hidden transitive: realistic relative to what? other films, other media, or to factual reality itself? Which aspect of reality? The reality of the physical surface; the reality of emotion; the reality of the events and occurrences? And which of these is more realistic or true? In countries where a political ideology is demanded, the problem is solved as the state would envisage the projection of its ideology and usually censorship is implemented. For those of us not of the same belief, the problem is harder to resolve and criteria are less easy to come by. Since as viewers, we would have to filter more deeply and objectively what we see on the screen. Do we mean by reality anything that "really" is in front of a camera? Not quite. The simulation of a scene in a film studio also stands in front of the camera. On one hand, the simulated scene is a representation of the reality from the physical world, and on the other hand it is completely fake and unreal because it is not the actual street or house. So, the way things look is not reality, and when we concern ourselves with realism in cinema we must not be misled by the physical

surface of things as Gray recommends²⁷⁴. This also applies to documentaries and newsreel shots of, for example, political campaigns, wars, interviews, or real cities, as these are not necessarily going to yield a realistic film. They may be edited with certain music or with a tendentious commentary and the final result may be in one case a satire, in another, propaganda. The concept of reality is difficult to handle. Even the raw footage, which may capture the reality of the physical surface, fails to depict the reality of the feeling tones of things. What is truth and real is something for us to judge. Reality can mean to be: what the state dictates, part of the physical world, what is hidden behind appearances, a world suggested but not shown, genuine as opposed to fake and so on.

From the theoretical approaches that have been tackled so far, one realises that the process of reading a film is complex, but the complexity lies in the attempt to understand the process, rather than to employ it. It is usually the formal analysis of a film that appears to be the most arcane and difficult: the extraction of key elements of the narrative or visual style that is so much a staple of film studies' texts and conventions. For the purpose of this research, Ferro's theory will be applied namely: (a) film content analysis, (b) socio-historical background, combined with the present researcher's applied thesis as outlined below.

4.13 Statement of Thesis

This qualitative study intends to show that the plight of the Egyptian woman as conveyed on the screen, was a representation of the socio-historical reality of the late 1940s to the 1960s. The gender based representational strategies in Egyptian films, and how these connect to the socio-historical conditions of the specific era will also

be identified. The representation of the woman in Egyptian popular films within her socio-historical context will be analysed together with the proposed textual variation approach.

4.14 Textual Variation Theory

This theory is based on the fact that the majority of the Egyptian popular films of the 1940s to the 1960s, the period in focus, were based on Egyptian contemporary novels, and that to understand the filmic realities of gender representation, the novels as a source of adaptation must be examined too. Textual variation looks out for the ways in which the film director varies or modifies the original text (novel) when it is adapted for the screen. When comparing the film to the novel, the textual variation would examine in particular the ideological shifts, the changes to the social existent values, if any, as well as the major plot modifications, especially as these are played out around the representation and narrative centrality of female characters. An attempt would also be partly made to show how such 'variations' might be connected to changing values about tradition, identity and modernity as these are grounded in gender issues. Figure 4.6 below endeavours to succinctly illustrate this theory.

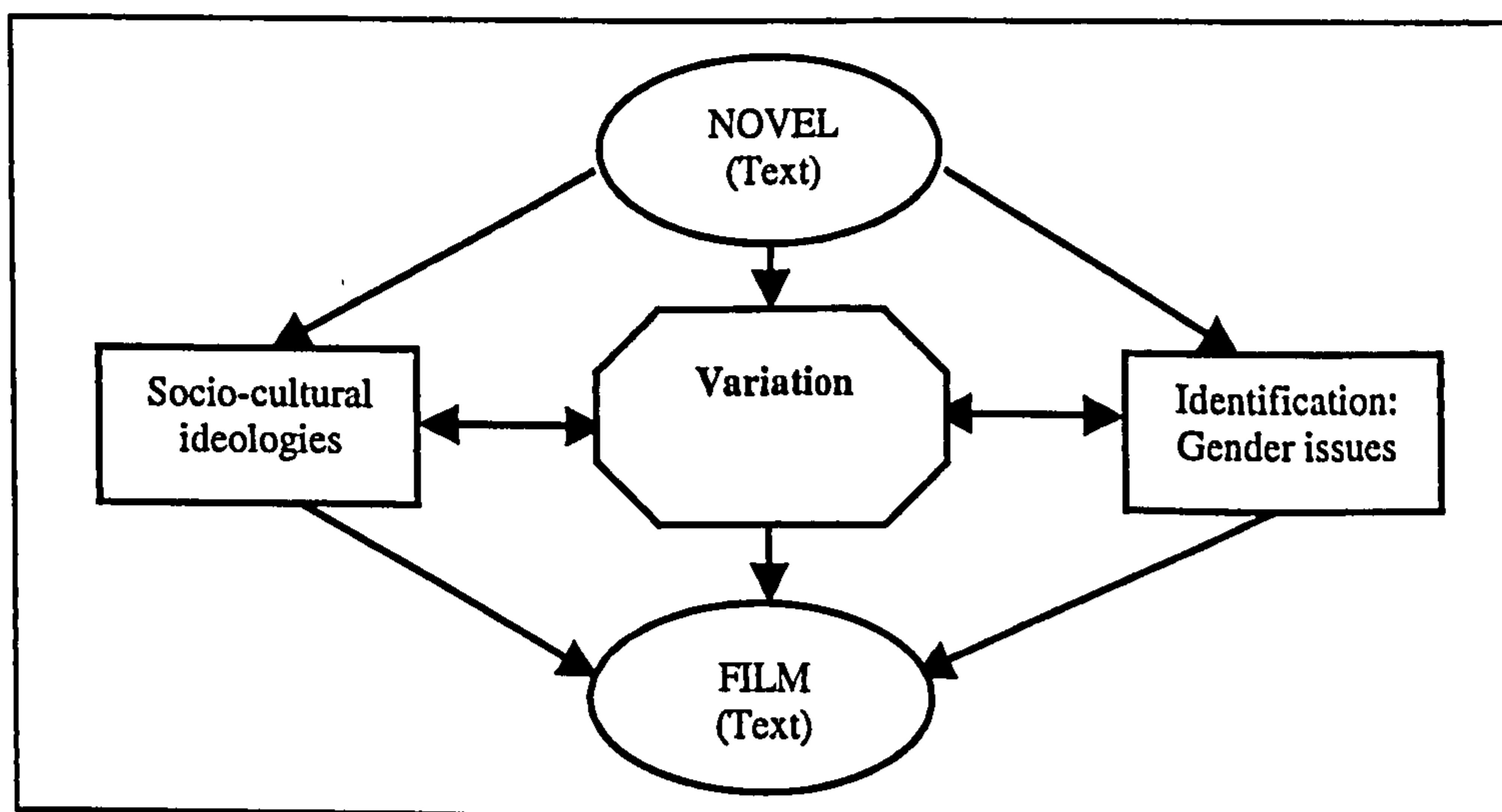


Figure 4.6 Textual Variation Theory

4.15 The Gender Issue in Egyptian Popular Films

The present research will not discuss the complex debates generated around feminist film theory, since a brief incursion into it cannot do justice. By tackling the filmic realities of gender representation, the present researcher basically means the position of women as subordinated, oppressed or exploited within the Egyptian social, historical and cultural dimensions, and examine how this has all been visibly or non visibly reproduced from the original novel to the screen.

The image of the woman in Egyptian popular films was created through a male director's perception only. Despite the great courage and determination of female film-makers like Aziza Amir, Fatima Rushdi or Bahiga Hafez in the 1920s and the 1930s, they only reproduced patriarchal stereotypes without ever managing to break off from the male dominated cinema. Thus, in Egyptian realist cinema of the 1940s to the 1960s, the audience was seeing the woman in the cinema and not a woman's cinema, even though the male directors criticised the ethics of patriarchal Arab society, and objected to the discrimination against women. See Figure 4.7 below.

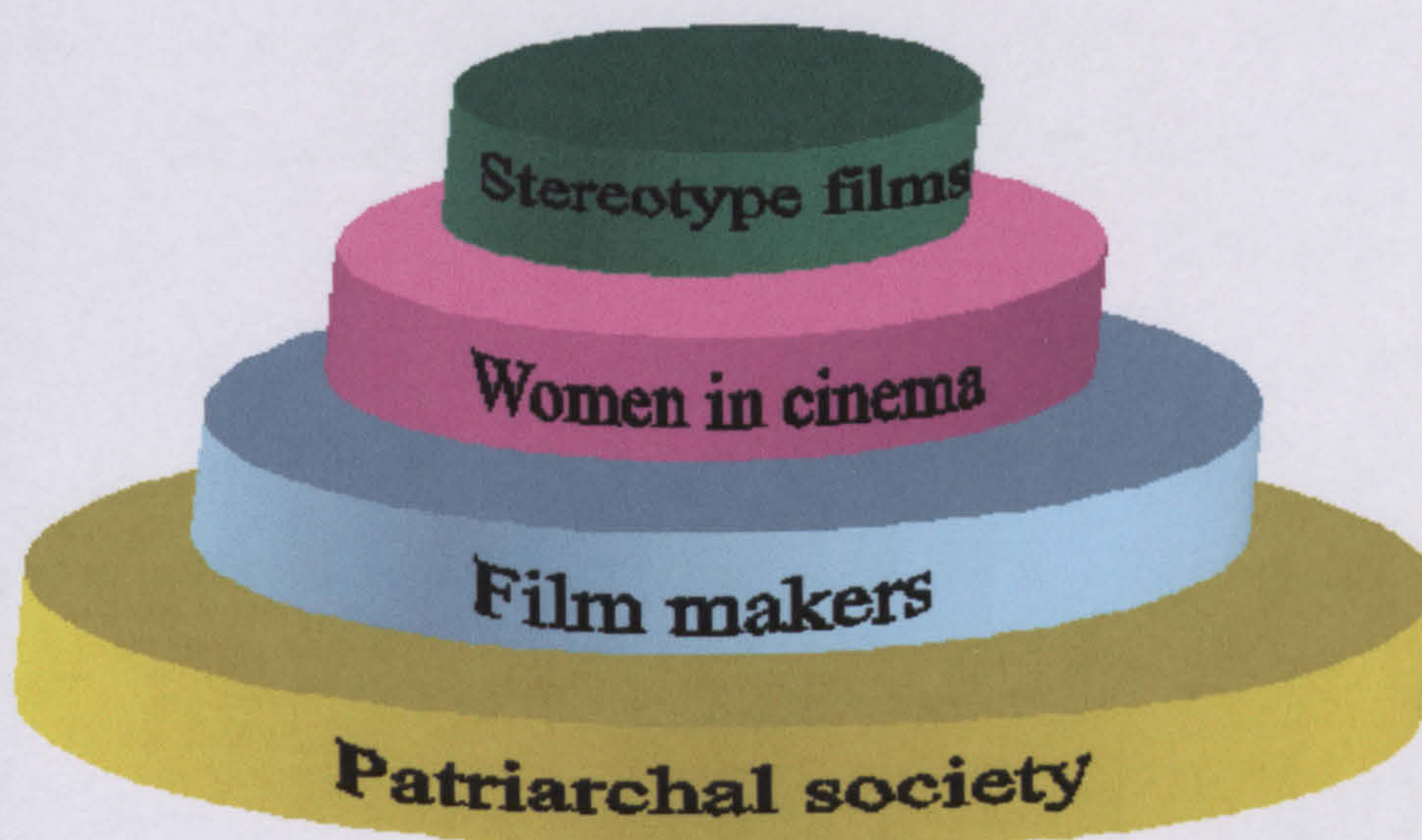


Figure 4.7 Reproduction of patriarchal stereotypical image of women

Among the most popular social realist film directors of the era concerned are: Salah Abu Seyf, Tawfik Saleh, Henry Barakat, and Hussein Kamal.²⁷⁵ The gender issues that these directors expressed in their films were mainly the need for female emancipation, examples are *Al-Bāb al-Maftūh* (1963) and *Anā Ḥurra* (1958). Criticism against arranged marriages is portrayed in *Al-Bāb al-Maftūh*, *Ayna ʿUmrī*, 1956 (Where is my Life?) and *Jaffat al-Amṭār*, 1967 (Draughts). The disadvantageous position and the molesting of women at work is made vivid in *El Avokato Madiha*, 1950 (Madiha the Lawyer), and oppression figures in *Bayna al-Qaṣrayn*, 1964 (Palace Walk), *Zuqāq al-Midāq*, 1963 (Midaq Alley) or *Lawʿat al-Ḥubb*, 1960 (The Agony of Love). Double moral standards are shown in *Bayna al-Qaṣrayn*, 1964 (Palace Walk), *Al-Buṣṭāgī*, 1968 (The Postman) or *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn* (1966), and examples for infringement of social taboos are *Bidāya wa Nihāya* (1960), and *Hadhā huwa l-Ḥubb*, 1958 (This is love). Loss of virginity and subsequent family dishonour which lead to death are skilfully depicted in *Duʿā ʿ al-Karwān* (1959) or *Al-Buṣṭāgī*. Rape, which only the woman is responsible for is featured in *Al-Ḥarām*, 1965 (The Sin), adultery in *Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn*, or *Al-Khāʿina* (1965), divorce in *Al-Zawja al-Thāniya* (1968), the femme-fatale in *Shabāb Imraʿa*, 1955 (A Woman's Youth), and *Rannat al-Khulkhāl*, 1955 (The Song of the Anklets), spinsterhood in *Jarīmat ʿIrd*, 1969 (Crime of Honour), the career woman and equal status with men in *Al-Ustādha Fāṭima* (1952) and *Zawjati Mudīr ʿĀmm*, 1966 (My Wife is Director General) and the neglected or abused wife in *Nahr al-Ḥubb*, 1960 (River of Love). In these examples of films, all of the gender issues are stereotyped, with the woman having to succumb to a male-dominated society either by punishment, suicide, madness, marriage, self-withdrawal, murder or with a tragic death. The ending of the above mentioned films are either tragic or 'happy,' in order

to compromise with the male-dominated Egyptian society. In these realist films that deal with gender issues, the audience clearly experiences a tug between masculinity versus femininity (as explained in the Binary Opposition Theory) not on biological categories, but rather through processes of repression, because the sexual differences are culturally constructed and therefore accepted by all.

4.16 Conclusion

The representation of the Egyptian woman within the textual variation theory shall be applied in the case-studies of the following chapters. Since the focus of variation is on the main female characters of the popular films, the present researcher deliberately chose a woman from different social strata, namely the lower working class, the middle class and the upper class in an attempt to maintain a balanced representation.

The three films selected for my case study are:

<i>Du'ā' al-Karwān</i>	Call of the Curlew	Henry Barakat	1959
<i>Bidāya wa Nihāya</i>	The Beginning and the End	Salah Abu Seyf	1960
<i>Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ</i>	The Open Door	Henry Barakat	1963

All these films were adapted from well-known Egyptian novels and all deal with the problems women face. The three films offer a different social, political, historical and cultural background as well as different social classes. These will help us to identify the predicaments of the Egyptian woman in relation to her socio-historical and cultural environment, as these are manifested in gender relations in these films and their antecedent novels.

-
- 192 Walter Benjamin, "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, (ed.) H. Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 233.
- 193 *ibid.*
- 194 *ibid.*
- 195 Marc Ferro, *Analyse de film, analyse de sociétés* (Paris: Hachette, 1975), p. 5.
- 196 *ibid.*
- 197 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, translated from French by Naomi Greene, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), pp. 82-83.
- 198 Marc Ferro, *Analyse de film, analyse de sociétés*, p. 5.
- 199 *ibid.*
- 200 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 24.
- 201 Marc Ferro, *Analyse de film, analyse de sociétés*, p. 14.
- 202 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 29.
- 203 Concerning these problems see Jean Patrick Lebel's *Cinéma et idéologie* (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Critique/Editions Sociales, 1971), p. 230.
- 204 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 28.
- 205 *ibid.*, pp. 28-29.
- 206 *ibid.*
- 207 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 208 *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 209 *ibid.*
- 210 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 30.
- 211 *ibid.*
- 212 *ibid.*
- 213 *ibid.*
- 214 *ibid.*, p. 81.
- 215 Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 170.
- 216 *ibid.*, p. 171.
- 217 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 8 (Chicago: Chicago University, 1992), p. 145.
- 218 *ibid.*
- 219 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, p. 81.
- 220 *ibid.*, p. 82.
- 221 *ibid.*
- 222 *ibid.*
- 223 *ibid.*, p. 83.
- 224 *ibid.*, p. 81.
- 225 K.R.M. Short, "Introduction: Feature Films as history", in *Feature Films as History*, (ed.) K.R.M. Short (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 16.
- 226 *ibid.*
- 227 *ibid.*
- 228 *ibid.*, p. 17.
- 229 Duriyya Sharaf al-Dīn, *Al-Siyāsa wa al-Sīnīmā fī Miṣr 1961-1981* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992), p.13.
- 230 *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
- 231 K.R.M. Short, p. 25.

-
- 232 *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 233 *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 234 During my fieldwork visits in Cairo in 1998 and 2000 I personally asked about twenty-five Egyptians who were avid cinema goers during the era under study so as to obtain a basic indication of the most popular realist film directors and the most realistic films that portrayed the social, economic and political situation of the 1940s to the 1960s in Egypt. The general opinion formed out of this inquiry showed that the mostly mentioned film directors were Salah Abu Seyf, Henry Barakat and Hussein Kamal, while the mostly mentioned films were *The Call of the Curlew*, *The Beginning and the End*, *The Postman*, *Palace Walk* and *The Open Door* amongst others. This basic inquiry served to assist the present researcher in her choice of the three case studies for the film analysis.
- 235 Paul Monaco, "Movies and National Consciousness: Germany and France in the 1920s", in *Feature Films as History*, (ed.) K.R.M. Short (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 62.
- 236 *ibid.*
- 237 *ibid.*, p. 64.
- 238 In discussing the autobiographical elements in *Iskandariya Lih? 1978* (Why Alexandria?) at a public lecture at Ewart Memorial Hall, Cairo, Winter 1981, Youssef Chahine said that the elaboration of reality, or fantasy built on reality, was an element of his success in film making. This lecture was broadcasted on *Voice of Cairo* radio in 1997, recorded copy at The Cinema Cultural Centre, Cairo, Egypt.
- 239 *ibid.*, p. 66.
- 240 *ibid.*, p. 73.
- 241 *ibid.*, p. 74.
- 242 John Carey, "Conventions and Meaning in Film", in *Film/Culture*, (ed.) Thomas Sari (London: Scarecrow, 1982), pp. 110-125.
- 243 Among those who applied the communication theory to film are: Christian Metz (1974), Jean-Louis Comolli (1993) and Jean Narboni (1993).
- 244 See p. 137, Figure 4.4.
- 245 Sol Worth, "Pictures can't say ain't", in *Film/Culture*, (ed.) Sari Thomas, pp. 97-109.
- 246 John Carey, "Conventions and Meaning in Film", in *Film/Culture*, (ed.) Thomas Sari, p. 114.
- 247 See Chapter One pp. 34, 53-54.
- 248 *ibid.*, p. 122.
- 249 *ibid.*
- 250 Yves Thoraval, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien 1895-1975* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974), p. 76.
- 251 Mohammed Khan, *An Introduction to the Egyptian Cinema* (London: Informatics, 1969), p. 54.
- 252 According to Teshame H. Gabriel "Location shooting replaces manipulatory controls and enhances documentary reality." "Towards a Theory of third World films", in *Questions of Third Cinema*, (eds.) Jim Pines and Paul Willeman (London: British Film Institute, 1989), p. 46.
- 253 *ibid.*, p. 47.
- 254 Paul Messaris, "To what Extent does one have to Learn to Interpret Movies?" in *Film/Culture*, (ed.) Sari Thomas, p. 168.
- 255 Béla Balázs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art* (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 34.
- 256 Paul Messaris, pp.168-181.
- 257 Graeme Turner, *Film as Social Practice* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-4.
- 258 *ibid.*, p. 67.
- 259 *ibid.*, p. 71.
- 260 *ibid.*, p.72.

-
- 261 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The structural study of myth", *Journal of American Folklore*, 78 (1955), p. 270.
- 262 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology 1* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 159-161.
- 263 Turner, p. 77.
- 264 Films like *Rocky* (1976), *Superman* (1978), *Fame* (1980), *Risky Business* (1983) or *The Karate Kid* (1984) mirrored the offensive and ambitious Reagan's administration. His policies converged in their exhortations to the American society to share in this triumphal attitude as projected by Reagan's political rhetoric.
- 265 *ibid.*, p. 79.
- 266 *ibid.*
- 267 *ibid.*, p. 80.
- 268 Hugh Gray was interviewed by 'Voice of America' Radio correspondent Edwin Gordon in 1972.
- 269 Hugh Gray, "Film and Reality", in *The American Cinema*, (ed.) Donald Staples (Washington: Voice of America, 1981), p. 166.
- 270 *ibid.*, p. 172.
- 271 *ibid.*
- 272 Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1969), pp. 53 and 65.
- 273 Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, pp. 82-83.
- 274 Hugh Gray, "Film and Reality", in *The American Cinema*, pp. 171-172.
- 275 Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1998), p. 128.

Chapter Five

Film analysis: Honour Killings in *The Call of the Curlew*

*"I, too, am most sorrowful at the
oppression of women: but the problem is
intricate, no solution do I find possible."*

Qur'ān 2:228 Iqbāl

5.0 Introduction: The Plight of women as represented in films

Seymour Chatman argues that films lose the linguistic specificity of the novel but gain a wealth of visual description.²⁷⁶ In cinematic representations it is the "essence" of the characters and/or the events that are remembered, rather than the language used in the film.²⁷⁷ It is the role of the female characters and the incidents into which they are woven in the novels and brought to life by the film-makers' modifications, which make the chosen films distinctive.

The purpose from analysing the selected films, is to highlight the oppression of women in Egyptian popular films, within the socio-historical context of the period between the 1940s and the 1960s. The image of the women in these films will be compared with the novels on which they are based. By examining these films and comparing them with their original text, I intend to portray both the differences and/or the similarities of the female protagonists in the film modifications. The film, as projected on the screen, is in itself a finished product, and may have no relation with the novel by which it was inspired. A film-maker who undertakes the adaptation of a novel is not transforming the novel at all, but views the novel as raw material. This adaptation is regarded as transformation of reality.²⁷⁸ The passage

from one medium to another imposes modifications of a technical kind. Other modifications may have been added to the film's script which were not originally in the novel. It is not the aim of this study to focus on the film's technical aspects, but on the role of the characters, namely the variation of the female characters' role. A film, much like a novel, offers various views, functions and devices to illustrate its meanings or messages. In my analysis I do not intend to decode all the different possible signs that both media carry, but through the textual variation approach, I shall attempt to reveal the mechanics of the predominant theme: the plight of the Egyptian woman of the period in focus, as reproduced on the screen. The film analysis shall be tackled by identifying the major or minor variations of the text to the film, and the full adherence to the text by the film-maker. The textual variation approach would lead us to recognise the ideological shifts, the socio-historical existent values, and how the major plot evolves around the female characters, who in turn depict their hardships against the stifling constrictions of the social norms. When treating gender issues or social ideologies, mention shall also be made as to whether the film-maker, through his modifications, has reaffirmed an existent tradition, attacked it or contributed to its improvement. The ending of the films is equally important to the analysis, since it reveals whether it was a happy ending or a tragic one.

The aim behind the textual variation approach is to understand the function of the dominant theme in both film and novel, its visible or latent realistic meanings vis-à-vis the structures of thought which dominated the Egyptian society of the 1940s to the 1960s. It is these structures of thought that impose on the film-makers the textual-variation from novel to film. The difference in the time period when the

novel was written is compared with the period when the film was produced, in order to assess the shifting values and ideologies. Thus, the time dimension factor helps us determine the internal expectations of the Egyptian society. In this respect, Marc Ferro justly remarks that: "film has the effect of destroying what several generations of politicians, thinkers, judges, managers or teachers had managed to place in a balanced order...the camera reveals their true function, more is shown than one would like to give away. Society's drawbacks and its faults are revealed. The camera overtakes its structures."²⁷⁹

The adaptation from novel to film very often requires the arduous task of squeezing the story into a given time frame. This imposes changes on the importance of characters and events. At times these variations are minor, and they do not drastically change the framework of the story. This is evident in the chosen three films namely: *Du'ā' al-Karwān* (1959), *Bidāya wa Nihāya* (1960) and *Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ* (1963). Another common element in these films is the plight of rural and urban women.

5.1 Analysis of *The Call of the Curlew*

5.1.1 *The Novel*

This was Taha Husayn's first non-autobiographical novel, which was published in 1934, and classified among the best of Arab romantic novels of the twentieth century. The author presents us, from a male perspective, with a harsh female dilemma. His female protagonists, who are servants of Bedouin origin, come from a low social stratum. The setting of the novel is a rural Egyptian village, with the main

protagonists being Hanadi and her sister Amna. The story begins with the forced departure of the poverty-stricken Bedouin mother and her two daughters from their village. Their uncle drives the three women out of their home after the murder of their disreputable husband and father who brought disgrace to the tribe. The women seek shelter in another town where they manage to earn their living as servants in different households, and usually they meet only during weekends. The younger sister Amna works for the local village prefect and is treated as a companion for his daughter Khadija. The latter initiates Amna into education and shows her the way to learning and to her emancipation. This is an essential quality, which distinguishes Amna from her mother and her sister.

As for Hanadi her fate is sealed. She works as a servant for a bachelor agricultural engineer who eventually seduces her. When her astounded mother learns that Hanadi has lost her virginity to her employer, she decides to run away with her daughters from the town back to their village. The loss of virginity out of wedlock is considered an unforgivable sin among Arabs, and so Hanadi's act violated a sacred tradition, which is punishable by death. On their journey they are joined by the mother's brother Nasser who came to look for them of his own accord. The mother and her brother are concerned about the family's honour, which has been sullied by Hanadi's loss of virginity. Before they reach home, uncle Nasser kills Hanadi in the middle of the night and buries her. They resume their journey as if nothing has happened. When the rural village is reached, the uncle simply explains that Hanadi died in an epidemic. Amna, who is deeply shocked and horrified, falls ill and suffers a nervous breakdown. But, when she recovers she runs away from the village and goes back to the town to resume her work at the prefect's house.

Angry at her sister's fate and unjust punishment Amna is determined to seek vengeance against her sister's seducer. When she learns that the agricultural engineer is to marry Khadija, the daughter of the household she works for, Amna foils the marriage by secretly revealing to the prefect's wife her sister's story. Amna later manages to get employed in the engineer's service without letting him know of her relationship to his victim. She deliberately makes him infatuated with her and tortures him by remaining unattainable. However, despite her torments of love, hatred and vengeance towards him, and after an anxious trial of wills between them, she finally gives in and falls in love with her employer. Subsequently, Amna confesses the truth of her identity and agrees to marry him after he became truly repentant.

In his novel Taha Husayn depicts the rigid traditions of Egyptian rural life, in particular the traditional ignorance of peasant women, and especially their vulnerable position in a society that believes in the family's honour, which has to be safeguarded only by women and controlled by men. The author contrasts the life of a rural village with that of a town. In the latter, there is a better standard of living and the girls of the middle and upper classes are given a basic education. This is represented by the character of Khadija and her family background. Amna becomes aware of all this when they moved to the town, where she experiences Khadija's different lifestyle when compared to her own upbringing. Amna is portrayed as a social climber who strives hard to liberate herself from her peasant background and its harsh conventions. In the novel Taha Husayn highlights the fact that women must be educated and given adequate training to enable them to run their homes and families properly, and also to earn a decent living. A woman, therefore, cannot fulfil

herself without acquiring the necessary tools for her freedom and success. Taha Husayn strove to bring out the importance of free education for all, from primary to tertiary, when he became minister of education under the *Wafdists* (1937), which provoked violent reactions from other politicians. In fact, Taha Husayn defended his policy in this novel. The appeal for the education and liberation of women by Husayn is also a reminiscent cry of the Egyptian feminist debate of the early twentieth century, which was still dominant in the 1930s when Husayn published this novel.²⁸⁰ The author also criticises Egyptian society, its backward traditions and the arbitrary authority of men over women. Hanadi, in the novel and the film, is the lamb of sacrifice owing to her tragic fate in a society that holds females like her in contempt, and imposes on them blind submission to social norms.

5.1.2 *The Film*²⁸¹

The story of the film representation is quite close in content to the original text, even though the film was released in 1959. The film was not a production of the Cinema Organisation, and thus, Henry Barakat, who was both its producer and director, was free to produce and direct the film as he pleased. While in the novel, events and characters are all described by Amna, the narrator-heroine throughout, in the film, her voice-over performs the same function as it comments on the development of the events and on her own emotions. In both the novel and the film, Amna narrates her story in flashback mingled by the resonating call of the curlew, and applied as a motif by the film director. This repeated motif of the curlew in the film, portrays the romantic and poetic language that Taha Husayn used throughout his novel. Of particular significance is the curlew for the Egyptian villagers, who believe that this bird is the harbinger of good luck to those who pray when hearing its song, as Amna

tells us in the film. The film opens with a short scene that is then repeated later. Both the novel and the film begin with Amna's flashback of her childhood happy days in the rural village.

5.2 Variations from the novel to film

5.2.1 Desert journey from the town back to the village

In the novel we read that the despotic uncle of Amna and Hanadi came to look for them out of his own accord, and joined them during their return journey. When he got to know about the dishonour to his family brought about by Hanadi, he murdered her in cold blood and buried her.

In the film, it is Zahra, the mother of the two daughters, who summoned him for his protection, since she had neither a father nor a husband to protect them, and this is in line with Muslim belief and Arab tradition. As a character in the novel, Zahra is more submissive to male authority since she does not protest with her brother for neglecting her. Nevertheless, she is not as submissive in the film; when her brother scolds her for Hanadi's sin, Zahra challenges him by questioning his wisdom in having ousted them from their village home, and leaving them to fend for themselves. In this scene, the film provides us with a mild attempt at resistance on Zahra's part, while the novel does not. This minor change by the film-maker as regards Zahra's behaviour reflects the important feminist debate that was initiated in the 1930s, and that culminated in the 1950s in Egypt. The Egyptian woman's emancipatory movement had long demanded an improvement in women's status and rights, but it was under President Nasser that the Egyptian woman obtained her right

to vote and her equality to man. Thus, the shift in Zahra's submissive character in the novel (written in 1934) to one who is less submissive as shown in the film (produced in 1959), may justify the film-maker's variation, who appears to have preferred to depict a more assertive Zahra than that of the novel.

The uncle, together with the anxious women, embarks on their journey through the desert with the women concerned about his evil intention. In the middle of the desert, Jabir orders Hanadi to step down from the camel and before the women realise what was going to happen, the uncle stabs Hanadi to death, which coincides with the call of the curlew, while the horrified Amna looks on and notices a shocked and a submissive helpless mother who simply sheds tears.

5.2.2 Focus on Zahra after Hanadi's murder

As in the novel, we see in the film that it is only Amna who is severely emotionally disturbed following her sister's brutal fate. She even accuses her mother of being an accomplice with her uncle in committing the crime of honour. Amna is hurt when her uncle leaves on a trade journey with her mother's blessings, who then remains in her home village. But Amna abandons her mother and goes back to the town and to the prefect's household, where she used to work before.

Unlike the novel, which never mentions Zahra again after this scene, the film later on puts her back on the screen. It seems that the director wanted to present the audience with a just punishment for Zahra. We see her in a quasi demented state, as she frantically runs all over the village calling for her two missing daughters, while the

villagers look on. By adding this scene in the film, one understands that the mother is also being blamed for her daughter's murder. Due to her submissive role in her brother's brutal act, she now deserves to lose her sanity, and thus receives her just punishment. The implied meaning here is that Zahra (who represents other Egyptian mothers, whose daughters have violated the same social taboo) does not seem to realise her own complicity in the crime she is now lamenting. Also, as a woman she could have refused her brother's orders, and safeguarded her own pregnant daughter. By adding Zahra's punishment in the film, the audience is expected to realise that women should not remain submissive or passive in their male dominated society, and should not adhere to rigid traditions. Therefore, Zahra's complacent role should be regarded as contributing to the oppression of women.

5.2.3 Additional scene of uncle Jabir

As regards this character, in the novel the uncle is called Nasser, whilst in the film he is renamed as Jabir, because Nasser was the name of the Egyptian president at the time the film was produced. Since the uncle's character is depicted as a villain who is very patriarchal, the director must have deliberately changed the name, perhaps to avoid clashes with the censors.

To further emphasise Jabir's cruel character and his patriarchal control over the three women, the film adds another new scene, which is not found in the novel. In this extra scene we see Jabir negotiating a marriage deal for his niece Amna, in her absence and without her consent. Jabir is seen calmly negotiating with the young Bedouin for the largest dowry possible. His abusive character is further exposed when he even takes a gold ring off the young man's finger, as a deposit for the

agreed marriage contract, a marriage arrangement of which Amna is not even aware. On the contrary, Amna is working in the service of the engineer's house, and has developed a love-hate relationship with her employer.

The latent message of this added scene by Henry Barakat can be interpreted in two ways:

- i) the director's social-awareness and criticism of pre-arranged marriages, which in the 1950s were still in practice among the Egyptian society.
- ii) the director had to give more importance to Jabir's character in the events of the plot, contrary to the novel. This is due to the film ending, which is totally different from that of the novel, in which Jabir plays an important role.

To represent all these simultaneous and juxtaposed actions, the director makes use of cross-cutting and intellectual montage. Once again, these cinematic conventions are employed by the director towards the end of the film to show uncle Jabir's diminishing patriarchal power, when in another added scene he appears impatiently interrogating Zahra as to the whereabouts of Amna. This time a broken hearted and tormented Zahra is oblivious to his threats. Preoccupied with his obligation to return Amna's dowry to the Bedouin, Jabir vows to look for his niece and subject her to his control.

In a juxtaposed scene we see Amna caught up in a dilemma of emotional feelings as she says in the film " I was obsessed by him (the engineer) torn between compassion, sincerity, tenderness and cruelty." These two scenes create a tension build-up among the viewers who, through the director's intellectual montage, are kept in suspense

until the end, as they wonder which of the three important characters (Jabir, the engineer and Amna) will finally prevail. Which ideology shall be triumphant?:- patriarchal control, adherence to tradition, Amna's revenge or love?

The following table outlines the variations to the film by Henry Barakat when compared with Taha Husayn's novel.

Table 5.1 Variation of novel to film

NOVEL	FILM
<u>Characters</u>	
Zahra is submissive and does not argue or protest with her brother regarding male protection.	Zahra confronts her brother on the issue and shows minimal resistance.
Zahra's part ends later in her home village after Hanadi's murder and Amna's recovery from the shock.	Zahra appears again roaming in her village in desperate search of her missing daughters. Her last close-up is that of a demented woman.
Uncle Nasser	Uncle Jabir (name change)
Nasser's role ends with his departure on a business trip and is no longer mentioned.	Jabir appears negotiating the dowry of his niece Amna with a Bedouin for their arranged marriage.
	Jabir is seen again arrogantly interrogating Zahra about Amna's whereabouts.
	Jabir is searching desperately for his niece, because of his arranged marriage contract.
	Jabir appears with a shotgun in front of the engineer's house to shoot his niece, because of her relationship with the engineer.
Amna departs with the engineer to Cairo and marries him soon after.	The engineer declares his love to Amna in front of the house but he ends up gunned down as he turns to protect Amna.
A romantic ending.	A tragic ending

5.2.4 Film closure and the triumph of morale

In the novel Taha Husayn opted for a happy romantic ending which leaves open the possibility of a love story between the engineer (coming from the upper-middle class) and Amna (of Bedouin origin), hence the bridging of two different social classes where love triumphs above all. However, the film ends with the involuntary murder-punishment of the engineer for his abusive behaviour. In the novel we read that Amna and the engineer fell in love and she reveals to him her true identity. Astounded, the engineer decides that they must carry the burden together and thanks to the strength of their love they succeed in overcoming all obstacles and decide to get married. The last part of the novel ends with Amna's departure with the engineer to his parent's home in Cairo and they shortly join in the unity of marriage. The story ends with their silent promise to remain together with the sad thought of Hanadi, accompanied by the call of the curlew in their ears.

Unlike the author, who preferred love to triumph over revenge, the film director modified the plot in a different way. The role of uncle Jabir in the end of the film becomes pivotal. When he discovers from neighbouring villagers that Amna is residing at the engineer's house, a violation of the moral order and the social norm, the furious uncle makes for their residence with a shotgun to kill Amna, whom he suspected to have, like Hanadi, violated the family's honour and thus, also ruined his arranged marriage deal. Just as Amna and the engineer are discussing their love in the front garden, the uncle is at the gate. He aims the gun at Amna but the engineer notices Jabir and quickly turns to protect her and thus, gets killed instead. Uncle Jabir runs off only to be caught later by the villagers. Ironically, Amna gets her revenge but not her lover. Thus, the film ending, unlike that of the novel, gathers all

the loose ends and ensures the well-deserved punishment for both uncle Jabir and the capricious engineer.

Another aspect to be looked into is why did the film director opt for a major textual variation for the film ending? The answer needs to be addressed from two aspects;

- i) the realistic element in the original text.
- ii) the socio-cultural ideology of the Egyptian life, especially during the film's production.

With regard to the first aspect, as to how realistic was the whole plot of the novel, one should point out that it is not an Egyptian custom to send away a widow and her daughters from their home village, because her husband was a dissolute person who was murdered in a quarrel. According to Arab custom, if the husband is away for a long period or dies, the wife and family should be put under the protection of a male guardian who could be either the brother, father or uncle or any other related male family member. Thus, the part where the uncle sends away the widow in the novel is dubious and cruel. The uncle who plays the villain should have taken them in and supported them. If he was so concerned about his family's honour, how is it that in the novel he does not pursue Amna when she leaves home and does not also kill her? In the novel he only kills her sister Hanadi and later disappears completely from the story. Therefore, the issue of lack of adequate male protection to the women, together with the uncle's partial concern about family honour, weaken the novel to such an extent that it cannot be fully considered as a realistic social document. Hence, Al Ray was right to declare that: "No one can expect that *The Call of the Curlew* is a realist novel. It is a romantic poem where the logic of things cannot be

understood.”²⁸² Henry Barakat, who formed part of the mainstream realist film directors of the 1960s, must have realised that the author failed to provide a true picture of the society that he wanted to criticise. Hence, he undertook a major textual variation by making some aspects in the film conform to the Egyptian social norms.

The second point to be raised, concerns the ideological thought and the gender issues that were modified. As already discussed, for the whole film, the director departed from the novel on three crucial socio-cultural issues:

- i) the role of Zahra and her fate;
- ii) a more dominant role assigned to uncle Jabir;
- iii) a tragic ending with the triumph of the morale, whereby neither uncle Jabir nor the engineer win.

If one focuses on the role played by these characters, one realises that all of them were directly or indirectly contributing to female oppression, furthering male dominance and adhering to old traditions. By summoning her brother, the mother betrayed Hanadi in order to preserve moral order. The main role assigned to uncle Jabir in the plot, is that of executioner of the moral and social order. He seems to be blameless and armed with the divine right to carry out justice according to patriarchal control. The non-visible message of the film is that women are suffering either physically or psychologically because of these same traditions and the yoke of patriarchy, mainly due to their ignorance and lack of education.

Barakat varied completely from Taha Husayn's closure, because he believed that the novel's ending was disappointing and not appropriate for a cinema audience. "The public believes in moral justice. The audience could not accept that the one responsible for the crime goes free or unpunished, and worse still gets rewarded by marrying Amna."²⁸³ Thus, this was one of the reasons that made Barakat opt for a tragic, but just ending. Also, he was not convinced with Amna's character traits. She is too articulate, crafty and ambitious for her social class. Personal communication with Barakat revealed that Taha Husayn had insisted on his original ending, and so the filmmaker shot two different closures for the same film, which he used during the film preview: one like that of the novel and another ending which the film presently has. The audience preferred the present ending and so did Taha Husayn's son, who persuaded his father to accept the audience's judgment.²⁸⁴ Thus, public opinion proved Barakat correct in his textual variations. Also, contrary to the author's aim in his novel, the triumph of morale in the film prevailed over that of romantic love. *The Call of the Curlew* represents certain widespread social values and comforts the audience in its prejudices.

5.3 Dominant Social ideologies

The film, and to a lesser degree the novel, reveal the disadvantaged position of the three female protagonists. Both Taha Husayn and Henry Barakat emphasise the repressive traditions of rural life, and the plight of women as a result of their submission to patriarchal control, lack of education and adherence to socio-cultural ideologies, namely in this case virginity, family honour and the dating of a man before marriage. As regards the loss of female virginity, the soiling of family honour and the consequential crime of honour, such issues did not undergo any change from

the time the novel was written in 1934, but were renewed and amplified in 1959 when the film was released. Thus, one realises that these ideologies were still dominant among the Egyptian society of the 1950s and that the film-maker, while attacking them, reaffirmed these existent values.

5.4 Honour and virginity

More than pride, honesty, anything a human might do, female chastity is seen in the Arab world as an indelible line, the boundary between respect and shame. An unchaste woman is regarded to be worse than a murderer, because her actions affect not just one victim but her entire family and tribe. Premarital sex, rape or adultery are considered as serious behavioural violations of the social code.²⁸⁵ An intact hymen is a guarantee of virginity that distinguishes a respectable woman from a man who biologically bears no such mark to prove his virginity. Culturally, a man is expected to be chaste before marriage, however reality is different. Virginity is only a woman's duty imposed on her by a patriarchal society.

The taboo that surrounds lack of virginity is not prevalent only in Egypt or in Arab countries, but it is a taboo, which has lost its sacred character in Western societies. According to Simone de Beauvoir, in patriarchal societies, "virginity took on a moral, religious and mystical values, and this value is still very generally recognised today."²⁸⁶ De Beauvoir recounts that there are areas in France where the bridegroom's family and friends wait behind the nuptial chamber, laughing and singing until the husband comes out triumphantly with the bloodstained sheet.²⁸⁷ It is in matriarchal groups, other non-Arab or non-Western cultures, that virginity and honour are not expected of a woman.²⁸⁸ But this custom of virginity and honour still

persists in Egypt and other Arab countries. Nawāl al-Saʿdāwī, the Egyptian psychologist and feminist writer defines the importance of virginity in Egyptian society in the following way:

The concept of honour in Egypt is tied to the girls' virginity before marriage, and to her fidelity and obedience to her husband after marriage. Loss of virginity for no matter what reason (including rape) equalled loss of honour. The men of the family must in such a case wash their honour in blood.²⁸⁹

Thus, the role of uncle Jabir, as the executioner of Hanadi in the analysed film, is realistic and clearly reflects the patriarchal values of the Egyptian society. From an Arab cultural aspect, uncle Jabir is regarded as a hero who has restored the family honour.

5.5 Honour killings or crimes of honour

As discussed previously,²⁹⁰ in an Arab Islamic context, women are fragile creatures who need male protection. Patriarchal tradition casts the male as the sole protector of the female, so he must have total control of her. If his protection is violated, his honour is tarnished because either he has failed to protect the woman or he has failed to bring her up properly. Thus, he has to uphold his honour by being the typical "honour killer" who is usually the father, husband or brother of the female victim.

The concept of male protection for the woman creates a bizarre dual role in her regard, because on the one hand, she is considered as a weak person who needs male protection, and on the other hand, she is an evil temptation or a *fitna*, from whom male society needs protection. This protection is reinforced through veiling, segregation and in some countries, female circumcision.

If a woman brings shame to the family, the male is expected to respond according to traditional practices and social pressures. If he does not, he adds to the shame, because he is not behaving in a masculine manner. Baker et al²⁹¹ note that this view is consistent with Kandiyot's²⁹² observation that femininity in an Islamic society is an ascribed status, whereas masculinity is an achieved status; "one that is never permanently achieved, because the danger of being unmanned is ever present", particularly through female misbehaviour.²⁹³

These male self-styled guardians of family honour view these "crimes" in light of their own interpretation of the Qur'ān. However, it is important to delineate that nowhere in the Qur'ān does it explicitly say that 'honour killings' are justified and must be conducted. What is very often forgotten by 'honour killing' criminals is that Islam forbids such a crime and states that "he or she who commits adultery gets one hundred whips if not married, and death if he or she was married."(Qur'ān XXIV: 2) Only the *Shari'a* (religious) court may decide this, and even then, four witnesses need to testify to an adulterous case. The Egyptian law in honour killings provides reduction, but not exemption, of imprisonment to the husband, only if he finds his wife committing adultery in *flagrante delicto*.²⁹⁴ Its strictness is reminiscent of the concept of crime of "passion", as practised in Western cultures, rather than of "honour".

5.6 The moral and social order of Egyptian women

If the origins of moral order have their roots in ancestral traditions, social order on the other hand relies on the laws drawn by legislators. These laws are directly drawn from the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadith* (traditions of the Prophet Mohammed). Thus, the

Egyptian woman's behaviour in her society has to be confined within these parameters. Indeed, certain moral and social expectations place the woman in a subordinate position with respect to the man. For example, while polygamy is lawful for men, polyandry under whatever form or circumstance is considered as adultery. Another example of the double standard practice and its consequences is that the husband is permitted to commit an honour killing and get a six-month prison sentence, if his wife commits adultery. Meanwhile, no similar forgiveness is given to the woman who kills, even when the circumstances are the same. Furthermore, there is never a threat to the life of the man if he violates the code of honour with regard to his sexuality.

The social taboo concerning fornication and the loss of virginity is deeply rooted in Egyptian tradition, not only in the countryside but also in the cities. However, it takes a more violent form in the rural areas. The Muslims and the Copts in Egypt are equally strict about this issue, as we see in Hussein Kamal's film *Al-Būṣṭugī* (1968). Jamila, the only daughter of a Coptic family and, who like Hanadi lost her virginity, is also murdered by her father, when he learns of the disgrace that Jamila brought upon him.

In the film *The Call of the Curlew*, the viewer is faced with the issues of virginity and family honour, together with the moral order that exerts itself on women. Both film and novel reveal in more than one instance, the condition of the women in the Egyptian countryside. Despite the time difference in which these two works took place, they still provide us with a general view of the peasant woman's social condition. Of particular note is the fact that although the film was produced in 1959,

its theme of honour and virginity, still holds true in present day Egypt, since crimes of honour feature regularly in daily newspapers.²⁹⁵

In Egypt, especially in the countryside, the woman is faced with archaic values. From her childhood she is submitted to a number of moral rules, which she has to learn to respect. The mother, as the guardian of tradition, is duty bound to instil in her daughter the precepts and prejudices which dominate the Egyptian society. Thus, the mother prepares her daughter to follow and perpetuate tradition. According to the Islamic *sunna*, at puberty the girl is expected to wear the headscarf, cover herself properly and safeguard her virginity. It is at this young age that girls start to resent the threat of losing their virginity and this fear is reinforced by their environment, since losing one's virginity is synonymous with loss of family honour.²⁹⁶ Such dishonour brings about the woman's death, regardless of whether she had been raped or had consented to the act. Sex outside marriage still leads to the same fatal end, namely death. Any transgression from the imposed social and moral orders, entails heavy consequences on the woman who is punished physically, in case of dishonour, as well as morally expelled, in case of prostitution. These moral and social impositions receive no opposition from society, not even from women themselves, since they also participate, actively or passively, in honour killings.²⁹⁷

In the film, Hanadi violated a sacred moral order and received an immediate physical punishment. Although nowhere in the film or the novel do we come across the mention of female circumcision, it is apposite to mention this topic, which also oppresses women in general and Hanadi's relation with her employer.

In many parts of Egypt, women's sexual emotions are curtailed by the practice of excision,²⁹⁸ as briefly explained in Chapter 2.²⁹⁹ No Qur'ānic reference is made to the ablation of the clitoris on girls as a means to control sexual desire. Thus, this appears to be a tribal custom. It is only the male circumcision that is emphasised for hygienic purposes in Islamic teachings. The aim of excision is to safeguard premarital chastity and virginity and also to reduce drastically sexual excitement in the woman.³⁰⁰

Hanadi's promiscuous behaviour to the advances of her employer raises the question as to whether she was circumcised or not, and being an important issue, especially among the villagers, it is strange how neither Taha Husayn, nor Henry Barakat mention this aspect in their works. The present researcher does not recall any feature film that discusses female circumcision between the 1930s to the 1960s. Was it a very delicate matter for the film directors of the period to intentionally avoid this issue, or did they genuinely overlook it? Had Hanadi been circumcised perhaps she would not have given in to her employer and her virginity would have remained intact, and her life saved.

Prior to her execution, we see Hanadi being ignored and rejected by her own mother Zahra, but not by her younger sister Amna, who was not yet fully aware of the serious repercussions as regards the loss of virginity. In this film, it is Hanadi who lives through this painful experience, and thus, one needs to focus on her character as well as that of her sister Amna.

5.7 The characters of Hanadi and Amna

In *The Call of the Curlew*, both film and novel, we are presented with two sisters who are assigned opposite roles. Both Hanadi and Amna are peasant girls brought up in a desert region on the hillside of the Upper Egypt valley. On the one hand, Hanadi is the impulsive type who follows her instinct and assumes responsibility of her deeds. On the other hand, Amna is more shrewd and her actions are calculated. Hanadi suffers a severe culture shock when she comes into contact with city life, as her life changes. She shares her feelings with her sister when she says that their move was like a forced exile, and Amna agrees when she says at the first scenes that “we were sent out of paradise”. The move from the rural village to the town allows the three women to come out of their isolation, but also become vulnerable to their new environment.

As previously mentioned, the three women are employed as servants with the leading families of the town they had settled in. Their jobs relieve them of their financial constraints, and the critical situation they had been led to by the male decision makers of their tribe. As already mentioned, Hanadi was working for a young bachelor, which meant she was alone in his house. This fact in itself was considered to be an unacceptable social and moral order by Hanadi’s society. On learning of such a situation, her mother Zahra, orders Hanadi to quit working for the bachelor, since she perceived the dangerous situation her daughter would eventually fall into. This is the first warning by the mother to Hanadi, as a guardian of her daughter’s virginity, and a mentor of the social order. But, this new life is far too attractive for the two young countryside girls, and all caveats fall on deaf ears. While Amna is exposed to literacy and education with her young mistress Khadija, Hanadi

experiences her first lessons in love and fornication with her employer, who had indulged in the same behaviour with his previous maids. His behaviour is never blamed by his patriarchal society.

When, eventually, Hanadi had to confide her secret with her mother, the latter behaves in a very ambiguous way. Zahra does not utter a word to Hanadi, but she is furious and simply decides to leave this town and go elsewhere. Hanadi knew that her loss of virginity meant her death, and when she secretly meets her sister Amna she could not help voicing her fears to her. Nonetheless, Hanadi does not regret the days of bliss she had spent with her young employer. She admits that she is ready to go back to him at the cost of endangering herself to the same situation again. Thus, her fate, according to social order, was her own doing. Hanadi's character can be thus, interpreted as that of a woman who rebels against her society's taboos and traditions. She believed that a woman should be free to make her own choices, like her male counterparts, and not be punished. During their second voyage, Hanadi is shown as very anxious. She confesses her secret to her sister to warn her of what will befall her, if she were to violate the social codes. Yet, Hanadi tells Amna that she had no regrets about her relationship with her employer and cannot accept her doomed fate. City life had brought Hanadi love and death at the same time. Hanadi's execution sequence is preceded by a series of scenes for tension build up, and also to bring out Hanadi's torments and sufferings.

With regard to Hanadi's behaviour, one notices her will for emancipation: she is a wilful victim within her oppressive society even though she was aware of the death

penalty if she violated her social and moral order. Her relationship with her employer is in defiance of the society which produced her.

When Amna is later seen observing the young engineer seducing another maid-servant, who had replaced Hanadi, she is deeply hurt for she realises that her sister was twice a victim: a victim of tradition and moral order and a victim of this employer who was devoid of any respect and conscience towards women. In this scene from behind the kitchen door, one cannot help noticing Amna's emotional sufferings and rancour against the engineer, who represents male dominance in a society that practices double standards. In revenge, Amna seduces the man, but does not yield herself. In her silent anguish, Amna turns out to be the moral bearer of the film. A compulsive relationship develops between the young engineer, whom no woman had ever resisted before, and this young Bedouin girl armed with knowledge through bitter experience. To let him deflower her meant a certain death for her, not only physically but also morally, and transgressing this moral code had already cost her sister's life. Controlling her passionate sentiments, made Amna worthy of being saved. Amna's preservation of her virginity gives her recognition in the engineer's opinion, and in itself society's recognition and requirement. In the film's last sequence, when the engineer vows to her his love and asks her to marry him, she rejects him and insists that he should repent and pay for his crime against her sister. At this point he is killed by Jabir. Order is re-established and moral order overrides social order. Through her perseverance, Amna gets her revenge and is the propagator of the desired moral order by her society, as portrayed in the film by the director.

When the novel is compared to the film one realises that the greatest textual variation by the film-maker occurred in the last sequence of the film. The happy ending of Taha Husayn's novel is revealed in the very first part of the book, while in the film, it is set aside. The viewer goes through suspense, tension build-up and finally experiences a sad tragic ending. Another dominating theme in the film is that of premeditated death: the first death is the murder of the father, the second death is the murder of Hanadi, and the last murder is that of the engineer. The film seems to be more engaged in social reality than the novel, from which it was inspired. As indicated earlier, the choice of such an ending was motivated by Henry Barakat's preoccupation with the social values of his time.

Personal communication with Henry Barakat has revealed that he, together with the script writer, Yusuf Jawhar, found it hard to adhere to Taha Husayn's ending.³⁰¹ "The novel's ending was too shocking for the audience, who would never had accepted seeing Amna succumbing to her employer, even within the legal body of marriage. Hanadi's murder had to separate them forever. The audience tends to have a sense of justice, which makes it accept or reject any behaviour presented to it."³⁰² Barakat said that with such a romantic and dramatic story, he and his team preferred a more "plausible" ending for their morally conscious audience, even though Taha Husayn completely disagreed with Barakat's decision.

The moral of the film proved to be an obvious closure within society's ideologies. The one who lost her virginity had to die, the one who safeguarded it was saved. Those men whose behaviour had caused misfortune had to pay their debt to society.

The employer is accidentally murdered, and the uncle is finally arrested. Thus, in the end moral justice joins social justice.

The Call of the Curlew is an excellent example of Egyptian social criticism on women's plight and the need for women to equip themselves with knowledge to fight for their liberation.

-
- 276 Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p.39.
- 277 *ibid.*, p. 118.
- 278 Andrew Dudley, *The Major Film Theories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 88.
- 279 Marc Ferro, *Analyse de film, analyse de sociétés*, p. 10.
- 280 The Egyptian feminist debate and the emancipatory female demands were discussed earlier in Chapter 2.
- 281 *The Call of the Curlew* was shown at the 31st International Exhibition of the Art of Cinema in Venice in 1970 (*Arab Film and Television Centre* No. 78/79, October 1970, p. 4); it also received international acclaim during the 19th Torino Film Festival, November 2001 (www.torinofilmfest.org/html/om_egitto).
- 282 Ali Al Ray, *Etude sur le roman Egyptien* (Cairo: Organisme Egyptien de l'Edition, 1964), p. 140.
- 283 Personal interview with Henry Barakat in Cairo, April, 1996.
- 284 *ibid.*
- 285 Lama Abu-Odeh, "Crimes of Honour and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies", in *Feminism and Islam*, (ed.) Mai Yamani (Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1996), p. 149.
- 286 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Everyman's Library, 1993), p. 462.
- 287 *ibid.*
- 288 *ibid.* and also in p. 161 Tibetan culture is mentioned.
- 289 Nawāl al-Sa^cdāwī, *Les femmes et la névrose* (Beirut: Etudes et publications Arabes, 1977), p. 59.
- 290 See Chapter 2, pp. 85 and 87.
- 291 Baker N.V., Gregware P.R., and Cassidy M.A., "Family Killing Fields", *Violence against women*, 5 (1999), pp. 164 -184.
- 292 Kandiyoti D.A., "Emancipated but unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish case", *Feminist Studies*, 13 (1987), pp. 317-338.
- 293 *ibid.*, p. 327.
- 294 Lama Abu-Odeh, p. 161.

-
- 295 A crime of honour was reported in Cairo in *Al-Hayat* (No. 14090, 13 Oct. 2001, p. 18) by Amina Khayri. The husband killed his wife and their four sons after discovering that his wife was having an extra marital affair with a friend of his. See also the UNICEF report of 1997 which cites 52 honour killings in Egypt from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/middle_east/
- 296 Nawāl al-Sa[°]dāwī, *Les femmes et la névrose*, p. 59.
- 297 Soheir A. Morsy, "Sex Differences and Folk Illness in an Egyptian Village", in *Women in the Muslim world*, (eds.) Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 608-610.
- 298 Hamid Ammar, *Growing up in an Egyptian Village: Silwa, Province of Aswan* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 121.
- 299 See Chapter 2, p. 91.
- 300 Nadjé Sadig al-Ali, "Nawāl al-Sa[°]dāwī", in *Gender Writing/Writing Gender* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1993), p. 21.
- 301 Personal interview with Henry Barakat in Cairo, April 1996.
- 302 *ibid.*

Chapter Six

The plight of women in *The Open Door*

*"To reach womanhood was to enter a prison
where the confines of one's life
were clearly and decisively fixed".
Latifa Al-Zayyat (1960: 24)*

6.0 Introduction

When published in Egypt in 1960 Latifa al-Zayyat's novel, *The Open Door*, was one of a few novels by Arab women that appeared during the time, which was a pioneering work conveying a feminist perspective. The novel is written from a woman's perspective and is considered as a literary landmark in Egyptian modern literature which had "sparked heated debate in many homes"³⁰³ because of its bold themes, which were considered rather provocative at that time.

Since the principal aim of the film analysis is to bring to light the plight of Egyptian women as depicted through the cinematic adaptations, the choice of *The Open Door* as a novel and a film, was an obvious choice. By comparing the film analysis to that of the novel, one discovers the significance and/or relevance in the variations adopted by the film-maker. As already discussed in the previous chapter, the textual variation approach from novel to film will concentrate on the gender issues, and the social dominant ideologies within the historical framework of both the novel and the film.

6.1 Analysis of *The Open Door*

6.1.1 *The Novel*

The Open Door portrays the woven net of relationships through which the main character, Layla, must navigate as she struggles to discover herself. Layla's inner conflict is based on opposite poles: adolescent sexual awareness versus social values, woman's emancipation and political commitment. From the outset of the novel, one realises Layla's silent psychological agony as she grows from girlhood to womanhood. The novel is a struggling journey of self-discovery for a meaningful life, paralleled with the political events and the nation's riots against imperialism and colonialism.

The novel is set mainly in Cairo and other important Egyptian cities. It begins with the unstable political situation of Egypt in 1946, that is, before the 1952 revolution. The political scene stretches over a decade, until November 1956, which marks the British and French paratroops landings in Port Said and the advance on Suez city, events that bring the novel to a close. This political scene provides the backdrop to the events in Layla's life. It was a time of flourishing patriotism and active resistance to the British occupation of Egypt, fomented by Nasser's socialist ideologies.

6.1.1:1 Language

Throughout the novel, both in the dialogues and the monologues, the author, Latifa al-Zayyat uses a colloquial register of spoken Arabic belonging to the urban middle class, of a petit bourgeois group, reminiscent of a Turkish aristocracy. The reader

comes across French and Turkish code switching together with colloquial Arabic such as *ma tante, merci, bonsoir, hanim* or *effendi*. Al-Zayyat's deployment of mundane language and colloquial Arabic is also very feminine in style, since it does not include vulgar, foul, obscene or aggressive vocabulary, which is usually included in a male's linguistic repertoire. More often than not, the majority of the conversations take place among women, without any men around, or with one man present, but who is always a family member. Thus, the majority of the scenes and dialogues are female dominated and such a linguistic aspect makes the novel different from other Egyptian novels written by men.

6.1.1:2 The plot and the narrative

The novel opens with the dramatic and violent mass demonstrations of 21 February 1946, a year after the end of World War II when Egypt, like other countries, was still struggling for a political and economic recovery. Layla is introduced as a young nervous and enthusiastic girl struggling in a male-dominated world where traditions dictate her every move. She wants to imitate her brother Mahmud, a political activist against the British and a student studying medicine. During a demonstration, Mahmud is shot in his leg. Unlike her parents who are concerned and dismayed, Layla is jubilant and also dreams of the day when she too can participate in a similar demonstration for the sake of her country's freedom. At school she boasts to her schoolmates about Mahmud's heroic participation in the demonstration.

Layla's first inkling of what it means to be a woman in her society, at that time, comes with the onset of her menstruation and her father's traumatised reaction to this event. Layla contrasts her father's hysterical distress, with the pride and joy that he

had shown when her brother, Mahmud, had reached puberty. On the contrary, when she has reached puberty her father cried and asked God's assistance to protect Layla from sin and to get her married off as early as possible. Layla is shocked at this double standard reaction. She discovers that now she is subject to an elaborate set of rules, which affect almost every aspect of her life: what she may or may not say, where she is allowed to go and with whom. Her posture, polite behaviour and the way she dresses are under close scrutiny, so that she can be married off to an appropriate suitor according to her parents' wishes.

Her mother, Saniya, as the guardian of Layla's honour and propagator of traditions, repetitively dictates to Layla the expected behaviour of girls and their assigned role in society. She often reiterates, "who ever lives by the fundamentals can't possibly go wrong."³⁰⁴ Layla is both confused and fed up with her mother's repetitive orders about the social fundamentals or because "the world demands as much. Anyone who doesn't go along with it is the one who suffers for it."³⁰⁵ Thus, during her adolescence, Layla starts to realise that her life was controlled by imposed social pressures. She seeks to rebel against these stifling codes of conduct, but seems unable to break free beyond occasional moments of respite: in her room behind closed doors, by day dreaming, or when at school with her friends, until the day when she marches in a demonstration triggered by the abrogation of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. Influenced by her brother's activism against the British, at school Layla runs through excited groups of girls confined within the school grounds, while the schoolboys were rallying outside. The schoolgirls wanted to join the demonstrations like the boys but the headmistress pounded on the microphone that a

woman's job was solely motherhood, and her place was at home, while fighting and weapons were solely a man's domain.

Unlike the film, in the novel it is Samia Zaki who walks up in front of the headmistress's microphone and boldly ridicules the headmistress's arguments by reminding her schoolmates of the 1919 revolution and women's participation at that time. The schoolgirls demand that the gates be opened, while the schoolboys from outside the gates force the gates open and the girls run out to join the demonstration, except for Layla's cousin, Jamila, who instead rushed home to inform Layla's parents of their daughter's participation in the demonstration. The rancour of her father and her horrified mother are described at length in the novel following Layla's arrival home. Her father beats her up mercilessly, while the mother stands helpless as she is forbidden to intervene by the father. His behaviour indicates the ignorant customs that he upholds with regard to the assigned roles for girls and his chauvinist mentality in a patriarchal society. Layla is left bewildered by her family's reaction to her participation in the mass demonstration.

The Open Door presents us with the young generation of Layla attempting to square theory with practice, where new ideas about their rigid social order and personal freedom are intertwined with the national political demands. This aspect appears most clearly in the emotional argument between Layla and her brother Mahmud, following her participation in the demonstration. She is furious to learn that even her brother did not approve of her participation and she challenges him by asking him why. "I haven't robbed anyone. I haven't killed anyone. I went out in a demonstration with a thousand other girls. All I did was to show what I felt...I forgot

that I'm not a person; I'm only a girl. A woman. Yes I forgot that!"³⁰⁶ When Mahmud reiterates that he believes in gender equality, Layla sarcastically replies that his beliefs were only "on paper", because she has no right to express herself like a human being, since she is a woman and thus, her behaviour is grossly condemned by society. To this Mahmud offers no reply.

6.1.1:3 Characters

The novel continuously sketches a compelling feminist quest for self-discovery in the main character of Layla, whose zest for social truth sharply contrasts the rigid traditions upheld by her family and propagated by her patriarchal society. The narrative continues to evolve around Layla's personal experiences, which also include the political ones, in support of her desire to open the door of her self against the harsh current of repressive customs inflicted upon urban women in her cultural milieu.

Despite her male dominated world, Layla supports and admires her brother when he announces that he intends to join the liberation army in the Suez Canal zone. Isam, Layla's cousin, with whom she is in love, also decides to go with Mahmud. But their conservative parents protest vehemently against their sons' decision and Isam's mother, Samira, feigns both a suicide attempt and an illness to prevent her son from joining the army. The next morning only Mahmud departs to the Suez Canal zone, where he befriends a *fidai* (commando), named Husayn.

Meanwhile, Layla's flighty and superficial cousin Jamila, succumbs to her mother's demands and she acquiesces to a loathsome marriage to a rich, pot-bellied old man.

Both her mother and her aunt are proud and happy that through a matchmaker, Jamila secured for herself a wealthy husband, a villa, a solitaire ring and a luxurious car. It did not bother them that Jamila loved someone else, and that she did not like Ali Bey, her future rich husband. The most important thing for them was for Jamila to secure materialistic gains, and concomitant prestige, and that they would boast about the fact that she obtained a high bridal price in her marriage contract, as though she were a "*jariya* in the slave market" in Layla's words.³⁰⁷

An attraction and first love develops between Layla and her cousin Isam. During Jamila's engagement party, Isam is obsessed with eying Layla in her lovely evening dress. As Layla converses with Sidqi, a male friend of the family, Isam becomes jealous and intervenes. Isam immediately follows her into a room and attempts to rape her, because he admits to her that he owns her: "You are mine. You are my possession." Terrified, Layla resists him and violently fights back his sexual assaults crying: "I am no one's possession - neither yours nor anyone else's. I am a free person!"³⁰⁸

When later on Layla is at Jamila's house to see her cousin's wedding dress, she is devastated by the discovery that Isam, who professes to love her, is having an affair with the maid. Layla is further perturbed when Jamila laughingly brushes aside Isam's sexual affair with Sayyida, the maid, as a "man's business" who needs to have a girlfriend other than his fiancée. Layla wonders how Isam could love her with his soul and simultaneously love the maid with his body. Faced with Isam's deception, she is driven to the verge of suicide, having numbed herself to all emotion as a consequence of this betrayal - proof of his fundamental, hypocritical immorality.

Layla ends her relationship with Isam and she remains bitter and cold about the significance of love. Isam's betrayal coincides with the great fire of Cairo, which was started on purpose by the government's reactionary elements to discredit the nationalist movement, a betrayal by the state.

Following these incidents, Layla remains in a state of emotional and mental shock, engulfed in misery and distrust, especially as regards men. From now onwards, there is a clear change in Layla's behaviour. She becomes a silent rebel, withdraws, and suppresses her love emotions. The novel presents a schizophrenic type of Layla with juxtaposed emotions of activism and passivism, brave rejection and blind acceptance.

Isam's betrayal, however, was not to be Layla's last shattering experience of the wiles of men. A few years later, as a university student, she is drawn inexorably into the orbit of Professor Ramzi, her philosophy lecturer, the epitome of male chauvinism, and a man whose cold moral rectitude seems to offer her the possibility of salvation. Professor Ramzi imposes his personality on Layla, and nearly succeeds to "improve" her personality and mould her according to his own oppressive theories,³⁰⁹ which reveal a tyrannical, insensitive and arrogant man. Professor Ramzi also reveals himself (during their engagement party) as a hypocrite of the highest order, interested in Layla, not because he loves her, but only because, as he tells her, that she is compliant, quiet and she listens to him and she obeys him without arguing. His reserve crumbles later in the evening when he is confronted by the seductive Jamila. Layla could see Ramzi's eyes fixed avidly on the crevice of Jamila's breasts, and his lips rounded in a smile were reminiscent "of the grimace of a predatory animal." Layla starts to realise that she has unwittingly evolved into the counterpart

of Jamila, with a husband also imposed on her just like Jamila. Layla's psychological plight intensifies when she further learns of Professor Ramzi's moral corruption in a conversation that takes place between him and her brother Mahmud. Ramzi tells Mahmud that there is nothing called love in a man but only a sexual "desire" and thus Mahmud should vent his sexual passion with Sanaa, his future wife, instead of marrying her since she was rejected by Mahmud's parents as a suitable wife. Ramzi also advises Mahmud that a man should marry not for the sake of love, but to have a woman at home to take care of his children and to be kept under "his feet". Upon hearing these words, Layla breaks down and rushes to her father in an attempt to tell him that she does not want to marry Professor Ramzi, but her father's murderous look sends shivers down her spine and she is forced to clam up and put up with Professor Ramzi's chauvinism.

Meanwhile, Layla's grudge against Professor Ramzi intensifies and she begins to be attracted to Husayn, her brother's friend, whom she had met before he left for Germany on his scholarship. When Layla was at university, Husayn kept sending her letters at her faculty of arts and prior to his departure for Germany, Husayn had declared his love for her and told her that he only wanted to marry her if she really loved him back. But Layla had not encouraged Husayn because she was still then deeply hurt by Isam's betrayal. In his letters, Husayn kept telling her that just because she had been betrayed by one man she should not be so daunted and "close her door" to real honest love. It is with Husayn, ultimately, that Layla will find peace of mind.

When Layla graduated her father became very anxious and wanted to marry her off before the agreed date with Professor Ramzi, but the latter was more interested that Layla would obtain a teaching job before they get married. Both her parents and Professor Ramzi wanted Layla to be posted in a secondary school in Cairo so that she would be close to her family, her work place and to Professor Ramzi since he taught at Cairo University. But when Professor Ramzi took Layla to the General Inspector for Social Studies to fill in the application form for her posting in a girls' school, Layla deliberately requested to be located only in Port Said, where her brother Mahmud and his wife Sanaa lived. It is also the place where Husayn, whom Layla did not see for over three years, lived.

Layla's parents and Professor Ramzi were furious that she was posted in Port Said. None of them realised that Layla was more clever than they had thought and that it was she who had tricked them, in opting for Port Said instead of Cairo. Her transfer to Port Said meant a delay in sealing her wedding contract to Professor Ramzi even though her father was eager to marry her off. Naturally, Layla was happy to teach in Port Said, as it enabled her to be away from her oppressive family and Professor Ramzi. She needed to be free and have her own space to be able to think without interference. Ramzi assured Layla's father that her posting in Port Said would only last for two weeks, because he would exert his influence with the Minister of Education and get her back in Cairo. But her father was not sure of Ramzi's promise and he finally gave in to his pressure to allow Layla take the job in Port Said. Before her father gave his full consent on this issue, he spoke to Layla, warning her that while in Port Said she was to reside in the school compound, and that she would not be allowed to visit her brother and his wife, threatening her that if he discovered that

she had visited or stayed with her brother he would kill her. Layla simply agreed to comply with his orders so that he would let her go.

But Layla's transfer to Cairo was not the easy matter that Professor Ramzi had promised. Instead of two weeks, Layla, to her delight, stayed in Port Said for months. On October 29, 1956, the Israelis attacked the Sinai. The next day Britain and France joined the aggression against Egypt and military operations against Egyptian strategic positions began, amongst them Port Said. The Egyptian resistance against foreign aggression increased and many men and women joined the national defence army. It was a time of war, tension, shortages of commodities, lack of communication and rampant patriotism in Egypt. Many youths organised themselves in secret units to defend their country. Among these young patriots were Layla, Mahmud as a doctor, his wife Sanaa and engineer Husayn. Although Husayn knew that Layla was engaged to Professor Ramzi, he still asked Mahmud to see her, even for one last time. So Husayn came to the apartment where the three relatives lived. When Layla and Husayn finally met, a new chapter in their lives had immediately begun. Husayn discovered that now, Layla was his beloved and she had succeeded in making her choice out of her own free will. Husayn was delighted to finally see her smiling and happy. She threw away Ramzi's engagement ring and told him that she was going to join him in the national defence army and remain with him. When Husayn asked about her family in Cairo and the repercussions of her decision, she dismissed the problems and told him that she had made up her mind, to which Husayn exclaimed that finally, she was free.

The war was not the end for them and their country, but the beginning of a future together. The novel ends with Layla and Husayn hugging each other with Layla feeling enveloped in tranquil peace, happiness and a sense of freedom. She had not felt like that for years and she had finally succeeded in opening the door for enlightenment, courage and self-determination.

6.1.1:4 Historical events

To appreciate the novel's or the film's intertwining of the historical and the personal, one must have an understanding of the political events that surround and infuse them.

As previously mentioned, the novel begins with the dramatic and violent mass demonstrations of 21 February 1946. When World War II broke out in 1939, Egypt became a vast army camp for the Western Allies. However, popular feeling was anti-British and more pro-German, because the Egyptians were disillusioned with the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. The true independence that the Egyptians had been promised was only on paper and limited to constitutional monarchy. Britain still had full control of the Suez Canal zone and had military bases in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said. During World War II, industrial and agricultural employment and output boomed, but so did inflation and urban congestion. The question one asked was what the economic situation would be like after the end of World War II?

Between 1945 and 1951 Egypt witnessed many uprisings and violent demonstrations against the Palace of King Faruq, and the British presence in Egypt so that the 1936 Treaty would be abrogated. Many of the demonstrators were young university students and their activism trickled down from the universities to Cairo's secondary

schools.³¹⁰ But, Egypt, with all its domestic problems, the unresolved issues of the 1936 Treaty, the strong presence of British troops on its soil, directed its energy to the rising Arab-Jewish contest for Palestine. When in 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state, the Arabs rejected this plan. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood called for a *jihad* to free Palestine from the threat of Zionism. King Faruq had even sent an Egyptian army to fight in Palestine in 1948, but it was defeated. The army's defeat in Palestine discredited Egypt's old regime. Free elections in 1950 brought back into office the *Wafd* nationalist party with a commitment to oust the British troops from the Nile valley. Premier al-Nahhas abrogated the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that he himself had signed in 1936 and did not hinder Egyptian commando (*fida'iyin*) volunteers from fighting against British troops in the Suez Canal zone.

It is within this time frame that the novel is set. Mahmud and his cousin Isam argue with their families about joining the Egyptian resistance in the Suez zone and it is here that Mahmud met his friend Husayn. In Cairo, as we see in the novel, the university becomes a recruiting ground and a training camp for the resistance volunteers, which is also historically correct according to Abdalla who says that at the University students were trained in military manoeuvres and recruited for the Canal zone in November 1951.³¹¹

Naturally the British struck back, but Faruq's administration did not provide the Egyptian commandos with enough weapons or provisions, and as a result many Egyptians were injured or killed, amongst them policemen. Upon learning of the fallen and the casualties, on Saturday 26 January 1952, Cairo erupted and thousands

of Egyptian demonstrators fanned across central Cairo and deliberately set fire to European and British landmarks. Policemen and firemen looked on in passive solidarity during this Cairo fire, known as Black Saturday, which enveloped in flames many bars, nightclubs and expensive department stores,³¹² such as the Cicurel et Oreco, where Jamila and her mother went shopping for the imminent wedding. This was the great fire that Layla, her brother, her cousins and Husayn went on to the roof to watch. Layla had asked who were those responsible for this fire and whether this was the end of all the country's turmoil.

It was not the end since the Free Officers Army that had been defeated in Palestine encouraged the mob and may have hastened the July revolution of 1952. After the Cairo fire, martial law was imposed and many were arrested and jailed for resistance, including Mahmud and Husayn, as we also read in the novel. But Black Saturday showed that the old regime of King Faruq had been stripped of any remaining moral authority to govern Egypt. The patriotic young officers forced King Faruq to abdicate and leave Egypt on July 23, and under general Muhammad Naguib seized power in a bloodless *coup d'état*. The detained resistance commandos were set free, amongst them Mahmud and Husayn.

But with the new military junta in power, the British presence in Egypt ensued. In 1954, Jamal Abd al-Nasser replaced General Naguib. Nasser and the British agreed that the latter were to withdraw completely from the Suez Canal base and by 1956 the British were all gone.³¹³ Many would have expected that Egypt's struggle for Independence should have ended here. But Egypt still depended heavily on Western financial institutions, mainly the Suez Canal Company, the greatest symbol of

Egypt's subjugation to foreign powers, but also the lifeline of the British Commonwealth. Meanwhile, Nasser was negotiating British-US financial aid to construct the Aswan High Dam, when the US pulled out. Since Egypt was desperate for revenue and infrastructure projects that the West was unwilling to finance, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956. Non-aligned governments applauded Nasser's decision, but because of financial or political reasons, Britain, France, and the newborn state of Israel strongly opposed this measure. Thus, in October 1956, the British and French invasion started and the subsequent reoccupation of the Suez Canal, while Israel's army pushed westward across the Sinai Peninsula. In November of the same year, British and French paratroopers landed in Port Said. The world's two superpowers, then the US and the Soviet Union, put pressure on the invaders to stop their attacks and to pull out of Egypt's territory. This is where the novel comes to an end.

Al-Zayyat's depiction of Egypt's political events in her novel, together with all her fictional characters' participation, in both their personal and public levels, are historically accurate and realistic.

6.2 The Film

The story of the film representation is very close in content to that of the novel. Henry Barakat was both its producer and director. The in-depth, articulate presentation of Layla's journey towards psychological maturity described at length by Al-Zayyat, provides the filmic representation with a rich groundwork for the scenario of the film, to the extent that the majority of the scenes, as well as the spoken word in the film is almost an exact replica of the written word. The

adherence to the exact words of the novel had been a specific request of the author, who also collaborated with Henry Barakat and Youssef Issa in setting the scenario of the film.³¹⁴ The faithful rendering of the novel to film shows the refinement of the original dialogues with their realistic interplay with the socio-historic themes that al-Zayyat wanted to portray. But the astuteness and beauty of the descriptive scenes of the narrative and the characters are partly lost in the film because of the limited time span.

Even though the film director adhered closely to the novel, many scenes from the novel were either only briefly inserted into the film or completely excluded. The film closure was completely modified, however, without losing sight of the novel's basic motives. This film's analysis shall focus only on those textual variations that are particularly relevant in respect of the plight of women in the face of societal pressures. Those themes or episodes in the novel that have not been modified shall not be referred to in this analysis.

6.3 Variations from novel to film

6.3.1 *Opening scene*

Unlike the novel, which succinctly prepares the reader for the political turmoil in Egypt, the film, released in 1963, takes us straight into the thick of the violent demonstrations. Barakat enriches the film by applying the collage technique, that is, newsreel footage of the era to illustrate the real-life demonstrations that dominated Cairo and major cities between 1946 and 1952. A deep male voice-over comments on these uprisings.

6.3.2 *Layla as the feminist patriotic school leader*

The main character of Layla is immediately introduced as a young, nervous and enthusiastic teenager. While male students protest against the British, Layla is shown at her school running excitedly among her schoolmates in the schoolyard, encouraging them to participate in the demonstrations. The school bell, a repeated motif from the first shot, rings in vain to bring order among the school girls. The headmistress takes the microphone and attempts to calm down the girls and strongly voices her opinion against the girls' demand to participate in the uprisings: "A woman's sole occupation is motherhood and her proper place is the home. Weapons and war are for men only!" With such a gender biased declaration to her students, one wonders how the headmistress was occupying her post and not keeping to the confines of her home rearing her own children! Thus, from the very beginning of the film, but not in the novel, where this school scene comes much later, the viewer encounters the first notion about women oppressing other women, because they blindly follow the expected behaviour of the women's assigned role in the Egyptian society of that epoch.

In the film, it is Layla who courageously takes a stand to show her strong disapproval against the headmistress's declaration, and not another girl like the novel narrates. In the film, Layla heroically challenges the headmistress and bluntly tells her that she is wrong, because when the English killed the Egyptians in 1919, they did not distinguish between men and women. Thus, women have an equal role to play. Layla demanded that the school gates be opened so that the girls are allowed to join in with the boys in the demonstrations. By means of an unspoken agreement Layla became the leader. She is applauded and all the girls shouted demands for weapons

while pounding on the school main gate, until it was forced open by the male students from outside. The girls join in the demonstrations, where Layla is seen carried shoulder high by the girls who chant slogans against the English, while the camera of Henry Barakat closes-up on Layla's face, with the skies as her background implying her loftiness and her uninhibited self-expression. Immediately after this shot, Barakat once again mixes newsreel footage to depict the real Cairo demonstrations.

6.3.3 Reaction after the demonstration to parallel action

Back home, Layla's actions are considered as "scandalous" and dishonourable by her parents. In the film, as in the novel, she is beaten up by her father with a slipper, and as in the novel, it was her spoilt cousin Jamila who denounced her participation in the demonstrations. In the novel, Layla's parents' reaction to her activism follows immediately after her arrival at home, while in the film, Henry Barakat cross-cuts the shots of Layla ecstatically shouting with the mob demonstrators, with the quivering silence of her parents at home. This alteration between the two different but parallel actions creates a stark contrast to the spontaneous collective action on the Cairo streets and the smothering tense and silent atmosphere at Layla's home, thereby emphasising a ruthless chauvinist father who deplores female's participation in public activities. Also, the scene in which Layla participates in the demonstrations with her enthusiastic schoolmates urging a liberated vision for women is opposed by traditional and patriarchal control as represented by her family at home.

6.3.4 Omitted scenes: Layla arguing with her mother

In the novel we read of several brief encounters of Layla and her mother, discussing or arguing about the expected behaviour and designated role of Layla within her society. Layla came to realise soon after her menstruation (which is not shown in the film at all) that her mother became very vigilant vis-à-vis her conduct. In their family conversations, Layla eventually learned that her mother had to bear full responsibility for her conduct and that her father always rebuked her mother for the slightest error Layla committed. Layla had grown sick and tired of her mother's persistent scoldings and lessons in morals and social behaviour, imposed on both of them by a strict father and husband. Layla felt suffocated by her mother's invoking proverbs "whoever lives by the fundamentals can't possibly go wrong" or "what people see is what counts". While in her room, behind closed doors, Layla became fully aware of all these societal pressures which were applicable to girls only and that she was being trained by her oppressed mother into a submissive tradition. In the novel we read how hurt and tormented Layla was about this double standard "art of life" assigned only for women. Unfortunately, Layla's encounters with her mother on these themes or when Layla is forced to greet her mother's arrogant relatives are all omitted in the film. The present writer believes that these early scenes in Layla's adolescent development, which are not shown in the film, diminish Layla's early psychological sufferings. Her strict patriarchal upbringing was a contributing factor during her adolescence for transforming her from an enthusiastic person, into a withdrawn woman without self-confidence. These important episodes are a missing link in the film, which would have helped the viewer better understand why Layla's character developed into a cold and compliant one. By omitting these scenes, the

film director appears to have robbed the film of a strong element of women's plight, so brilliantly described in the novel.

Another important event that Henry Barakat omits from the scenario of the film, on grounds of being a secondary incident, is the suicide of Safaa. In the novel, Layla, in her stream of consciousness and arguments with her mother about women's oppression by their own relatives, reveals a heart-breaking story of Safaa, daughter of Dawlat Hanim, a rich relative of Layla's mother. Dawlat Hanim had imposed an old but rich husband on her daughter, who had committed suicide out of despair on account of her unhappy marriage. She had begged for a divorce from her husband, but it was refused and subsequently she ran away to her mother for shelter, who later admonished her and refused to accept her and she simply sent Safaa back to her husband. Out of despair, Safaa commits suicide. Though Dawlat Hanim grieved for her daughter, she never doubted the wisdom of her actions because she believed in the "fundamentals" and Layla's mother always told her that those who follow the rules "cannot go wrong, cannot weaken" or lose their self-confidence. It is not surprising that Dawlat Hanim gained more respect from her relatives and friends after her daughter's death, because she did what was expected to be done in such a situation.

Unfortunately, this scene is not depicted on the screen by the film director. Although for Henry Barakat it did not appear to be very relevant to the linearity of the film,³¹⁵ the present researcher begs to differ. This scene would have been highly relevant to depict further the Egyptian woman's strife in her society. Although Safaa's suicide is simply referred to in the novel, it still reveals a double plight: one for Safaa who

physically perished and another for Layla who appeared to remain psychologically traumatised, not because of the suicide, but because of the hardships caused by arranged marriages, parents' impositions on their daughters and the blind adherence to traditions.

Latifa al-Zayyat's novel contains lengthy detailed descriptions about Layla's mental development and awareness of the unnecessary hardships caused by social traditions. Although Henry Barakat undertook intelligent variations to adapt Latifa al-Zayyat's novel into film, he failed to produce a poignant and explicit plight of women that Latifa al-Zayyat had brilliantly portrayed in her novel. On the other hand, as a film director, with a limited time span, Barakat succeeded to produce a film that illustrates the "latent truth" of women's predicament as Marc Ferro's theory implies.

6.3.5 Film Closure and the triumph of self-determination

Despite the continuous family and social pressures on Layla that we witness in both the novel and the film, Layla succeeds in the end to gain back her self-confidence and self-determination to rebel against her family's strict traditions and the intellectual manipulations of Professor Ramzi. It is thus a happy ending. In both novel and film, one clearly perceives this message: Layla's constant struggle to assert herself, rather than be dissolved into a system that expects women to simply please others, mainly men, and to sacrifice themselves in marriage to society.

Towards the end, in both novel and film, we see Layla leaving for Port Said to join the greater rebellion of the people against the tripartite aggression of 1956. In the novel, with the national political victory of Egypt, comes Layla's personal triumph

over gender discrimination and the oppressive socio-cultural traditions. But Layla's self-liberation is described at greater length and is achieved over a much longer phase in the novel than in the film, which is hastily reproduced. Due to the usual time factor problem and to limited production facilities that film-makers encounter, the ending of the film varies considerably from the original text, though the basic motive of the novel has been evidently maintained. It is in the method in which this same motive is depicted that there is a variation from novel to film.

In fact, of particular note is the fact that the major change in the final scenes from novel to film were criticised by Latifa al-Zayyat, because the film ending reflected more a male perspective, since Layla's physico-moral liberation depended on a man.

Al-Zayyat had said:

The ending of the film suffered an alteration which undermined the general meaning, for the liberation of Layla stems from the self and through the activism developed by that self, but in the film this development is to some extent dependent on a man (Husayn) which is exactly what I tried to avoid in the novel.³¹⁶

By comparing the textual variations of the final events in the novel to those of the film, one would be able to judge al-Zayyat's criticism to the film's closure. The novel fulfils its symbolic title when finally, after many disheartening encounters, Layla breaks free from her submissive role and rebels methodically against her parents and their class-oriented ambitions, and against Professor Ramzi's chauvinism by the following processes:

- a) Layla's secret and deliberate choice to work as a teacher in Port Said, so as to be happily close to her brother and his wife Sanaa and their friend Husayn;
- b) Layla's occasional encounters and discussions with her favourite friend and sister-in-law Sanaa at Cairo University;
- c) Husayn's encouraging and liberating suggestions to Layla in his letters to her;

- d) Layla's actual participation in the Port Said tripartite aggression in the battlefield;
- e) Her attachment, as a patriot, to the collective spirit of her own people fighting for their country's liberation;
- f) Her brief encounter with Husayn in Port Said, with whom Layla felt reassured and self-confident.

All these processes, narrated at different time frames in the novel, gradually led to Layla's awareness in regaining her internal strength that she once had as a girl, and to overcome her fears and psychological dilemmas, all caused by social pressures. In the novel one reads that Layla achieved her self-liberation only through her own reasoning and through her own courageous decisions. Only when she had reached this stage did she accept to meet Husayn in her brother's apartment. When they met after a separation of more than three years, Husayn immediately realised that Layla's depressing mood has suddenly vanished and that she had calmed down and had become her real self. This was the Layla that Husayn for years had yearned for. Husayn noticed that Layla had a new glow in her eyes "which was quiet, warm, steady, and light emanated from within. Husayn sighed happily. "Finally...we are there."³¹⁷ Thus, in front of Husayn, Layla appeared as an enlightened and liberated woman because of her own convictions. Ending in the same spirit as that of the opening pages, the novel comes full circle with moving scenes of the collective, bittersweet celebrations, following the patriotic victory of the Egyptians over imperialism.

In the film, the six processes listed above, have been condensed or totally omitted (in film-making this is called ellipsis) in a way that the ending scenes represent a slightly

different Layla than that of the novel's. The textual variations from those of the novel's ending, applied by Henry Barakat, are as follows:

- a) During the Cairo air-raids, Husayn is already in Cairo and manages to steal a few moments with Layla to inform her of his departure to Port Said, and that she is welcome to join him there;
- b) Nowhere in the film do we see Layla departing on her own to Port Said but instead, we see Layla departing from Cairo with her family and Professor Ramzi to escape the bombings and air-raids. It was Professor Ramzi, who advised Layla's family to take refuge in al-Fayyum far from the war events;
- c) In the final scene, at the crowded train station, on their departure to Fayyum, Layla sees hundreds of youths enthusiastically embarking the trains for Port Said, and numerous rows of militants marching along the platforms. An officer's voice announces an hour's delay of all trains because of the priority given to trains to and from Port Said. A feeling of futility and great shame overcomes her when she compares this sight with her selfish family's decision to escape from war. Her eyes search among the crowds, moved by the knowledge that Husayn was among them. Meanwhile, her father and Professor Ramzi attempt to persuade Layla to stay close to them because of the huge crowds. But the sight of casualties arriving from Port Said, suddenly injects a strong will and courage back into her. She hands over the engagement ring to Professor Ramzi and runs frantically through the crowds, completely ignoring her parents' bewildered appeals to turn back;
- d) The film's last shot shows Layla desperately searching for Husayn who saw her among the crowds and called out to her. She runs to catch the train that Husayn was on. While the train is slowly pulling out of the station, dozens of hands reach out to

pull her onto the moving train, where she runs into the arms of Husayn and makes for the front with him;

e) The film's closure is located in Cairo and not in Port Said as is the case in the novel.

The film ends here and no scenes of Layla, living in Port Said with her brother Mahmud, and sister-in-law Sanaa, or her getting injured in the battlefield in Port Said are shown in the film. The film ends with the tripartite aggression still intensifying all over Egypt, while the novel ends with the aggression coming to an end, with the ending based in Port Said and not Cairo. Thus, we do not only have a complete modification in some scenes but also a change in the location.

In the closing scenes of the film, one understands that Layla regained her inner strength because she was engulfed with the patriotic crowd. Her activist spirit was recharged through the collective, as Husayn had always advised her in his letters. The rediscovery of her courage is shown, in the film, through passive observation of the events in Cairo station and not by her direct involvement in the front in Port Said, as depicted in the novel. Finally, her self-determination to master her own destiny in the film is hinged on Husayn. She managed to escape her despotic father and Professor Ramzi's clutches because Husayn was her saviour on the train to Port Said.

When Henry Barakat was asked why he opted for a major textual variation for the ending of this film, he said that this was a matter of time factor and also budget limitations. He could not stretch it further to shoot on location at Port Said and thus, preferred that the narrative of the film ends in Cairo without involving the scenes of

paratroopers or the blowing up of Ferdinand de Lesseps statue in Port Said. Barakat believed that even through the altered closure of the novel, he still emphasised the novelist's basic intentions: the triumph of Layla over herself, the importance of patriotism, and to give a message of hope for reform by the young generation.³¹⁸ The film, like the novel, ends with a happy ending of sincere love that conquers all obstacles. Finally, Layla and Husayn found each other.

The following table shows the film variations, related to women's plight, by Henry Barakat when compared to Latifa al-Zayyat's novel.

Table 6.1 Film variations related to the plight of women

NOVEL	FILM
Plot	Plot
Mahmud is shot in the leg during the 1946 uprisings.	This event is not shown in the film
Samia Zaki plays the role of the feminist patriotic school leader.	It is Layla who takes this patriotic role.
Father's corporal punishment of Layla occurs after the end of the demonstration when they learn about her participation.	Parents' tense reaction is juxtaposed with that of the demonstration.
Episodes of Layla arguing with her mother about Layla's expected social behaviour.	These are not featured in the film.
Reference to Safaa's suicide because of an imposed marriage	These are not featured in the film.
After her graduation in August, crafty Layla applies as a teacher for Port Said to escape from her parents' tyranny and her wedding to Professor Ramzi in November.	This is not featured in the film.

NOVEL	FILM
Plot	Plot
Layla participates as an assistant to the casualties in Port Said and lives with her brother Mahmud and Sanaa during the 1956 tripartite aggression.	Layla's parents, together with Professor Ramzi, are in Cairo at the same time, preparing to leave for Al-Fayyum.
In Port Said Layla meets Husayn twice before she finally admits her love to him. She rebels against all the social constraints and patriarchal family control. They remain together in Port Said to build a brighter future together.	In Cairo during an air raid, Layla meets Husayn for a short instance and admits that she is too weak to gain her will and self-confidence. Husayn informs her of his departure to Port Said by train.
These scenes are not in the novel.	At Cairo train station, Layla, together with her parents and Professor Ramzi is on the platform to depart. But there is an hour delay because priority is given to Port Said trains.
These scenes are not in the novel.	Layla wanders off on her own on the platform and observes the huge crowds, the military and the numerous casualties arriving or departing to Port Said.
	Layla is ashamed about the fact that when her nation needs her, she is denying her help. She thinks of Husayn who is among the crowds.
A happy ending.	Professor Ramzi and her parents order Layla to stay with them.
	Layla hands over her engagement ring to Professor Ramzi and runs to the first departing train to Port Said. She ignores her parents' pleas. Her patriotic spirit is rekindled by the huge crowds in the station.
	Layla is helped to jump on the moving train by the passengers.
	Husayn catches sight of her and runs from inside the train to greet her. Finally they embrace while the train gains speed on its way to Port Said.
A happy ending.	A happy ending.

6.4 Dominant Social Ideologies

As discussed earlier, the film *The Open Door*, is a close reproduction of the original text except in its ending. The characters that one comes across in the novel, whether primary or secondary, were brought to life on the screen without any modifications to their roles except with regard to those of Sanaa and Husayn in the film closure, and again with minor changes. The same total adherence from the novel to the film was maintained by Henry Barakat in the dominant social ideologies that persistently oppress mainly the female characters. Both novel and film reveal the disadvantaged position of the female characters and to illustrate their plight, the socio-cultural pressures in the film shall be dealt with.

6.4.1 *Women's assigned status and public life*

The very first part of the film shows the viewer one of the major social restrictions imposed only on women: the fact that women are prohibited from participating in public life. The school headmistress, whose role in the film and novel is to preserve traditions, advocates to her students the importance of women's assigned role in society: that of motherhood and women's place at home. This is the first social criticism that both novel and film clearly want to question.

The social status of the Egyptian woman in the twentieth century was discussed in Chapter Two,³¹⁹ however a brief reference to this aspect would facilitate a better understanding of the socio-cultural perspectives of the film.

Layla came from an urban middle class family residing in central Cairo. As a *bint al-hitta* (daughter of the neighbourhood) she was not secluded from men and the

interaction between the two sexes was allowed, as long as this took place in the presence of a family member. Family honour, virginity and reputation are among the sacred social and moral principles to be followed. For Layla and her family, a good reputation is of paramount importance and that is why her mother kept repeating the adages that those who follow the fundamentals cannot go wrong or that appearance is what really counts. In the neighbourhood everyone knows all the women, and their actions are always monitored. A woman's public behaviour had to be in accordance with social expectations. From both novel and film we learn that it was regarded as very shameful for a girl to actively participate in political affairs or in demonstrations just like Layla did. That is why her mother admonishes her and tells her that she had shamed the family's name as well as that of the whole neighbourhood. Her father lamented the fact that he had lived to see the day when his daughter took part in a demonstration, which in the 1940s or 1950s was unimaginable, even though in 1919 prominent Cairene women did take part in demonstrations. Upper and middle class women were generally confined by the rules governing the household, mainly seclusion and veiling. Severe social strictures limited all women and prohibited most of them from participating in public life.³²⁰ The prohibition of women's participation in public life or the political arena, is not a recent one associated only with the preservation of family honour, burdened only on women, but it has been also a question of dominance encouraged by moral order, which dates back to the advent of Islam. For example, there is little evidence of 'Aisha's intervention in any major political decisions taken by the Prophet even though she was his favourite wife, and "in spite of all the nobility, the learning, the devotion and the piety of 'Aisha, the Prophet did the opposite of what she wanted."³²¹ Also, the Prophet has been quoted by the famous jurist al-Māwardi (d.1058) that "a

people who entrusts their affairs to a woman will not prosper."³²² Besides these sayings, traditions or myths, the power of the woman in Islam can be regarded as limited if one quotes the holy Qur'ān from Sura 4, verse 34 that "Men are in charge of women, because Allah had given the one more (strength) than the other." But on the other hand, Islam never hindered women from becoming political leaders, like Shajarat al-Durr, who ruled Egypt as sovereign regent in 1250 for three months. It is more a matter of patriarchal control and traditions enforced by men, who always seized power from women and preferred to seclude women for their advancement.

As a young woman, Layla regarded the social strictures and patriarchal family control as unjust to women, since she believed that men and women should be equal in all matters. Layla's awareness and need to strive hard to rebel against her social pressures led to her psychological oppression. But her torments to struggle for gender equality in the film are in accordance with the socio-historical realities of the 1940s to late 1950s in Cairo.

The feminist movement in Egypt was born in 1919, when a number of veiled upper-class urban women marched in protest against the British. Strictly speaking, the women involved in the demonstrations and marches of 1919 did not march on behalf of their rights, but rather advocated the same nationalist point as those presented by men.³²³ From its inception, Egyptian feminism was linked with nationalism and supported the desire to develop Egypt as well as liberate the country from foreign control. These ideologies are all reproduced in Layla's character in the film.

The Open Door's social and political events are spread over a decade from the late 1940s to 1950s. Some of the feminist demands of the 1920s had not yet been fully granted in the time frame of the film story. Behind Layla's claims and plight against social pressures, there is the latent message for women's full participation in public and political affairs. In 1948, *Bint al-Nil*, was Cairo's first all female political party to be established. Following the Cairo fire in 1951, members of this party demanded representation of women in Parliament, while education was made free for both sexes up to the secondary level. In the film, these aspects are hardly touched upon, except when, at the university, Layla and her female colleagues are seen enlisting for the National Guard, an act that is discouraged by Professor Ramzi, who advises Layla that her involvement in the military is nonsense and it should be left for the non-intellectuals. Women's aspirations for equal status are hinted at through Husayn's encouraging words to Layla, and in his letters, whose subtle messages to her call for reform in the Egyptian society: "The very same rules that you despise and that I do too, and all who look toward a better future for our people and our nation."³²⁴

Nasser's revolution eventually did grant the Egyptian woman the right to vote in 1956, the same year that the Suez Canal was nationalised. In 1957 the first women were elected in parliament and so Layla's aspirations for a real change in her society together with that of emancipation began to materialise, as Husayn had once told her "we determine the end; we make it- me, you, Mahmud, everyone who loves Egypt."³²⁵

6.4.2 Adherence and defiance to the dominant social ideologies

Throughout the film one experiences a clash as regards the generation gap when it comes to their social ideologies. But adhering to or defying the “fundamentals” still led to the same consequence: suffering, and Layla was not the only victim of her social pressures, so were Jamila, her cousin, and Sanaa, Layla’s sister-in-law and university friend. As *banāt al-ḥitta* all women are expected to maintain their honour and family reputation. For example, a woman is not expected to date a man by herself before marriage or go out by herself to bars or clubs. Male relatives are responsible for the girl’s virginity and family honour. These related to her worth and consigned her as a valuable commodity, which at the same time restricted her freedom of movement in society at large. A woman cannot appear in public, walking hand-in-hand or hugging her fiancé, unless they are formally engaged. Thus, with such strict social codes, it is quite difficult for a woman to experience or discover honest love, and many times they end up marrying a husband whom they do not like. The patriarchal nature of Muslim society and the value attached to lineage ensured that men formulated the rules for marriage. An imposed husband was preferred by the parents, because through such a marriage, family and political alliances together with economic interests would improve the collective good at the expense of the bride’s feelings. Love or mutual affection was not part of imposed marriages. This was exactly the case for Jamila and her relative Safaa. Both Jamila and Safaa complied with the “fundamentals” of their society and chafed under their mothers’ pressure to marry a man “whose pocket would not shame him.” Safaa could not endure her forced marriage and committed suicide, while Jamila, who also attempted suicide, managed to escape reality by taking up Sidqi as her boyfriend, even though she was married to rich Ali Bey. Her mother rejected Jamila’s plea to file for a

divorce and simply warned her that she did not want Jamila to cause scandals to the family. Jamila's mother was more than pleased to marry off her daughter to a wealthy and powerful *bey* so as to improve her social class status. Nevertheless, even though, Jamila appeared to be happily married and well off, she also was undergoing a silent plight because of her imposed marriage. This clearly emerges in the film during Layla's engagement party, when the latter accidentally finds Jamila and Sidqi in the middle of a sexual affair. Strangely enough, despite the harsh penalties and perils in transgressing the sexual codes of adultery, it appears that there is a tacit permission for women to enter into extramarital sexual liaisons, wherever and however they are conducted, in spite of family vigilance. After all, Jamila's mother had also suggested to her that it is better if she finds a paramour, instead of divorcing her rich powerful husband without causing scandals. Jamila's anguish and plight is exposed to Layla, to whom she bitterly explains her sufferings because she was trapped in the rigid social traditions that she blindly agreed to follow for the sake of prestige and a generous dowry.

Layla soon realises that unwittingly, because of her social and family pressures, she has also consented to an imposed marriage like Jamila's. Layla's plight reaches its zenith when she learns that Professor Ramzi was not marrying her for love, but because she was quiet, obedient and compliant. Although Layla attempts to tell her father that she has changed her mind and does not want to marry Professor Ramzi, her father's violent and murderous looks terrified her and made her submit to his demand and Professor Ramzi's arrogance. Layla's internal struggles for truth and to rebel against her social constraints cause her serious psychological sufferings. She becomes a terrified introvert and a silent rebel, who philosophises to herself, but

never utters a word or protests against anything. She tries to figure out what went wrong, even though she had followed the sacred social rules that her mother had taught her. Towards the end of the film one witnesses Layla's internal struggles: either she liberates herself from her social constraints and rebels against them, or else accepts to conform to patriarchal control to please her family. Layla was faced with a double plight because whichever decision she took, she would still suffer the consequences. In the film, through Husayn's letters (the only possible means of communication with a man outside her family) and his final encounter with her, she chose to defy her social strictures and run away from her family to join Husayn in Port Said. However, by choosing to free herself from an imposed husband to find peace within herself, she would still never be totally free from her family's punishment or social constraints, even though Mahmud had tried hard to explain to his parents that the fundamentals have changed and that they all have to learn to adapt to them.

Although Sanaa has a secondary role in the film, one cannot help noticing that Sanaa also suffered from social disapproval and eventual marginalization because of her bold decisions to defy all the social norms that she was expected to follow. For example, Sanaa goes swimming with Mahmud while Layla's family were on vacation in Port Said. Sanaa even dates Mahmud secretly in Cairo and lets Mahmud hold her hand in public during their stay in Port Said and at Layla's engagement party. On the other hand, Layla refuses to let Husayn walk next to her or hold her hand in the presence of her brother, who is supposed to protect and monitor her honour. But Sanaa and Mahmud defy all social ideologies and traditions when they inform their parents of their wedding plans. In a brief scene in the film, a horrified

Layla watches her parents' rigid opposition to Mahmud's wedding intentions to Sanaa. His father asks about the dowry and the bridal money that his son is to give to Sanaa and her family, but Mahmud bravely replies that he was going to marry for love and not to purchase Sanaa's family. Professor Ramzi's attempts to discourage Mahmud from marrying Sanaa were all futile. However, because Mahmud and Sanaa decided to go ahead with their plans despite all the family and social pressures, they both were banished and had to endure the pain of their families' rejection and social marginalization. Moving to Port Said away from their oppressive social milieu, they were in a better position to lead a free life. Layla, Sanaa and Mahmud all sought to free themselves from rigid family control and social expectations, which they found absurd. While seeking this self-liberation and self-determination, the women were the ones who suffered most, but who were also victorious in the end, because they defied the social ideologies. On the other hand, Jamila, her mother, and her aunt were doomed to remain imprisoned in their sacred social ideologies because they preferred not to "cause scandals". None of them dared to violate the social codes and yet they were victims of these same codes.

6.4.3 Oppressed mothers and mothers as oppressors

In the film one comes across two mothers: Saniya, Layla's mother and Samira, Jamila's mother who are sisters and who play a strong secondary role. Layla's mother is the worse of the two because she is doubly oppressed: by her husband and her own society, while Jamila's mother is a widow and abides only by her social and moral constraints. Layla's mother lives in fear of her chauvinist husband who holds her fully responsible as the monitor and guarantor of Layla's upbringing and family honour. Saniya obeys her husband's every command and sheds useless tears in the

face of difficult situations without offering any pragmatic solutions. She is depicted as the busy housewife, whose only form of power is over her daughter Layla. She constantly urges her to obey and follow the “fundamentals.” Once again in this film, the mother is the guardian of tradition; “It is the mother who is at the service of a greater value than her own maternal instinct: a purely moral value. For her, maternity is a moral function judged according to the laws of social order inside which she grew up. She channels her love and tenderness as secondary, as long as the duty towards the preservation of moral and social values permit her.”³²⁶

In the film we see Layla upset about her mother’s constant orders as to what to do and what not to do with regard to her social behaviour. In one scene, while her mother is sewing, Layla appears nervous and snaps harsh replies to her inquisitive mother, such an attitude reveals that Layla felt suffocated by her mother’s orders, which on her part were simply perpetuating the guiding rules and her husband’s orders. Although Layla was allowed to pursue her studies at university, she still remained under her parents’ control and protection and it was her mother’s duty to scrutinise her behaviour closely. Layla’s astonishment as regards this oppression increases when she learns from her thrilled mother that Layla was to be married to Professor Ramzi without her own consent, thereby realising that her husband-to-be would replace her parents’ patriarchal control. Layla had had imposed a husband, whom she did not choose or love; her plight appeared perpetual. The mother-daughter relationship based on trust, affection or mutual love did not exist between Layla and her mother. Their relationship was based on submission: from father to mother and from mother to daughter. Saniya simply echoes her husband’s

demands; she lives for him and by him in fear and thereby oppresses her own daughter.

Jamila's mother is more authoritative and imposing than Layla's mother. As the latter jealously expresses: "My sister Samira is very clever. She knows exactly how to keep her children tucked under her wing."³²⁷ But Samira is a cruel, egoistic mother and a blind follower of her social order. Her only motives were to climb the social ladder, attach her family's identity and reputation with the rich aristocratic class. She manages to exercise her motherhood power on her daughter Jamila. A loving mother would undoubtedly have tried to ensure her daughter's happiness. But Samira is selfish and treats her daughter as if she were a commodity for sale. She had her own interests at heart and not her daughter's. But Samira's plan could only work out because Jamila was brought up as a submissive girl, fearful of social constraints. Despite Jamila's protests with her mother that she did not like Ali Bey, she finally gave in to her when Samira constantly mentioned to Jamila his wealth, his reputation and power that her future husband had, but she never mentioned love. After three years of marriage, Jamila from a submissive daughter, turned into a worldly-wise woman, but her plight was not visible to those around her except to her mother and Layla. Jamila had told both of them of her deep sorrow and suffering in her loveless marriage. But her mother refused to hear of a divorce even though she knew that Jamila's marriage was a disaster of her own making. Samira was determined that her daughter's marriage would not break down, so that the family's reputation would remain intact. Jamila was betrayed by her own mother, who made her obey the fundamentals at the expense of her own feelings.

Although these two mothers took different attitudes towards their daughters, their common point of upbringing was a determined preconception regarding honour, authority and legality. Both were willing to sacrifice their daughters (Samira succeeded) to maintain their duty towards society, and towards a certain social order of which mothers are the guardians.

6.4.4 The plight of imposed marriages

Another traditional aspect that women were expected to comply with is their parents' full consent of their future husband. In the past, arranged marriages were highly preferred because of the bridal sum and the contracted dowry. First cousin marriages were also preferred, since it kept wealth, in whatever form, within the family. In imposed or prearranged marriage contracts there was little element of choice for the marriage partners. But in Modern day Egypt arranged marriages are on the decline since couples prefer marriages based on mutual love. Andrea Rugh's research in Egypt in the 1980s showed that rational and romantic approaches to marriage were still frequently at odds among the urban lower classes, but the concept of a compassionate marriage was well spread among the urban middle and upper classes.³²⁸ However, the parents' opinion of their daughter's future husband is still important.

In *The Open Door* we are presented with four marriage situations, three imposed and one based on mutual love. In the case of imposed marriages, the woman's personality is completely hidden when it comes to choosing a husband. Despite Jamila's protests that she did not love Ali Bey, her mother was able to manipulate and persuade her daughter to accept this marriage. Thus Jamila never chose her

husband. But in the eyes of her family, Jamila was an exemplary daughter because she obeyed the social rules. No one cared or bothered, not even her own mother, about Jamila's great sadness and depression as a result of a marriage to a man who was much older than her. Thus, we have not only an oppressed Jamila but also a resigned helpless woman. Although Jamila had obeyed her mother and the social norms, she secretly defied the moral code by having extramarital affairs with different men, even though polygamy is permitted in the Qur'ān among Muslim men, polyandry is prohibited for Muslim women.

Safaa's marriage scenario ended up in a tragedy. Instead of accepting her predetermined fate, Safaa rebels against her family's imposed marriage and commits suicide.

Layla's case was slightly different because it was an indirect imposition. Professor Ramzi's marriage proposal went straight to her parents who never asked for her consent about this marriage, even though this is against the precepts of Islam. As has previously been indicated, Layla found herself in a very contradictory situation because on the one hand, she was impressed by Husayn's honest love for her and on the other hand, she found herself succumbing to Professor Ramzi's high reputation and her family's patriarchal control. Her true self becomes crushed and torn between two poles: to succumb to her true emotional desires and to be free from all the social constraints, or to obey her father's will in this imposed marriage, since her father threatened to kill her if she dared violate his patriarchal order, as well as the legal, moral or social orders. But Layla was a silent rebel, armed with knowledge. Her

wit, her self-determination and her pursuit of truth saved her and she courageously defied all her social and family constraints.

Sanaa's marriage to Mahmud was regarded as dishonourable for both families, because neither Sanaa nor Mahmud sought parental approval or adhered to the required traditional procedures, such as the bridal money to the bride's family or the dowry to the bride, and also an official engagement. But for Sanaa and Mahmud's young generation, these traditional systems were shifting. Both of them defied the social order and in the film we see that Mahmud's father expelled him from his house and refused to acknowledge Sanaa as his daughter-in-law, for him she was a "loose woman". From all the female characters, Sanaa is depicted as the least oppressed, only because she was a rebel who courageously defied all the dominant ideologies. Instead of accepting to dissolve herself in her social system, she chose to please herself and become a reformer rather than a perpetuator of old traditions.

The following table shows the assigned roles of all the characters in both novel and film:

Table 6.2 Characters: a comparison between novel and film

NOVEL	FILM
<u>Main Female Characters</u>	
Layla, Saniya, Samira and Jamila.	The same.
<u>Secondary Female Characters</u>	
Sanaa, Adila, school headmistress, Dawlat Hanim and Safaa.	Sanaa, Adila, headmistress. Not shown or referred to.
Souchette	Souchette

NOVEL	FILM
<u>Main Male Characters</u>	
Muhammad Effendi (Layla's father)	The same.
Mahmud (Layla's brother)	The same.
Isam (Layla's cousin)	The same.
<u>Secondary Male Characters</u>	
Husayn (Mahmud's friend, an engineer)	The same.
Professor Ramzi (Layla's fiancé & Lecturer)	The same.
Sidqi (a rich spoilt friend of Jamila)	The same.
Ali Bey (Jamila's old & wealthy husband)	The same.
<u>Oppressed Female Characters</u>	
Layla (except in the end)	The same.
Jamila	The same.
Saniya (Layla's mother)	The same.
Safaa	Not mentioned.
<u>Oppressive Characters</u>	
Saniya, Samira (Jamila's mother)	The same.
Muhammad Effendi (a despotic father)	The same.
Isam (a usurper, sex maniac)	The same.
Professor Ramzi (a chauvenist)	The same.
<u>Confident and courageous characters</u>	
Mahmud, Sanaa, Husayn	The same.
Layla (in the end)	The same.

6.5 Conclusion

In drawing an analogy between the chosen novel and its filmic adaptation, this chapter has attempted to depict the hardships that Egyptian women had to face not only because of social pressures but also because of their own families. Henry Barakat, has to a great extent, demonstrated a loyal adherence to the original text, with the exception of the film closure. Through his intelligent cinematic techniques (such as cross-cutting, close-ups etc) he has succeeded in bringing to life the sufferings of his characters, together with the real political events of the late 1940s to the 1950s. Both novel and film should be regarded as timely literary works, a clear reproduction of the socio-historical events that Egypt went through after World War II till the post-Nasser revolution. These historical events that shaped the future of Egypt were brilliantly woven with the personal liberation versus the political commitment, the nation's good versus the improvement of women's status. The film addresses the conflict of reconciling one's own desires (mainly the female protagonists) with the harsh reality of which they are a part. To resolve this dilemma, the female characters, especially Layla, believed it necessary to annihilate their own individuality, so as to find their proper place in a patriarchal society controlled by rigid social traditions. This is where the plight of the female characters in the film stands out clearly. Layla and Sanaa, despite their social and family constraints, were victorious because they did not remain passive and submissive like the other women in the film; on the contrary, they preferred to defy all rules. Both novel and film conclude with a happy ending and with a message of the nation's hope in the young generation that will shape up the social and political future for the better.

-
- 303 Latifa al-Zayyat, *The Open Door*, trans. Marilyn Booth, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000), p. x.
- 304 Latifa al-Zayyat, *The Open Door*, p. 44.
- 305 *ibid.*, p. 35.
- 306 *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 307 *ibid.*, p. 41.
- 308 *ibid.*, p. 136.
- 309 Latifa Al Zayyat (Interview), "On Political Commitment and Feminist Writing", in *Alif 10* (1980), p.134.
- 310 Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt 1923-1973* (London: Al-Saqi Books, 1985), p. 55.
- 311 *ibid.*, pp. 55-57.
- 312 William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 285-286.
- 313 *ibid.*, p. 291.
- 314 Personal interview with Henry Barakat, Cairo, April, 1996.
- 315 *ibid.*
- 316 Latifa al-Zayyat (Interview), "On Political Commitment and Feminist Writing", p. 134.
- 317 Al-Zayyat, *The Open Door*, p. 364.
- 318 Personal interview with Henry Barakat, Cairo, April, 1996.
- 319 See Chapter 2, pp. 74 – 78.
- 320 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, "The Revolutionary Gentlewomen in Egypt", in *Women in the Muslim World*, (eds.) Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 261-276.
- 321 W. Walther, *Woman in Islam: from Medieval to Modern times* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 1993), p. 124.
- 322 As cited in Ruth Roded, *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 113.
- 323 Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics", in *Women in the Muslim World*, p. 289.
- 324 Latifa al-Zayyat, *The Open Door*, p. 218.
- 325 *ibid.*, p. 154.
- 326 Sophie Abdallah, *Eve et quatre géants* (Cairo: Organisme Egyptien du livre, 1976), p. 50.
- 327 Latifa al-Zayyat, *The Open Door*, p. 105.
- 328 Andrea Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), pp. 107-147.

Chapter Seven

Woman's Oppression in *The Beginning and the End*

"You made me fall into a fatal predicament...

Do you take me for a plaything which you can throw away whenever you like?"

Najib Mahfuz (1985: p. 137)

7.0 Introduction

Najib Mahfuz is undoubtedly one of the most widely acclaimed Arab novelists, and his novels became even more popular once he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1988. Since Mahfuz's literary output extends over a period of sixty years, this has led to numerous and various analyses of his works by several literary scholars, among whom many (Kilpatrick 1974, Badawi 1993, El-Enany 1993 and Milson 1998) have attempted to classify Mahfuz's works by style or content, and among the major categorisations of his works, we find the historical works, the socio-realistic works or those of psychological conflicts.³²⁹

Since one of the major themes of the present research is related to the socio-cultural realities of Egyptian society, as reproduced in the films of the 1940s to the 1960s, refraining from choosing a novel from Mahfuz's literary repertoire, would have been a sin of omission. Mahfuz's continuous pursuit of the truth, with regard to his society's problems, is a recurrent motif in his novels, which should not be overlooked by anyone who is interested in the social and cultural development of Egypt. Indeed, Mahfuz is a great observer of Egyptian society - one that he has often severely criticised in his works, but towards which he was full of empathy. As Al-

Naqqāsh aptly notes about Mahfuz: “He has a love affair with Egypt as no other writer has had before or after him.”³³⁰ Al-Naqqāsh further remarks that, “even if you read hundreds of books on Egyptian history, politics and social life, you cannot understand Egypt unless you read Najib Mahfuz. Mahfuz gives you the real taste of Egypt. He puts the keys to understanding the Egyptian personality into your hands, and then leads you into the hidden chambers of the real authentic Egyptian spirit.”³³¹ Out of Mahfuz’s repertoire of social realistic novels, the present researcher selected *Bidāya wa Nihāya*, (The Beginning and the End, 1950) which was described by Anwar al-Ma‘addawī, a respected Egyptian journalist, as “a perfect work of art.”³³²

This chapter first sketches Mahfuz’s novel, which will be compared to its cinematic adaptation by Salah Abu Seyf. As in the previous chapters, particular attention will be paid to the plight of the female characters, and how the film-maker depicted their dilemmas within the social dominant ideologies of Egypt. Since the film-maker was very faithful to the novel, with the exception of some minor scenes, this case study will take a slightly different approach to the one adopted in the two previous analyses. In fact, both the novel and the film will be discussed concurrently as regards the plot and the narrative, the characters and their roles, and their parameters of conduct within the Egyptian social conventions or pressures.

7.1 The setting of the novel

The Beginning and the End deals with the pressures and drama of life in Egypt shortly before the Second World War. The novel evolves around three major factors: fate, poverty and social pressures that lead to a tragic ending. Fate makes its initial appearance at the very outset of the novel, when the father, who is the sole

breadwinner, dies of a heart attack. Fate and individual choices by the members of this family, together with poverty, create a ripple effect and generate more problems. Despair, hardship and social injustice are overwhelming in an atmosphere of pessimism and bitterness against the circumstances that the protagonists encounter. An air of imminent catastrophe dominates throughout the novel. Hope only produces a mirage. "Death is more merciful than hope itself! There is nothing surprising in this, for death is divinely appointed, while hope is the creation of human folly. Both end in frustration."³³³

The Beginning and the End is set in Cairo's poor parts of the old suburb of Shubra and spans a period of three years. The novel begins in 1933,³³⁴ during the stifling economic conditions prevalent in Egypt at that time, and ends in 1936 or early 1937. We read of Hasanayn's premature graduation from the Military Academy³³⁵ as a result of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which stipulated an increase in the numbers of the Egyptian army, and the action ends within months of Hasanayn's graduation. This is a story about the decline and fall of a lower-middle-class family, where traditional and patriarchal beliefs are strictly adhered to, despite the absence of the father as the power of authority in the family. The themes and characters are stereotypes and typical of an Arab society, as represented in everyday life.

7.1.1 *The Plot and the Narrative*

The novel opens with a problem: the sudden death of the father, a minor government clerk, who leaves his family to face a life of destitution. Already of limited means, this lower-middle-class family made up of a widow, three sons and a daughter, is

reduced to measures of austerity, having to survive only on a meagre pension left by the deceased father, without any other sort of inheritance. The mother, a strong-willed and resourceful person, stoically perseveres to keep her family together, and to save it from ruin. However, all her efforts are doomed to failure. All the family members put up with living in abject poverty, in the hope that the middle son, Husayn will obtain his baccalaureate and bring financial relief to his family. Meanwhile, the mother banishes all hope that her eldest son Hasan will ever shoulder his responsibility and support the family, as after all, he was duty bound to do. Hasan is twenty-five years old at the outset of the novel; a school drop out, an idle person and an utterly spoilt man, who solely aspires to a singing career. Eventually, his life degenerates to one of depravation. When he abandons home, he turns to a life of crime. Hasan becomes a nightclub bouncer and a drug-pusher living with a professional prostitute. He, however, keeps contact with his family, and on two occasions manages to help his two brothers, in time of dire need. As a result of Hasan's outright neglect of duty and for failing to protect and provide for his family, Nafisa, the twenty-three year old daughter has in part, to shoulder the family's financial burdens. Being the only daughter, we read that she was the preferred child of the deceased father. Nafisa is unattractive and loses whatever hopes she has of marrying, since usually women are already married by nineteen. Her pride is shattered for now she has to work as a dressmaker to support the family. This is considered to be socially humiliating as regards Egyptian social status of that time and further accentuates her depression, since she must also sew bridal gowns. Nafisa finds it quite dishonourable to visit her clients in their homes and also to do her shopping, since such chores are usually carried out by family servants. In the hope of getting married, she gradually starts to accept the compliments and advances of

Salman Jabir, a grocer in her neighbourhood quarters, until she finally succumbs to him. But he rejects her after seducing her, so as to marry the wealthy daughter of another grocer, in an arranged marriage between the parents of the bride and the groom. Nafisa is bound to suffer even more, when she is asked to sew the bridal trousseau for Salman's bride. Overcome by her strong sexual urges, Nafisa gradually resorts to occasional prostitution. Nearly all of Nafisa's income goes to maintain her other two younger brothers Husayn and Hasanayn. Husayn, the middle brother, is both serious and pious, and even though he does obtain his baccalaureate certificate, he gives up his plans for further education because of Hasanayn. Husayn accepts a poorly paid clerical job in Tanta, away from his family, in order to support it and to pave the way for Hasanayn's ambitious career. In Tanta, Husayn is introduced to his superior's daughter and for a while he dreams about a happily married life with this girl. However, when his mother learns of his intentions, she advises Husayn that such an early marriage would deprive the rest of the family of its livelihood, and thus, he realises that he must relinquish any marriage plans until his family is better off.

The youngest brother, Hasanayn, turns out to be a ruthlessly ambitious person, with wild dreams of climbing up the social ladder overnight. Thanks to the help and sacrifices of Nafisa and Husayn, he manages to graduate as an army professional officer and proudly returns home as a highly respected officer. Hasanayn plans on beginning a new life and maps out his ascent to a higher social status, first by wanting to obliterate his family background. He embarks on his plans by first dumping Bahiya, his young fiancée who lives in his neighbourhood, and to whom he had insisted on becoming engaged when he was still seventeen and in worse times.

Then, he casts his eyes on an important government official's daughter, who is wealthy and powerful, and he dares ask for her hand in marriage, but fate had other plans prepared for him. With alarming speed the young aspirant's world falls apart. His marriage proposal is turned down by the upper-class family, on account of his humble origins; his eldest brother Hasan refuses to quit his criminal life-style when Hasanayn nearly orders him to do so. Meanwhile, when the police look for Hasan in the family's flat in Shubra, Hasanayn, overwhelmed by shame and wrath, advises his family to move to Heliopolis, a more dignified and up-market neighbourhood. But even in their new apartment, the badly injured Hasan seeks refuge with them, again fleeing from the law. The final blow to proud Hasanayn occurs when the police arrest his sister inside a brothel. Full of rancour and unable to face the scandal, he accuses Nafisa of family dishonour. He hastily welcomes her altruistic offer to commit suicide by drowning herself in the Nile, to save his reputation. His sheer egoism, vanity and pride blinded him and for a while he seemed to forget the sacrifices that Nafisa had made to help him. Aware of his sudden downfall, Hasanayn decides to end his life in the Nile, and thus, the novel ends with a double tragedy. Only Husayn, the middle brother, is saved from destruction, even though fate was not kind to him. But because of his endurance, compliance and self-denying character, he successfully sails through all the hardships.

Throughout this novel, Mahfuz paints a very gloomy picture of Cairo. He focuses on the themes regarding family honour, criminality, prostitution, sexual deprivation and family obligations. The novel is saturated with pessimism, hardship and anxiety, and the struggle for survival. To balance the miserable circumstances and the social maladies, Mahfuz offers some relief in the characters of Husayn and his brave mother

Samira. Their honesty, compliance and submission to their socio-economic situation, enabled them to survive the catastrophe. Unlike Mahfuz's other novels, in this novel there are no strong political overtones. In fact, there are only marginal references to the demonstrations against the British and the signing of the Independence Treaty of 1936.³³⁶

7.1.2 Characterisation and Roles

7.1.2:1 The main characters

Unlike the film, the novel centres on Hasanayn, the protagonist of the whole story. All his actions, plans and ambitions affect his family members, his fiancée and even himself. Hasanayn is the ultimate egoist, the over-ambitious son who refuses to accept his family's socio-economic limitations, and yet, does not stick his neck out to improve them. In other words, Hasanayn is the tragic hero³³⁷ who demands either our sympathy or scorn, in his fatal struggle against his past.

Hasanayn is presented as being obsessed with the family's dignity and honour, since his father's death when he was seventeen years old. He contrives the boldest lies in order to keep up appearances with his schoolmates, in case they were to discover his humble origin. Hasanayn's aim was to completely annihilate his past and to aspire to upward mobility. His extreme selfishness is evident, since he harbours no qualms in accepting the sacrifices made by his family to promote his ambitions. When his mother Samira decides that in order to earn an alternative income, Nafisa, his sister has to work as a seamstress, he protests loudly, not to safeguard his sister's dignity,

but to avoid denigrating his own image. “My sister will never become a seamstress. No, I refuse to be a seamstress’s brother!”³³⁸

Hasanayn always complains and protests when his personal interests are involved, and his dialogues in such contexts are full of envious overtones. For example, when he visits Ahmad Yusri Bey’s villa he says “would I ever be able to acquire such a villa?”³³⁹ The problem with Hasanayn’s self-centred character is that he wants an overnight change in fortune. He wants a new past, a new luxurious house, a new grave (for his deceased father), a new family, a glamorous life and a beautiful wealthy fiancée coming from an influential family.³⁴⁰

Upon graduating from the Military Academy, he becomes haughty in his behaviour even at home. Towards the end of the novel, his obsession with glory and high-class status ruins him. When Hasan, his criminal brother, arrives in their new home at Heliopolis to seek shelter from the police, Hasanayn suffers a psychological conflict. He is torn between fraternal love and a morbid fear about his reputation, to the extent that he wishes his brother to die from the serious injuries that he was suffering from. However, Hasanayn does not accuse or reprimand his eldest brother for his crimes, and neither does his mother. Nevertheless, when he discovers that his sister Nafisa is a prostitute, he goes mad, and accuses her of jeopardising his future and dishonouring the whole family. Despite his vain character, Mahfuz makes us sympathetic towards him. The way he develops his character does not allow us to be too harsh in condemning his detestable qualities, because his conduct can also be regarded as a reaction against the discordant socio-economic conditions that produced him. The despicable trait in him is that all the other members of his family

did their utmost to support his capricious career, and yet, he was ungrateful, quick to accuse them or to get them out of his way. In accordance with the actual Arab practice, the brothers were expected to protect and provide material welfare for the female members of the family. In the case of Hasan and Hasanayn, this duty was neglected.

In the film, however, the director Salah Abu Seyf portrays Hasanayn as an unsympathetic opportunistic villain and a chauvinist. Salah Abu Seyf was even criticised for his negative depiction of Hasanayn, something which Mahfuz himself defended.³⁴¹ But if Hasanayn was so ambitious and determined to realise his dreams, why did Mahfuz make him commit suicide at the end? Mahfuz's subtle implication for depicting Hasanayn's character as such is related to the author's negative opinion of the military officers who had led the July 1952 revolution in Egypt.³⁴² In 1936, the Military Academy College for the first time opened its doors to young Egyptian men, whose origins were not aristocratic or upper-class. This was the year when Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sadat and other members joined the Academy, and who as Free Officers led the 1952 revolution. Mahfuz's intended analogy between the fictitious character of Hasanayn, and the leaders of the revolution indicates how much the author abhorred this revolution, as personified in the self-destructive egoistic character of Hasanayn.³⁴³

The black sheep of the family, in both the novel and the film is Hasan, the eldest son who is bone-idle and a spoilt brat. He considers himself as a "tramp" and the only occupations that interest him are singing, dealing in drugs and serving as a bully for his criminal circle of friends. In both the novel and the film, he is hardly rebuked by

his mother for his misconduct, even though he neglects his obligations towards his family, which is expected of the eldest son. His mother had given up hopes that he would ever become the constant reliable protector and financial provider that the family was in dire need. Nevertheless, despite his criminal actions, Hasan is portrayed as a generous, outgoing and sincere pragmatic man without any pretensions or wild ambitions unlike his youngest brother. Hasan's unprecedented kindness saved his two brothers in their hour of need. Without his one time support, their career plans would have been shattered. When Hasan starts living with a prostitute, he hardly pays a visit to his family home. And worst still, when his mother Samira learns of Hasan's immoral behaviour, she does not admonish him about it, but simply accepts it, since he is a man and she needs not bother about his chastity. But here the parameters of the mother's conduct are acceptable within her male dominated society, and her attitude proves a double-standard ideology, because she did not accuse her eldest son of family dishonour for living with a prostitute out of wedlock, since such social taboos apply to women only. Unlike women, men are not sexually deprived before marriage, as both the novel and the film demonstrate. In both the novel and the film, Hasan is depicted as a victim of fate and economic circumstances.

Mahfuz's preferred main characters in the novel appear to be the middle son Husayn and his mother Samira. Husayn is considerate of others, altruistic and proves loyal to his family and friends. He sacrificed his career plan of becoming a teacher for the sake of his young ambitious brother. Husayn, in both the novel and the film, is portrayed as a man of integrity, a pragmatist who accepts gradual progress and one

who perseveres. Unlike Hasanayn, he does not rebel against the hardships that he has to live with.

The mother, in both the novel and the film, is depicted as the strongest character, who through her patience, frugality, determination and wisdom is able to endure and survive all the troubles that life gives her. However, in the novel, but not in the film, the mother's role is more powerful and domineering, as she has a stronger hold on her children. But both the novelist and the film director reproduced a typical Egyptian mother in her conduct and customs. She is the traditional mother who expects her sons, especially the eldest, to provide physical welfare and protection for the family in their father's absence. If her sons were young, her brothers should support her. But Samira only had a younger sister who lived in the countryside and could not expect such assistance or any inheritance. In both the novel and the film, the mother suffers greatly in submission to her fate. In the Arab male-dominated society, a woman's fate is usually dependent on the actions of men who have authority over her, like a father or a husband. Furthermore, the social status and material wealth of women is always dependent on the social and economic status of their protective men, with whom these women are associated. In Samira's case, she is a widow and has no parents or brothers to protect and support her. Thus, her fate is doomed and her situation is an indication of Mahfuz's subtle criticism of the values, beliefs and conventions of his patriarchal society.

Following her husband's death, Samira is confined to her humble home without any social life, since she has no male relatives to provide for her financially. Her possible solution is to remarry, but her old age, the presence of several young

children, coupled with the cultural superstitions that label her a “bad omen”, are all deficits in the marriage market. Such is Samira’s plight, as she unfortunately has young sons, while her eldest one is too unreliable to see to the family’s economic needs. In the film we see Samira clad in the black mourning garment known as *thawb al-hidad*, which indicates her entering widowhood and a withdrawal from society. Despite overwhelming odds, Samira accepts the order of things without complaining. Her plight is a silent and a submissive one within the parameters of her society.

Of a different order is the plight of the young daughter Nafisa, who had grown up in a changing world, but because she belongs to a lower middle class, remains subject to severe medieval social restrictions.

In the novel we read about Nafisa’s concern and awareness of her ugliness and unattractive features, which greatly depress her. Even when her father was alive, no one had asked for her hand in marriage, and now at twenty-three, who would want to marry a fatherless woman without a good dowry? Her chances of getting married were indeed very slim. Her poignant concerns about remaining a spinster, on account of her ugliness and the fact that fate had dealt a mighty blow on her family, are excellently reproduced on the screen by the film director, who portrays her gazing angrily in the mirror, or by crying alone in her room. An ugly woman without her family’s financial backing was doomed to remain a spinster, or end up being married to an old or illiterate man, as usually happens in a traditional Egyptian society. As seen from the previous two chapters on the other two analysed films and even from other literary works, the Egyptian woman of the late 1930s to the 1950s was not free to exercise control over her lifestyle. The principal reason that

originates this rigid tradition is the obsessive notion that patriarchal Arab society suffers from, namely, the importance given to a woman's virginity and honour. As already extensively discussed in the previous two chapters, the guardians of a woman's honour are the father, the brothers or the husband, who according to Islamic precepts enjoy full authority over their women. Thus, Nafisa's conduct has to be evaluated within this social framework.

In the novel, Nafisa's role is as important as Hasanayn's, but she is not the main protagonist. However, the character of Nafisa is central in the film, even though she shares the focal position with Hasanayn. Once again, both the widow's and Nafisa's sacrifices and sufferings for the boys' sake, are emphasised more in the film than in the novel. The relationship between Nafisa and her brothers, especially Hasanayn, is characterised by dominance and submission, even in the absence of her father. When her father was still alive, we are given to understand that the relationship between father and daughter was based on the same principles, that of dominance and submission, since the father was obliged to care for her, protect her and marry her off. In turn, Nafisa is expected to be obedient, industrious, stay at home and be away from the public eye, and to keep her family's honour intact. The film director, through juxtaposed scenes, succeeds in illustrating the stark contrast between the dominant roles of Hasanayn, who is demanding, egoistic and abusive towards his sister and his fiancée, and that of Nafisa, who is altruistic and submissive.

Nafisa is probably the most tragic female character created by Mahfuz, and the worst victim of her social dominant ideologies in his novels. Her name means 'precious' or 'priceless' and is derived from the word *nafs* (soul), which in Islamic Sufi

tradition implies a desirable soul with evil inclinations. There is an obvious ironic contrast between the meaning of Nafisa's name, and the harsh reality of her life. Also, one cannot help noticing the constant ironic note to her name, when she eventually stoops into occasional prostitution, a 'precious' woman in a degrading occupation.

Nafisa had no further education other than the elementary school she attended as a child, and she always lived in the confines of her home, under the protection of her parents, until her father's sudden death. She immediately becomes apprehensive about her own future. Nowhere is it mentioned that she inherited anything from her father, and since he died before she was married off, her brothers became responsible for her welfare, conduct and status. This again is quite in accordance with actual practice. We see that until she was fully sheltered at home, before her father's death, she was a flat and dull character, but a 'good' woman. Out of dire necessity Nafisa is obliged to work as a dressmaker and has to be out of the house to see to her clients' orders. As soon as she starts going out of her house, she becomes the 'bad' woman, for being independent and not at the mercy of a man's economic support or full control. Now that Nafisa is 'alone', that is, without a providing father or brother, she becomes a colourful character, rather independent, free to roam the streets of Cairo and to meet different people from all walks of life. By western culture standards, she becomes the 'proper' independent woman, but within the parameters of the Egyptian culture of the period involved, Nafisa's new role is deplorable.

In both the novel and the film, we witness Nafisa's difficulty in agreeing to work as a dressmaker, a low rank occupation, even for her family class status. The work of a

dressmaker was performed by the traders or working class, and regarded as dishonourable by the middle-class, because it required the woman to work outside her home at times, especially if she were an unmarried dressmaker. For this reason, in the novel, more than in the film though, we see Hasanayn protesting against Nafisa's work, and even Bahiya, his young fiancée, expresses contempt in this regard. The irony is that Hasanayn never refused Nafisa's generous financial support, at times, even behind their mother's back, and never offered her an alternative solution to her 'debasing' job.

Nafisa's desperate hopes for getting married culminate with her encounters with Salman Jabir, the grocer. She readily succumbs to his verbal advances, and naively accepts all his extra and free foodstuffs by which she can maintain her hungry brothers. With Salman being her only hope of marriage status, Nafisa starts meeting him secretly in dark alleys, regardless of the social constraints imposed on her and the consequences she would have to face if caught in Salman's company. The latter is also aware of social taboos and her fears, and exploits the opportunity by inviting her to his house, so that they can enjoy some "privacy". Nafisa's surrender was her first step to her social downfall. One must point out that it is a very unusual custom for a woman in Egypt – still more in the 1930s – to go alone inside a man's house. At first, she resists him but when he promises her marriage and showers her with passionate kisses, she caves in because of her sexually deprived life and her "troubled and tense self". But no sooner does he get his way that he marries another wealthy pretty girl. At this stage Nafisa finds herself totally trapped; driven by poverty, loneliness, despair, and coupled with strong sexual compulsions, she begins to secretly prostitute herself for meagre sums of money that her family sorely need. Nafisa manages to find the

opportunity for her brief escapades, under the pretext of her work as a dressmaker, which permits her to leave the house.

When the youngest brother finally graduates from Military College, and considers himself in a position to take care of his sister's welfare, he orders her to quit her job as a dressmaker, since it had caused him enough humiliation. Yet, by now, Nafisa had tasted some kind of freedom, even if such freedom was regarded as going against her ingrained traditions. She still preferred to continue her work as a dressmaker and conduct her secret meetings with men. She has also become too interested and entangled in her sexual urges and was in despair for not getting married.

On the day Nafisa is arrested in a brothel, the police discreetly notify Hasanayn, the military officer, to spare his reputation. For his sake, she is released without charges. After her release, her brother is furious with her for having tarnished the family's honour. He pressures her to commit suicide for the sake of their reputation. Hasanayn's pressure on his sister Nafisa to commit suicide is another form or device for honour killing. Unlike the film *The Call of the Curlew*, where the uncle kills Hanadi, in this film we encounter a subtle murder, a forced suicide so that the murderer escapes criminal charges.

In line with the prevailing norms in Arab societies,³⁴⁴ Arab women, according to the ideal model, are expected to abstain from any kind of sexual practice before they get married or from any act that might lead to sexual activity. Women, through their modesty, are supposed to uphold family honour and the list of prohibitive behaviour is quite long.³⁴⁵ As Sana al-Khayyat notes "everything is *'ayb* (shame) for girls."³⁴⁶

If a woman transgresses the parameters of her expected behaviour she is destined to face the consequences.

Honour killings, including forced suicide, may occur not only when the woman loses her virginity but also when she is suspected of having lost it or if she transgresses the imposed prohibited borders of social behaviour. For example, a woman may suffer the violence of honour even if she is spotted talking to a man in a neighbourhood or in a street, or if she is seen leaving the car of a strange man in lower-class urban neighbourhoods.³⁴⁷

Thus, in this perspective, Nafisa's tensions and fears are understandable when she meets Salman Jabir in remote dark alleys or when she secretly rides in the car of the mechanic. Nafisa's deeds are clear signs of having jeopardised her social norms, because she "moved with a body in a space where she is not supposed to be,"³⁴⁸ since sex outside marriage or being in the company of men other than relatives or official fiancés are prohibited.

A woman's behaviour is directly linked to virginity, which in turn is closely tied to honour or better a collective honour; the honour of the whole family and not of the individual alone. Women are thus entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining the whole family's reputation, while men are expected to protect and be vigilant in maintaining the honour. It is always a woman's fault if she loses her virginity and the men of the family are expected to preserve their honour and defend it.³⁴⁹ When the woman brings shame onto the family, her closest male relative, usually father or

brother, must restore the family's honour, by killing her, or by forcing the woman to commit suicide as the case in this film.

7.1.2:2 Brother-Sister Relationship

Both the novel and the film give tremendous importance to the strong relationship between Nafisa and her brother Hasanayn, and this calls for further analysis. By delving deeper into this brother-sister relationship, one discovers that it implies more than simply love and dedication, which is another cinematic non-visible message that even Salah Abu Seyf did not fail to represent in his filmic adaptation. In an interesting study by Suad Joseph,³⁵⁰ she contends that in the absence of the father's exercise of patriarchy, a brother, by taking "charge of his sister", is himself learning to become a patriarch, by becoming the man of the house in relation to his sister, mother and other siblings. Suad Joseph describes the brother's empowerment and masculinisation on the sister as "patriarchal connectivity" inscribed as love or strong bonding. She further argues that the brother-sister relationship reveals "psychodynamic, social structural and cultural processes" through which their relationship contributes to the "reproduction of Arab patriarchy."³⁵¹ In this patriarchal view, the brother-sister relationship, as an extension of the father-daughter relationship, is an instrument of the honour-shame complex believed by many scholars to predominate in the Mediterranean family culture.³⁵²

How does the brother exercise control over his sister, whose control leads to "patriarchal connectivity"? Suad Joseph claims that the special brother-sister relationship is to be considered different from a woman's relationship with her father or her close patrilineal relatives, because the brother-sister relationship entails the

complexity of the “love/power dynamics.” One’s sense of self is intimately connected with the self of another so that “the security, identity, integrity, dignity and self-worth of one are tied to the actions of the other.”³⁵³ The brother is always responsible for his sister’s behaviour and the sister is expected to embrace her brother’s wishes or needs as her own, each other’s well being becomes merged. They are brought up to share, care and be committed to each other. Suad Joseph also points out that unlike the West, where the rearing of the children is modelled only on that of the parents’ relationships, in Arab families, the brother-sister rearing is also modelled on their strong mutual relationship. By taking charge of his sister, a brother would be teaching her to accept male power in the name of love, so as to train her for future domestication when she is married. The brother’s disciplinary actions on his sister are understood by all members of the family to be in the best interests of the sister. Even a brother’s violent action on his sister and his continuous love for her involves submission to control her,³⁵⁴ thereby she learns that a brother, like her future husband, is both a loving protector and a controlling power in her life. In this way, sisters identify with their brothers as their security and thus a brother’s achievements open opportunities for her, just as his failures close doors.³⁵⁵ Through the “patriarchal connectivity” sisters learn to understand that to receive the protection and support of brothers they have to see to their brothers’ expectations.³⁵⁶ Both the brother and the sister are therefore using each other as role models in their socialisation of patriarchy. The sisters learn to accept their brothers’ authority over their lives, even when they might disagree with their brothers’ rights over them, as a central factor for maintaining the family honour.

The roles played by Hasanayn and Nafisa in both the novel and the film conform well to Suad Joseph's analysis of the special brother-sister relationship among Arab families. This unique bond explains Nafisa's total submission to her brother Hasanayn and why she easily complied with his request to commit suicide, because her brother's interests and her family's honour transcend their mutual love. Nafisa and Hasanayn's characters and behaviour clearly indicate the realistic socio-cultural norms of their time.

7.1.2:3 The secondary characters

There are many other secondary characters that fall under Mahfuz's preferred or despicable characters. Among the good characters, in both the novel and the film, we come across Bahiya, Hasanayn's young fiancée. Although she never had formal education beyond elementary level, which was typical in those times, Bahiya is portrayed as the preserver of tradition, who safeguards her virginity, despite Hasanayn's advances. She is the typical virtuous obedient daughter, as preferred in an Egyptian traditional society. Bahiya is the submissive daughter, brought up as a precious object, who never transgresses the social or moral order, even at the cost of suppressing or restraining her emotions. Unlike Nafisa, she is shy and withdrawn and never leaves her parents' house, unless with their full consent, and if need be, only accompanied. Since she obeys her mother's advice and social expectations, Bahiya does not err in the rigid social constraints. When she is abandoned by Hasanayn, she agrees to marry Husayn, the middle brother, whose character and nature are similar to hers. For Husayn, Bahiya represents all that he wants in his life; a home, children, security and a well brought up wife, because the notions of

marriage and procreation are ingrained in both males and females up till this day in Arab Muslim societies.

It is through this couple that the status quo could go on indefinitely, as neither of them is a rebel. Bahiya's parents are the honest good neighbours of Husayn's poverty stricken family, who give them the real support. Samira, refers to Farid Effendi's family, their neighbours, as "the best of all people".

Two other minor characters are Ahmad Bey Yusri and Salman Jabir. The former is the aristocratic high government official, who knew the deceased father and on whom the family relies for favours in desperate times of need. The latter is the grocer who seduced Nafisa. He is depicted in both the novel and the film, as a usurper, who is unable to decide for himself, because he is oppressed by his tyrannical father who arranged his marriage to another grocer's daughter.

Against this background where struggling for survival is a daily occurrence, and with a life ruled by fate, the characters that manage to survive the catastrophe are distinguished by their piety, their lack of ambition, and by their acceptance of life as it is, without rebelling in the face of their economic hardships and their social pressures.

7.2 The Film

Salah Abu Seyf was the first film-maker to direct a film based on a published novel by Najib Mahfuz, *The Beginning and the End*. Dinar Film Company produced the film, which bears the same title as the novel, in 1960. Following this filmic

adaptation, twelve of Mahfuz's novels were later adapted for cinema by other film directors, but mostly by Salah Abu Seyf.

The story of the film representation is basically a replica of the novel in all aspects, even in the dialogues of the film, which again are a replica of the original written text. Thus, in this case analysis we have a faithful rendering of the novel to the film by the director. Only some minor secondary scenes have been shifted, slightly modified or else completely excluded from the film. But these minor modifications do not affect the plot or the narrative of the film in any way. Unlike the previous two film analyses, the closure of *The Beginning and the End* totally replicates that of the novel. The only modification that Salah Abu Seyf made was to put Nafisa's role as the centre of the film, where her sacrifices and psychological sufferings are highlighted more than in the novel. Since there are hardly any textual variations from the novel to film, and not even changes in the characterisation, this film's analysis shall focus further on Nafisa's plight when compared to the other characters within her social pressures.

7.2.1 Nafisa's plight

In the film, the director presents Nafisa as the fallen woman and a victim of social constraints. Thus, she is the miserable tragic heroine who attracts pity, rather than blame. Nafisa's sufferings are both psychological and physical, and these are caused mainly by social dominant ideologies or male dominance. Her plight originates from three factors: her work as a dressmaker and the fact that she is both a spinster and a prostitute. Her first torment begins when her mother decides that Nafisa has to start working as a dressmaker. Owing to this decision, we see that Nafisa's reaction is one

of great humiliation and degradation. Broken hearted, she cries out while her youngest brother protests with their mother against this measure. Hasanayn loathes the idea that he has to be the brother of a dressmaker, but does not offer an alternative pragmatic solution to prevent his sister from taking up this job. On the contrary, he welcomes her financial support, especially to pay for his exorbitant college fees. Hasanayn and his mother hardly complain when Nafisa used to arrive home late at night from her work, since they badly needed her cash. Nafisa's love for her ambitious brother and her altruism render her submissive to Hasanayn's dominance, and also, she is indirectly, a victim of her late father's misguidance, because he had acted in accordance with the conventions of society. In *The Beginning and the End* we learn that it was her deceased father who had objected to his daughter studying beyond the elementary school, a decision which arguably contributed to her becoming first a dressmaker, and then to becoming a prostitute. Had her father not opposed his daughter's education, Nafisa would probably have been better off.

Not only was her brother Hasanayn ashamed of the fact that his sister was a dressmaker, but she was also ashamed of herself for being so. In the novel, Nafisa's lengthy reflective thoughts on the fact that she has to work as a dressmaker, have been portrayed on the screen by the film director, through her continuous sobs, and her sad expression while she sits at the sewing machine. It took her a while to adapt to her new job and the idea that she has to be the breadwinner, instead of her supposedly protective brothers. Nafisa realised that she had not only lost her father, but now also her pride. From both the novel and the film we are given to understand that the work of a dressmaker for a lower-middle class family, like Nafisa's, was

regarded as an inferior status job, ideally reserved for the lower working class women. It also meant that at times, she has to be outside the house to work on her clients' orders. As has already been extensively explained in Chapter Two, middle class Egyptian families preferred that their daughters did not work outside their homes, because they feared for the family's honour. It was usually women hailing from the lower social strata or the country womenfolk who enjoyed social freedom, which was dictated by their financial needs. Thus, for Nafisa and her "proud family", working as a dressmaker meant a step towards downward mobility. Adhering to the traditional social norms, preserving the female's chastity and being obsessed with social class image are continuously reflected through Hasanayn's character in both the novel and the film. Nafisa's shame and sense of guilt for working as a dressmaker are self-inflicted, because tradition dictates her conduct.

In theory, Muslim women are not prohibited from working outside their homes, for the Qur'ān says: "Men shall have a benefit from what they earn, and women shall have a benefit from what they earn," and "I shall not lose sight of the labour of any of you who labours (in My way), be it a man or a woman: each of you is an issue of the other."³⁵⁷ Thus, what precludes Muslim Arab women from making their own honest living is blind adherence to their traditions and not Islam.

The social stigma against women working outside their homes comes from both men and women. Both genders are brought up to accept that men are the breadwinners, providers and protectors of their womenfolk, thus the financial support is the men's responsibility. For Egyptian women it is a sign of a status quo not to have to work outside the home, unless it is a prestigious job in a government office or a

profession.³⁵⁸ Women accept to work outside the home because of poverty, divorce, widowhood, and husband's illness or in the absence of male support.³⁵⁹ The women's 'negative' attitude towards work outside the home confirms their cultural biases which in turn constitute a contributing factor in defining women's roles but not a determining one, since the economic need (on the part of women) is a much stronger factor.³⁶⁰

Such is the case of Nafisa, whose economic needs dictated over her family's social and cultural traditions even though her profession is perceived as a step down in the social ladder. In a society where men condemn and resent women's work, and where working women are looked down on, both Hasanayn and Nafisa were fully aware of the stigma that their family has to face. Thus, Hasanayn's harsh protests and Nafisa's crying against the need to work, encountered in both novel and film, are visible signs of the socio-cultural realities of Egypt, not only of the 1950s or the 1960s but also of contemporary social realities.³⁶¹ Hence, with regard to the stigma of women's work, one notices that there has hardly been any ideological shift.

In both the novel and the film, we see that Nafisa's occupation not only means social degradation, but it acts as a constant reminder of her personal depressing position, since she has to sew bridal dresses for young brides of good social standing. The more bridal dresses she sews, the more aware she is of her spinsterhood, which is another agonising factor within her culture.

Nafisa knew that she was a plain-looking but good-natured girl, as her deceased father used to tell her "a sweet temper is more precious than beauty,"³⁶² who had no

real marriage prospects. Nafisa's depressive mood is represented in the film in front of the mirror, where she loathes her own image reflected on the mirror. Social pressure makes it very clear to women that marriage is the only desirable position in life. In front of the mirror, she often repeats to herself, "I have no beauty, no money, no father and no protection. I am terribly lonely, desperate and suffering."³⁶³ At twenty-three years, her overwhelming concerns were that she was not attractive enough to find a husband and thus, would remain a spinster all her life, which was also a position looked down upon in her society.

The position of the single woman in a Muslim society is precarious, since any suspicion or mistrust of her moral conduct can stigmatise both the woman and her family for life. In a social system where men have to continually safeguard a woman's sexual behaviour, this entails a strong institutional mechanism of social control to guarantee non-exposure to possible alternatives to marriage. Evidently, Muslim societies are characterised by effective institutional mechanisms that preclude contact with the opposite sex, through, for example veiling, sex segregation in schools, mosques, some places of work and even in familial activities. Since childhood, girls are kept under tight parental control and channelled in the direction of marriage, by instilling in them desires for familial roles, by extolling in them the rewards accruing from motherhood status, and through severe community censure of spinsterhood. Thus, young females are brought up with the idea that only one life exists for the woman: marriage. Parents' fears that their daughters may be deflowered before marriage, thereby dishonouring the family and making it impossible to marry them off, compel parents to ideally arrange for their daughters, a marriage when they are still very

young. An early marriage is a security against the loss of virginity, and it also frees the parents from having to be in charge of the daughters' economic welfare for the rest of their lives. As regards sons, parents are never concerned about their chastity and they enjoy more freedom in the choice of their wives. The above mentioned examples of institutional mechanisms that control women's social and moral conduct demonstrate society's refusal to grant women the right to seek sexual fulfilment, which in turn, results in oppression or frustration among the women. Their subconscious oppression, as corroborated in numerous Egyptian novels and films, results in suicide, insanity, rebellion, emigration, deceit or religious hypocrisy. Career minded single girls, who manage to pursue higher education, or those who do not manage to get married (despite polygamy), are looked down upon and suspected of promiscuous behaviour. Societal mechanisms have succeeded in channelling young women into marriage by penalising the single status. Hence, with so many social strictures, one clearly understands why a female worker, especially an unmarried one, is judged as being loose and immoral, in contrast to those women who are secluded in their homes and thereby, considered paragons of virtue and chastity.

Therefore, Nafisa's plight as a dressmaker is based on (a) class status, (b) social image, (c) and moral censure.³⁶⁴ Nafisa's frustrations make her feel an outcast in her society, because an unmarried woman is considered unproductive and undesirable, and also because the function of procreation and motherhood is highly venerated in Islam, as long as it takes place within marriage. In the film, more than in the novel, we see that Nafisa has also been rendered as a servant to her brothers, mainly to Hasanayn, who orders her around as though she were his slave. Thus, Nafisa's

character can be perceived as a total crisis because of her incomplete integration in her society.

7.2.2 *Spinsterhood*

Apart from the moral censure on spinsterhood, which is backed by the Islamic teachings, the single status of a woman, whether by choice or by circumstance is not culturally or socially encouraged. According to Iman Bibars, who conducted a recent extensive research among Egyptian women,³⁶⁵ it was found that spinsters constitute the smallest percentage of women who took care of their households in Egypt, and remaining un-married, especially in low-income urban areas, where the main purpose in life is to be a wife and a mother, has grave implications. The threshold age of spinsters is when a woman approaches twenty years old and is still without any marriage prospects. When in her twenties she is pitied for still being single and if she reaches thirty and remains unmarried, the family considers her situation as a lost cause. However, according to the Egyptian law, a woman is not considered a spinster until she is forty-eight years old and thus is entitled for the spinster's pension.³⁶⁶ Irrespective of the reasons behind remaining single, be they economic conditions or family pressures, society still blames the woman for failing to conform to the social codes.

Interestingly enough, Bibars' research also mentions poverty and lack of beauty as being other reasons for remaining single.³⁶⁷ Women who lack money and good looks are expected to marry anyone, even a widower with children, or become second wives and endure any kind of hardships in order to avoid the single status. The

character and the conditions of Nafisa fit well into this framework. Bibars' findings, though of contemporary Egypt, still hold for this case study, whose novel and film were produced in 1950 and 1960 respectively. The situation clearly shows that with regard to spinsterhood, from the 1950s to the late 1990s, there was no ideological shift and that Egyptian unmarried women are still enduring their hardships. More than this, they are also subjected to further humiliation from the welfare section of the Egyptian state. One of Anwar Sadat's pension schemes that were introduced in Egypt during his office was the 'chastity pension,'³⁶⁸ received by spinsters when they reach their forty-eighth birthday. The humiliating criterion for the eligibility of this pension is that since an unmarried woman must conform to the conservative modes of behaviour, as a spinster, she has to prove with a doctor's certificate that she is still a virgin to benefit of this scheme. By enforcing this condition for eligibility, the state, through its welfare schemes, is reasserting and reinforcing women's subordinate position in society.

7.2.3 *Prostitution*

Desperate and not willing to relinquish her only visible hope of getting married, Nafisa develops a liking for Salman Jabir, even though she knew her brothers would object to such a marriage. Unlike Bahiya who always rebukes Hasanayn for attempting to touch her hand, Nafisa gladly welcomes Salman's verbal and physical advances, and is easily duped by Salman's empty promise of marrying her. However, Nafisa's psychological breakdown is stronger in the novel than in the film. When she learns that Salman intends to marry another woman, she is emotionally shattered and loses control of herself. In the novel she hears about this marriage from Salman's future wife, who had commissioned Nafisa

as her dressmaker. In the film she learns about Salman's marriage through her brother Hasan, who had offered to sing during Salman's wedding ceremony. When Nafisa realises that she has been exploited and rejected she pours out her rage on Salman, and while physically attacking him she cries: "Do you take me for a plaything which you can throw away wherever you like?"³⁶⁹ As a result of Salman's deceitful conduct, she becomes more than ever a frustrated woman. Her desperate position and the miserable socio-economic conditions make her sacrifice her self-respect for her strong physical instincts. Nafisa's fatalistic approach makes her succumb to other men, by gradually accepting poor sums of money in return for her services. But yet again, even in her occasional prostitution she is bound to suffer for she is not adequately paid. In the film this is highlighted more than in the novel, through the use of intellectual montage by Salah Abu Seyf. This occurs when Nafisa allows the mechanic to pick her up for the first time, and he simply throws a half-pound at her feet and drives off at a speed, giving the impression that his encounter with her was not worth more than that coin. Furthermore, to show Nafisa's shame and shock, in this scene, the film director applies the full shot and the low-key lighting, when she slowly picks up the coin, stares at it for a moment and then very slowly walks her way back home. When she arrives home, she is rebuked by her mother and by her brother for arriving late.

Nafisa's final blow comes at the end of both the novel and the film. One day she is arrested in a brothel and the police inform her brother Hasanayn. After her unconditional release, Nafisa and her brother go through an emotionally-charged scene towards the end of the film. Gripped by rage and shame, Hasanayn hits her and

asks her about her scandalous conduct that "ruined us all." In submission and despair she replies, "It was God's decree." But he retorts and says that it was the devil's decree, and that she is the devil herself. Full of wrath, Hasanayn readily accepts her offer and encourages her to commit suicide so as to spare his reputation. Now that her brother and the police have discovered her sexual escapades, Nafisa was fearful, more than ever before, as she knew the social consequences of her actions. Her agonising last words to her brother before drowning herself in the Nile prove her emotional distress: "My life is more dreadful than death itself." For Hasanayn, Nafisa's "death is the right end for her", but perhaps only from a patriarchal point of view and of his society's, that imbued him with such ideologies.

In both the novel and the film, Nafisa is a total victim of male oppression and double standard dominant ideologies. First, she was exploited by Salman who took advantage of her wretched situation; second, she was usurped by her dominant brother Hasanayn, who always asked her for more cash: Although he was against her working outside the house, he did not take his obligation to support and protect her, as dictated by the Islamic precepts; third she is a victim as a woman who has to pay for a misdeed of which she is not entirely guilty. The police only arrested her and other women for being in the brothel. None of the male accomplices was arrested for participating in the same sexual activity, thus the blame is only put on women, and they are the only party to be convicted. The man in cases of immoral acts, such as prostitution, becomes a state witness and testifies against the female prostitute. He thus, leaves the court as a free citizen.³⁷⁰ Thus, in such a situation, the Egyptian Penal Code discriminates against women. Another case where women are treated unequally by the Egyptian Penal Code is that of adultery, because of the two

different Qur'ānic verses that leave room for different interpretations. Prostitution is compared to fornication or adultery. An adulterous relationship is the woman's fault, not the man's, according to both the social and the legal codes,³⁷¹ and even Qur'ānic verses contribute in some way to female discrimination. Fornication (*zinā*) is explicitly forbidden in Islam, but two separate verses relate to this offence differently. In *Sura Al-Nisā'* 4:15, only women are mentioned as fornicators and their punishment is imprisonment in their own home for an undetermined period of time which may be until her death. On the other hand, another verse in *Sura Al-Nūr* 24:2 refers to fornicating men and women, both of who are to be punished by one hundred lashes. In the light of these complex religious, legal or traditional teachings and or interpretations of women's social and moral conduct, nonetheless, a woman is not to encourage any male advances and she must resist them under all circumstances. The treatment of these religious and social conditions that surround the status of the Egyptian woman helps to illustrate the precarious situation Nafisa was in.

Nafisa's fate and social conditions were full of negative aspects that left her with little room for hope of getting integrated. Her need to ascertain her femininity was manifested in prostitution, which is considered a sin in the moral sense of the word. The Qur'ān and the *Sunna* strictly proscribe prostitution. Consequently, women in this occupation form the opposite picture, which the moral order tries to preserve. These women are the subversive element inside a Muslim society and naturally are regarded as marginal within their society.

Fallen women, like Nafisa, are despised by their family and society, and thus, have to suffer the consequences of their misconduct. In Egypt in 1949, state-licensed brothels were shut down by military order and in 1953, state-regulated prostitution was totally outlawed.³⁷² Despite these laws, it does not mean that prostitution is not practised clandestinely any more, like elsewhere.

7.3 Film closure and the triumph of morale with a tragedy

It is understandable why Hasanayn went berserk when he discovered that his sister had allowed herself to stoop so low to support them. The lowest status in this case, derives in part, from the fact that a woman damages her own reputation and that of her family. Towards the end, Nafisa submissively agrees to commit suicide as a punishment for transgressing the moral order. Her actions are redeemed by death. The novel's and the film's closure both portray the triumph of morale. However in both artistic works, only Nafisa was socially and morally condemned for her "sin".

The film director seems to contrast Nafisa's conduct with that of her eldest brother Hasan, who was a drug dealer and was also living with a wealthy prostitute. Towards the end of the film, but not in the novel, the viewer is presented with two immediate successive calamities: that of the injured Hasan being sought by the police, and that of Nafisa who was being held at the police station. The reaction and behaviour of Hasanayn towards the two situations are different. Although Hasanayn was infuriated at both his brother's and his sister's misconducts, he agreed to give shelter and medical assistance to Hasan, but in Nafisa's case, Hasanayn does the opposite. Hasanayn hits her, admonishes her and encourages her to commit suicide to wash her "sin" away. Nafisa's and her eldest brother's deeds are both morally condemnable acts, but only

Nafisa had to be sacrificed to save the honour of the family and not her brother Hasan, who was committing a bigger crime.

As already indicated earlier, while the novel's focus is Hasanayn, the film's focus is Nafisa. The shift in the main protagonists' focal point from the novel to the film by Salah Abu Seyf was intended³⁷³ to purposely illustrate the plight of a Cairene woman, who not only suffered psychologically from social constraints, but who had to suffer physically because she had to commit suicide. Unlike the expected traditional social strictures, even her youngest brother was spared from having to kill Nafisa to save his honour and to avoid being arrested for her murder. Her plight was even harsher because she indirectly admitted that her sexual compulsions and her sexual deprivations are condemnable by her society. The film indicates that the director was more sympathetic to Nafisa and he adhered to a realistic ending. On the other hand, her criminal brother Hasan, who also transgressed the moral code, was spared. In the last long shot, Hasanayn is gripped by severe remorse and also commits suicide, and thus justice is obtained even though the film ends with a double tragedy. But the greatest tragedy in both the novel and the film is that women who desperately try to improve their lot, or who wish to be independent, are crushed by evil forces or harsh traditions in their society.

7.4 Conclusion

By examining the chosen novel and its filmic adaptation, this chapter has attempted to reveal the structures of thought which dominated the main characters, especially that of Nafisa and her society. These structures impose on the film director not only the realistic themes of the original novel, but also the social conventions that

conform with the life-style of the time when the film was made. It is because they have coincided we may say that total adherence was kept from the novel to the film, from the time the novel was written until it was produced as a film, one notices that within a time frame of ten years, no particular ideological shifts or social values related to gender issues occurred, or developed in a way to improve women's status. Salah Abu Seyf seemed to be aware of this, as he did not see the need to make any textual variations for this film. "I did not need to modify anything or change the film ending, as the novel was very realistic and it deserved a tragic cinematic ending that would please the audience."³⁷⁴ Through his cinematic techniques, Salah Abu Seyf succeeded to bring to life the sufferings of his characters, especially that of Nafisa who unfortunately, was engulfed by grief and lost in her societal pressures. Both the novel and the film address the problem of single women's status, such as widowhood and spinsterhood, and the hardships that they bring on them. Unfortunately, it seems that traditional and religious beliefs hardly contribute to ease women's plight when no welfare state exists to compensate for their sufferings.

Salah Abu Seyf's total adherence to the novel's text corresponds to a perfect acceptance of the original intended message. The cinematic form, naturally, required the condensation of the time span, which means that certain details or scenes had to be sacrificed during the adaptation. However, this made no difference whatsoever to the image and role of the oppressed women in this film. On the contrary, it allowed for a better understanding of the social dominant ideologies in the city. Sadly, none of the two main protagonists were positive characters that could bring about improvement or change in their traditional society.

- 329 See for example Nabīl Raghīb, *Qadiyyat al-Shakl al-Fannī 'inda Najib Mahfuz* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb, 1975), who classifies Mahfuz's literary works as "the romantic historical stage, the realistic social stage, the disconnected psychological stage and the stage of dramatic shaping".
- 330 Raja' al-Naqqāsh, "Najib Mahfuz wa al-Mishwār al -Ṭawīl min al-Ḥusayn ila Stockholm", in *Al-Muṣawwir* (Cairo, 21 October 1988), p.36.
- 331 *ibid.*
- 332 *Al-Risāla* (Cairo, 2 July 1951), p. 257.
- 333 Najib Mahfuz, *The Beginning and the End*, trans. Ramses Awad (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985), p. 237.
- 334 *ibid.*, p. 60.
- 335 *ibid.*, p. 282.
- 336 *ibid.*, p. 182.
- 337 The character of Hasanayn here is in more than one aspect a reminiscent of Clyde Griffiths, the hero protagonist of Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy* (New York: H. Liveright, 1929).
- 338 Najib Mahfuz, pp. 33, 41, 277 and 283.
- 339 *ibid.*, p. 250.
- 340 *ibid.*, pp. 284-285.
- 341 Milson Menahem, *Najib Mahfuz, the Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 77.
- 342 *ibid.*
- 343 *ibid.*
- 344 See for example, Ahmed Abou-Zeid, "Honour and Shame among the Bedouins of Egypt", *Honour and Shame*, J.G. Peristiany, (ed.), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp.243-60;
Forouz Jawkar, "Honour and Shame: A Feminist View from within", *Feminist Issues* 6, no. 1(1986), pp. 45-63;
Leila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Piety in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986);
David Gilmore, (ed.) *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987);
M.E. Combs-Schilling, *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality and Sacrifice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
- 345 During my fieldwork visits in Cairo in 1996 and 1998, many young female Egyptians told me that as unmarried women they were prohibited to smoke in public, wear tight slacks or short dress, or sit in bars/cafes with a male friend, or joke in public about sex in general. Such acts are considered as flirtatious behaviour and seen as having committed a disgraceful act that may easily invoke violent reprimands or reactions from the male members of their families.
- 346 Sana al-Khayyat, *Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq* (London: Al-Saqi, 1990), p. 33.
- 347 Lama Abu-Odeh, "Crimes of Honour and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies", in *Feminism and Islam*, Mai Yamani, (ed.), (Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1996), p. 151.
- 348 *ibid.*
- 349 Iman Bibars, *Victims and Heroines: Women, Welfare and the Egyptian State* (London: Zed Books, 2001), p. 132.
- 350 Suad Joseph, "Brother-Sister Relationships, Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon", in *Intimate Selving in Arab Families*, (ed.) Suad Joseph, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), pp.113-140.
- 351 *ibid.*, p. 116.
- 352 See for example J.G. Peristiany, *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), and Jane Schneider, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honour, Shame and Access to Resources in the Mediterranean Societies," *Ethnology* 10 (1971), pp. 1-24.
- 353 Suad Joseph, "Brother-Sister Relationships, Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon," in *Intimate Selving in Arab Families*, p. 122.
- 354 *ibid.*, p.116.
- 355 *ibid.*
- 356 *ibid.*, p. 126.
- 357 Sura 4:32, *Al-Nisā'* and Sura 3:195, *Al-'Imrān*.

-
- 358 Barbara K. Larson, "Women, Work, and the Informal Economy in Rural Egypt", in *Middle Eastern Women and the Invisible Economy*, Richard A. Lobban, (ed.) (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 156.
- 359 *ibid.*
- 360 Soheir A. Morsy, "Rural Women, Work and Gender Ideology: A Study in Egyptian Political Economic Transformation", in *Women in Arab Society*, Seteney Shami, Lucine Taminian et al, (eds.) (Paris: UNESCO, 1990), p. 93.
- 361 Iman Bibars, *Victims and Heroines*, pp.155-157 and pp. 126-128.
- 362 Najib Mahfuz, p. 57.
- 363 *ibid.*, pp. 57-58.
- 364 The moral censure of unmarried women in Muslim Arab societies is also reflected in the Qur'ān because Islam enjoins marriage (See Sura 24:3) and it forbids all forms of sexual relationships outside marriage. Therefore, the abhorration of a single status among women especially is not only a matter of social tradition but is also reinforced by Islam.
- 365 Iman Bibars, *Victims and Heroines*, p. 50.
- 366 *ibid.*
- 367 *ibid.*
- 368 *ibid.*
- 369 Najib Mahfuz, p. 137.
- 370 Iman Bibars, *Victims and Heroines*, p. 19.
- 371 *ibid.*
- 372 Badran Margot, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996), p. 206.
- 373 Personal interview with Salah Abu Seyf, Cairo, April, 1996. Salah Abu Seyf said that he wanted to concentrate more on Nafisa's problems, which were very typical of the era, even though the film was produced in 1959 and released in 1960. He further explained that Mahfuz did not object to this slight shift because it also reflected like his novel, his personal sympathies and his rejection of the values and conventions of a double standard patriarchal society.
- 374 Personal interview with Salah Abu Seyf, Cairo, April, 1996.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to trace and analyse the plight of women in Egyptian cinema of the 1940s to the 1960s and how this was realistically represented on the screen. The research starts by presenting a succinct historical review of the birth and development of the Egyptian cinema, as well as by discussing the important roles played by some pioneering women in the growth of the industry as actresses and producers. It also seeks to establish the relationship between the roles of the female protagonists in films and that of their socio-historical and cultural background. For this reason, an exploration of the status of the Egyptian urban woman is extensively discussed in Chapter 2. One of the major queries in this thesis is to establish that cinema is a representation of the socio-historic reality in a specific era, and Chapter 4 deals with the film theories of representation, communication and gender representations. To complement these film theories, the textual variation method is also applied. Three case studies were analysed to further support the research's hypothesis.

Historical Review

The historical review revealed that Egyptian cinema owes its inception to the French Lumière Brothers, who showed their first film strips in Alexandria in 1896. It was this event that triggered great interest among the European residents in Egypt, as well as the Egyptians themselves, where the latter began to emulate the Europeans and to compete with them in this new entertaining business. Nonetheless, Egyptian film

production and direction developed gradually under the influence of Egyptian film pioneers such as Mohammed Bayyumi and Aziza Amir.

The First Phase – The Silent Films

The silent era of Egyptian films lasted only five years, and from 1926 to 1931, fourteen long-feature films were produced. The actors, actresses and film-makers that dominated this era were Aziza Amir, Widad Orfi, Ahmed Jalal, the Lama Brothers, Togo Mizrahi, Muhammad Karim, Assya Dagher, Fatma Rushdi and Bahiga Hafez. The silent films of this first phase were mainly melodramas or Bedouin love adventures. The first long-feature film was *Leila* (1927) produced by Aziza Amir, and considered as the first female production in Egyptian cinema. It was indicated in Chapters 1 and 3, that even some early films such as *Leila* or *Zaynab* (1930) by Muhammad Karim had already addressed problems inherent in Egyptian society, such as forced marriages or the limitations on female independence.

The Second Phase – The musicals and the 'talkies'

With the appearance of sound films in Egypt in 1932, popular Egyptian theatre actors, singers, and dancers dominated the screen for two decades, amongst them Abdul Wahab, Farid al-Atrash, Asmahan, Umm Kulthum and Leila Murad. It was inevitable that oriental song and dance, so much part of Egyptian social life, would appear in films. Gradually, Egyptian cinema developed other styles of its own, like farces, comedies, and historical films, which were all well received by the Egyptian cinema viewers.

Before the setting up of large studios in the late 1930s, all Egyptian films were the products of individual efforts and private entrepreneurs. We saw that the 1940s witnessed the development of stardom in Egyptian cinema. Romantic heroines introduced the issues about the hardships of women as individuals, but the majority of these films, even though some of them were produced or directed by women, could not offer a solution to women's struggles without a hero-saviour; clearly indicating the mentality of women's dependence on men. Similarly, society's interference with romantic love so as not to disturb its norms, were also portrayed as in the film *Intisār al-Shabāb* (1941).

The Third Phase – The 'Golden Age' (1950s-1960s)

The 1952 Nasser revolution turned the tables on all cultural, economic and administrative structures of the cinema industry. In an attempt to control and organise the cinema industry, the new government created the Nile Film Company, and in 1960 the government nationalised Studio *Misr* and other major organisations related with the cinema business. Thus on one hand, it reduced private investment to its bare minimum, and on the other hand, it permitted the dawning of new genres and new cinematic themes such as neo-realism, socio-political issues, nationalism, and patriotism, along with the idealisation of lower class struggles and even gender issues. It was in this 'golden age' that many popular novels or short stories were adapted to films, especially the literary works of Najib Mahfuz, Yahya Haqqi, Taha Husayn and Ihsan Abd al-Quddus.

As explained in Chapters 1 and 3, these filmic adaptations were dominated by female protagonists and were characterised by an indictment against the traditional mores

that few women dared to challenge, with the exception of the films *Ana Hurra* (1959), and *Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ* (1963).

Chapter 2 traced the development of the Egyptian feminist movement and its struggle for the emancipation of women. It was interesting to note how the liberation of the veiled and secluded urban women occurred in conjunction with the political aspirations of Egypt, and it became common for suffering women to be equated with the oppressed nation. Furthermore, the status of the Egyptian woman in relationship to her social and religious expectations was examined, since this served as a sound groundwork for the identification of the plight of women as represented on the screen.

Research Findings

The hypothesis of this research was to find out whether the plight of the Egyptian woman, as conveyed on the screen, was a representation of the socio-historical reality of the late 1940s to the 1960s. In order to answer this question two different approaches were involved:

A] The application of Marc Ferro's method, which associates film analysis with social analysis: According to Ferro's theory of representation, the film should be taken as a documentary evidence (directly or indirectly, whole or in part) of the era the film was produced. As the main question of this research entailed the analysis of Egyptian cinema as a representation of the socio-historic reality of the 1940s to the 1960s, Marc Ferro's theory proved to be the most appropriate for this type of analysis. As extensively discussed in Chapter 4, Ferro believes that a film should be

analysed and viewed in relation to the world that produced it. According to Ferro, a film is relevant not only because of what it reveals, but also because of the socio-historical approach that it justifies. Thus, Ferro's method of film analysis, in order to grasp the film message or its realistic representation, involves the comparing and contrasting of significant signs and repeated themes, that in turn would demonstrate society's dominant ideologies.

The present researcher based her film analysis partly on Ferro's method, and that by analysing the film's dominant theme simultaneously with the socio-historical aspects of Egypt and the time frame when the film was produced. When the three case studies were analysed within their socio-historical perspectives of the period in focus, it was found that certain historical aspects or gender related issues portrayed in the films were:

- (i) better understood in their particular social context;
- (ii) the behavioural parameters of the society and its historical events were realistically demonstrated in the films.

For example, the murder of Hanadi by her uncle because she lost her virginity in the film *The Call of the Curlew*, was and still is an acceptable dominant social ideology in Egypt, while for a westerner's perception, Hanadi's murder is simply understood as a senseless cold blooded crime. Hence, the importance of analysing a feature film (from the school of realism) in relationship to its socio-historical and cultural background. Meanwhile, Ferro's theory also holds valid for the discussion of the social, historical and religious status of the Egyptian women carried out in Chapter 2. When the three case studies were analysed, the gender issues and the Islamic precepts raised in Chapter 2, helped to identify the predicaments faced by the female

characters in the films, which clearly revealed that they were indeed a representation of their time. The analysed films manifested the following dominant predicaments among the female film protagonists:

(1) In the film *The Call of the Curlew* we came across widowhood, lack of financial support from the male relatives; the dependence of women on men to survive or have minimal freedom; the arrangement of Amna's marriage which failed and Hanadi's crime of honour.

(2) In the film *The Open Door* we saw Jamila's forced marriage and subsequent adultery; Layla's struggle for self-liberation and emancipation from her patriarchal family and social pressures; and Sanaa's and Layla's psychological sufferings to improve their social status.

(3) In *The Beginning and the End* we witnessed widowhood, spinsterhood, prostitution, and also another type of honour killing.

All these gender issues were clearly represented and also thoroughly examined in these films, thus showing how realistically the films under study portrayed the plight of Egyptian women.

B] The application of a textual variation approach to support further the question of the realistic representation of the plight of women in Egyptian cinema: As explained in Chapter 4, this theory entails the analysis and comparison of the film to its antecedent novel. The aim behind this approach is to bolster the idea that films are a representation of reality and that by analysing the socio-historical and cultural backgrounds of the novels which are then compared to those of the films, we are thus provided with either different or similar backgrounds, that would help us read and identify, if any, the ideological shifts or existent social values related with the gender

issues. One of the striking findings of this study is linked to the film director's function in the textual variation approach, due to his textual modifications of the novel to film. It is the director's textual variation or even his total adherence to the novel that helped to demonstrate more explicitly the realistic themes, the dominant ideologies or the relevant roles played by female protagonists. The analysis undertaken by the textual variation serves to reveal the structures of thought which dominated the Egyptian cinema and its society, because these structures impose on the film directors not only the existent themes but also other aspects that conform with, or that have shifted from the novel's dominant ideology. By revealing these shifting or existent structures of thought, we are once again identifying the extent of the realistic representation of the film.

The textual variations encountered in the three case studies were of three kinds:

- (1) variations in the plot;
- (2) variations in the assigned female character's role;
- (3) total variation in the film closure from that of the novel.

The variations were on the whole, rather minor ones, since they did not affect or change the dominant theme of the film, as in *The Call of the Curlew* and *The Open Door*, or a total adherence to the novel as in *The Beginning and the End*. The endings of the three films were used by the director mainly to highlight his intended message and sometimes even that of the novelist.

By having applied the above methods and theories of film analysis to answer the questions raised in the Introduction of this study, we can confirm that the plight of the Egyptian woman was realistically represented on the screen, mainly because the

historical, traditional and religious facts that were cross examined in both novel, film and the Egyptian society, conform well with the structures of thought of not only the novelist but also with those of the film directors.

The three case studies showed that when there was a total adherence by the director to the novel, as in *The Beginning and the End*, by Salah Abu Seyf, this adherence indicated that both novelist and director shared the same views together with their cinematic audiences, as in for example, the aspect of honour and reputation of an unmarried young woman, even though there was a difference of a decade between the novel and the time when the film was produced. In the case of *The Beginning and the End*, Salah Abu Seyf has thus reaffirmed and also criticised an existent tradition, namely that a woman's transgression of a moral code is punishable by death. By adhering totally to the novel's gender issues, the film director has proved that there were no ideological shifts in this regard among the Egyptian society when the film was produced, and thus the predicaments of the women discussed in this film's analysis were still existent at the time of the film production, which in turn prove to be also very realistic of their time.

Another prevalent social taboo that directly affects women, and that was reaffirmed by both directors in the three film studies is that of woman's space and movement. The women in our films caused problems or suspicions for their families when they needed to be out of their protective homes. While the male characters in the three analysed films were free to roam about or leave their homes by themselves whenever they wished, the female protagonists were not allowed to go outside their homes, unless accompanied either by a male or female relative, or by an official fiancé. The

only exception was Nafisa because her family's economic situation dictated this possibility.

The freedom of movement enjoyed by men, but not by women, was also indirectly reproduced in the three analysed films. The obvious setting in which the actions took place in our analyses is of two kinds: a) exterior, and b) interior, where the plight of women was even highlighted in the film settings. The researcher noted that the interior spaces, which mainly consisted of houses, fashion boutiques, colleges, or offices, were specifically reserved for female characters, thus implying a restricted space especially for middle class women like in *The Call of the Curlew* or *The Open Door*. The exterior setting of the analysed films is open to men and women, especially those women deprived of means of survival and forced to go out to work as in *The Beginning and the End*, and also in *The Call of the Curlew*. The crossing from interior to exterior rarely occurs for the female protagonists of the analysed films, and if a woman needs to go from the interior space (signifying a protected zone) to the exterior space (intended for men) she hardly does it on her own. For example, Amna and Hanadi travel with their mother in *The Call of the Curlew*, Layla goes to school with her cousin Jamila, and when officially engaged to Professor Ramzi she was partially allowed to be out on her own in *The Open Door*.

Thus, it becomes evident that the moving of the female characters from the interior world, which is the secluded space for women, to the exterior world, which is confined to men, corresponds in our analysed films to a kind of moral downfall. The woman exposes herself to an experiment and suffers the consequences of this, passing from one world to another. It was revealed from the three case studies that

all the female protagonists who attempted to move from the interior to the exterior world were depicted as either the fallen women (as in the case of Hanadi in *The Call of the Curlew*, and Nafisa in *The Beginning and the End*) or the condemned marginalized woman for transgressing the moral code (as in the case of Sanaa or Layla in *The Open Door*).

In two of the case studies, where both films were directed by Henry Barakat, it was found that in both films, namely *The Call of the Curlew* and *The Open Door*, Barakat opted for minor variations in the film endings, a modification which did not please the novelists as explained in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively. In *The Call of the Curlew*, Barakat preferred to modify the film ending because the novel's plot could not be considered as a realistic circumstance reflective of the social situation, since for example, the widow and her daughters are not given protection and support by their male relatives but were sent away. Barakat was compelled to modify the film ending to make its plot more realistic and representative of his viewers' structures of thought, as he expressed in his interview with the researcher. Thus, in this film, Barakat not only criticised an existent ideology (crime of honour) but also reaffirmed it, more than this Barakat attempted to improve it and that by having the male oppressive characters also justified.

Barakat once again modified the ending of *The Open Door*, by making Layla's self liberation and triumph over her social strictures dependent on Husayn, her preferred fiancé, rather than on her self-determination as the novel actually ends. This dependence on a male hero is stereotyped in the films of the period in focus, and probably reflects the social mentality that women were not yet able to stand alone to

save themselves. In a personal interview with Barakat, this latter expressed that he still believed in women's dependence on men despite the fact that Layla and Sanaa's characters represented a hope and an improvement in the social status of the Egyptian women of the 1960s, which coincided with the many reforms introduced under Nasser. Hence, Barakat has not only reaffirmed and criticised the existent dominant social ideologies, but also, through the character of Layla contributed to the improvement of the woman's status and that women should abandon their passive and submissive roles to fight their plight.

From these analyses one can conclude that these feature films were a witness of their time and that the plight of women was realistically represented.

By analysing the female characters' roles and the plot within their socio-historical and cinematic contexts, the woman's social and religious status in her society, as well as her traditionally learned strictures or the religiously imposed roles such as motherhood and submissive wives, were revealed. Through the critical review of the case studies it transpired that the weights of rigid traditions and social taboos played a dominant role in the plight of women, even though certain Islamic precepts (like polygamy, seclusion, and veiling) put the woman in a disadvantaged position when compared to western cultures. For example, the tradition of honour killing was practised in Egypt not only among Muslims, but also among the Coptic minorities, as shown in the film *The Postman*.

It is evident from the numerous reviewed films or the analysed ones, that in many situations it is meek acceptance, lack of education or financial means and passivity of

the women that cause their own entrapment. But on the other hand, by having the qualities of shrewdness, perseverance, resourcefulness and self-determination on the part of the female protagonists, women still faced societal pressures, limited freedom of movement, laws or religious precepts that could still inflict injustice and restrictions on them.

Suggestions for further studies

In addition to this study, the researcher feels other issues arose during the course of this work and recommends that further research should be done in the following domains:

1. The issue of sexuality and its representation in Egyptian films.
2. The role of censorship and its effects on the film-maker's freedom of expression.
3. The mapping of the ideological shifts in Egyptian society and whether they changed diachronically, and this by analysing the thematic trends in Egyptian novels and films.
4. The subject of this thesis and its method of analysis may be built on the Egyptian cinema of the 1970s and beyond.

Bibliography

Books

- Abdalla, Ahmed, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt 1923-1973*, London: Al-Saqi Books, 1985.
- Abdallah, Sophie, *Eve et quatre géants*, Cairo: Organisme Egyptien du livre, 1976.
- Abdel Kader, Soha, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society 1899-1987*, Boulder Colorado: Lynne Reinner, 1988.
- Abdel Sayed, Edris, *Les Coptes d'Egypte*, Paris: Publisud, 1987.
- Abu Lughod, Janet, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Abu-Lughod, Leila, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Piety in a Bedouin Society*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1986.
- Abū Shādī, °Ali, *Abyaḍ wa Aswad*, Cairo: Cairo International Film Festival Publishers, n.d.
- Adams, Charles, C., *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933.
- °Adlī, Nādir, *Kamāl Al-Shaykh*, Cairo: Cairo International Film Festival, 1995.
- Afsaruddin, Asma, (ed.) *Hermeneutics and Honour*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Aḥmed Kamāl Mursī, Majīd Wahba, *Vocabulary of Cinema Art*, Cairo: Egyptian Ministry of Culture, 1973.
- Ahmed, Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, New Haven: Yale University, 1992.
- Aḥmed Ra'fat Bahjat, (ed.) *Miṣr Mi'at Sana Sīnimā*, Cairo: Cairo Cinema International Festival, 1996.
- Ajami, Fouad, *The Arab Predicament*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981.
- Al-Ali, Nadjé Sadig, *Gender Writing/Writing Gender*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1994.
- Al-°Arīs, Ibrāhīm, *Riḥla fī al-Sīnimā al-°Arabiyya (A Voyage through Arab Cinema)* Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 1979.

- Ali, Yusuf, trans., *The Holy Qur'ān*, Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983.
- Ammar, Hamid, *Growing up in an Egyptian Village: Silwa, Province of Aswan*, New York: Octagon Books, 1966.
- Andersen, Michael Bruun, Grodal Torben, et al., *Filmanalyser. Historien i Filmen*, Copenhagen, 1974.
- Andrew, Dudley J., *The Major Film Theories*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Arab Cinema and Culture: Round Table Conferences*, 3 vols. Beirut: Arab Film and Television Centre, 1965.
- Arasoughly, Alia, (ed.) *Critical Film Writing from the Arab World*, Quebec: World Heritage Press Inc., 1996.
- Arendt, H., (ed.) *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, 1969.
- Armbrust, Walter, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Armes, Roy, *Third World Film Making and the West*, Berkeley: University of California, 1987.
- Arnheim, Rudolf, *Toward a Psychology of Art*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
- Audi, Robert, (ed.) *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Awrāq fī Mushkilāt 'ādat al-Tārīkh li al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya*, Cairo: Academy of Arts-Cinema Union for Publications, 1994.
- Azzopardi, M., Borg, E.V., Dalli, C., et al, *Malta, an Intimate Survey*, Blata l-Bajda: Merlin Library, 1993.
- Bächlin, Peter, *Der Film als Ware*, Basel: Burg, 1945.
- Badawi, M.M., *A Short History of Modern Arabic Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Badran, Margot, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1996.
- Bakr, Yahya Abu, Saad Labib and Hamdy, Kandil, *Development of Communication in the Arab States: Needs and Priorities*, Paris: UNESCO, 1985.
- Balázs, Béla, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, New York: Dover, 1970.

- Baron, Beth, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Bazin, André, *What is Cinema? Volume II*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972.
- Beck, Lois and Nikki, Keddie, (eds.) *Women in the Muslim World*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Berrah, Mouny, Jacques Levy and Claude-Michel Cluny, (eds.) *Les Cinémas Arabes, CinémAction [sic] 43*. Paris: Editions du Cerf and Institut du Monde Arabe, 1987.
- Bettini, Gianfranco, *The Language and Technique of the Film*, trans. D. Osmond Smith, The Hague: Mouton, 1973.
- Bibars, Iman, *Victims and Heroines. Women, Welfare and the Egyptian State*, London: Zed Books, 2001.
- Blandford, Steve, Grant, Barry Keith and Hillier, Jim, (eds.) *The Film Studies Dictionary*, London: Arnold, 2001.
- Bordwell, David, Staiger, Janet and Thompson, Kristin, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.
- Bordwell, David and Thompson, Kristin, *Film Art: an Introduction*, London: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997.
- Bosséno Christian, *Youssef Chahine l'Alexandrin, CinémAction [sic] 33*. Paris: Cerf Publishers, 1985.
- Bowen, Donna Lee and Early, Evelyn, (eds.) *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Braude, Benjamin and Bernard, Lewis, (eds.) *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982.
- Carter, B.L., *The Copts in Egyptian Politics*, London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- Chatman, Seymour, *Story and Discourse Narrative Structures in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Cinéma et Education*, Cairo: Centre Catholique Egyptien du Cinéma, 1959.
- Cleveland, William, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.
- Cluny, Claude-Michel, *Dictionnaire des nouveaux cinémas arabes*, Paris: Sindbad, 1978.

- Colombe, Marcel, *L'Evolution de l'Egypte 1924-1950*, Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve, 1951.
- Combs-Schilling, M.E., *Sacred Performances: Islam, Sexuality and Sacrifice*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Comolli, Jean-Louis, and Narboni, Jean, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism", trans. Susan Bennett, in Antony Easthope, (ed.) *Contemporary Film Theory*, London: Longman, 1993.
- Cowie, Peter, (ed.) *Variety International Film Guide*, London: Hamlyn, 1996.
- Darwish, Mustafa, *Dream Makers on the Nile*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998.
- De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, London: Everyman's Library, 1993.
- Downing, John D.H., (ed.) *Film and Politics in the Third World*, New York: Praeger, 1987.
- Du Bourguet, Pierre, *Les Coptes*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988.
- Dreiser, Theodore, *An American Tragedy*, New York: H. Liveright, 1929.
- El-Enany, Rasheed, *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of Meaning*, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, London: C. Hurst & Company, 1992.
- Esposito, John, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982.
- Farid, Samir, *Arab Cinema Guide*, Cairo: Arab Cinema Guide, 1979.
- Farīd, Samīr, *ʿAn al-Sīnimā al-ʿArabīyya (On Arab Cinema)*, Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīfah, 1981.
- Farid, Samir & Magda Wassef, (eds.) *A propos du cinéma égyptien. Dossier No. 13*, Québec: Agence de Coopération Culturelle et technique, cinémathèque, 1984.
- Fearings, Franklin, *Influence of the Movie on Attitudes and Behaviour*, New York: MacGraw Hill Book Company, 1963.
- Ferro, Marc, *Analyse de film, analyse de société*, Paris: Hachette, 1975.
- Ferro, Marc, *1956: La crise de Suez*, Paris: La documentation Française, 1986.
- Ferro, Marc, *Cinema and History*, trans. by Naomi Greene, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.

- Gabous, Abdel Karim, *La femme et le cinéma Arabe*, Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1985.
- Gabriel, Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1969.
- Gershoni, Israel and Jaukowski, James, (eds.) *Redefining the Egyptian Nation 1930-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Gilmore, David, (ed.) *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987.
- Gledhill, Christine, (ed.) *Home is where the heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, London: BFI, 1994.
- Goldschmidt, Arthur, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Goody, Jack, and Tambiah, S.J., (eds.) *Bride Wealth and Dowry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Graham Brown, Sarah, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in the Middle East 1860-1950*, New York: Columbia University, 1988.
- Guthrie, Shirley, *Arab Women in the Middle Ages*, London: Al-Saqi Books, 2001.
- Gurgus, Fawzi, *Dirasāt fī al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsi al-Miṣrī*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Dār al-Miṣriyya, 1958.
- Al-Ḥaḍarī, Aḥmad, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr*, Cairo: Cinema Club Edition, 1989.
- Hamadane, Gamal, *La Personnalité Egyptienne*, Volume IV, Cairo: ʿālam al-Kutub, 1984.
- Hanna, Nelly, (ed.) *The State and its Servants: Administration in Egypt from Ottoman Times to the Present*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1995.
- Haywood, John A., *Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970*, London: Lund Humphries, 1971.
- Heyworth-Dunne, J., *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt*, London: Luzac, 1938.
- Hill, John and Church Gibson, Pamela, *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Hind Rassam Culhane, *East/West, an Ambiguous State of Being: The Construction and Representation of Egyptian Cultural Identity in Egyptian Film*, New York: Peter Lang, 1995.

- Hockings, Paul, (ed.) *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975.
- Hourani, Albert, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, London: Macmillan, 1981.
- Hourani, Cecil, (ed.) *The Arab Cultural Scene*, London: Namara Press, 1982.
- Hoyle, Mark, *Mixed Courts of Egypt*, London: Graham & Trotman, 1991.
- Humphreys, Stephen R., *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193-1260*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.
- Hudā Sha'rawī, *Harem Years: Memoirs of An Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, trans. Margot Badran, New York: The Feminist Press, 1987.
- Ibrāhīm, 'Abduh, and Shafīq Duriyya, *Tatawwur al-Nahḍa al-Nisā'iyya fī Miṣr*, Cairo: Maktabāt al-Tawwakul, 1954.
- Ilbert, Robert, *Héliopolis, Le Caire 1905-1922*, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique, 1981.
- Ilhāmī, Ḥasan, *Dirāsa Mukhtaṣira 'an Tārīkh al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya 1896-1976*, Cairo: The General Egyptian Organization for the Book, 1976.
- Ilhāmī, Ḥasan, *Muḥammad Ta'at Ḥarb, Rā'id Ṣina'at al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya 1867-1941*, Cairo: The General Egyptian Organization for the Book, 1986.
- Ilhāmī, Ḥasan, *Tārīkh al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya 1896-1970 (The History of Egyptian Cinema 1896-1970)*, Cairo: Cultural Development Fund, 1995.
- 'Imāra, Muḥammad, (ed.) *Al-A'māl al-Kāmila li Qāsim Amīn*, Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1976.
- Jad, Ali B., *Form and Technique in the Egyptian Novel 1912-1971*, London: Ithaca Press, 1983.
- Jarvie, Ian Charles, *Towards a Sociology of the Cinema*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Jarvie, Ian Charles, *Movies as Social Criticism*, London: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1978.
- Joseph, Suad, (ed.) *Intimate Selving in Arab Families*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999.
- Joseph, Suad, and Slyomovics, Susan, *Women and Power in the Middle East*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

- Jousse, Thierry, (ed.) *Cahiers du Cinéma - Spécial Youssef Chahine*, Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 506 (October 1996).
- Al-Khayyati, Sana, *Honour and Shame: Women in Modern Iraq*, London: Al-Saqi, 1990.
- Khalifi, Omar, *Histoire du cinéma en Tunisie*, Tunis: Société Tunisienne de diffusion, 1970.
- Karam, Azza, M., *Women, Islamisms and the State: Contemporary Feminisms in Egypt*, London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998.
- Katz, Ephraim, *The Macmillan International Film Encyclopaedia*, London: Pan Macmillan, 1994.
- Keddie, Nikki and Baron, Beth, (eds.) *Women in Middle Eastern History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Khan, M., *An Introduction to the Egyptian Cinema*, London: Informatics, 1969.
- Khayati, Khémais, *Salah Abou Seif, Cinéaste Egyptien*, Paris: Sindbad, 1990.
- Khayati, Khémais, *Cinemas arabes: Topographie d'une image éclatée*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996.
- Khayati, Khémais, Cheri'a, Tahar, and Daudelin, Robert, (eds.) *A Propos du Cinéma Egyptien*, Montréal: Cinémathèque Québécoise, 1984.
- Kilpatrick, Hilary, *The Modern Egyptian Novel*, London: Ithaca Press, 1974.
- Krämer Gudrun, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989.
- Kracauer, Siegfried, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Kuhn A. and Radstone S., (eds.) *The Women's Companion to International Film*, London: Virago, 1990.
- Kuhn, Annette, *Women's Pictures - Feminism and Cinema*, London: Verso, 1994.
- Landau, Jacob M., *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1958.
- Landau, Jacob, M., *Jews in 19th Century Egypt*, New York: New York University Press, 1969.
- Lane, Edward W., *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London: East West Publications, 1989.

- Lebel, Jean Patrick, *Cinéma et Idéologie*, Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Critique, 1971.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *Structural Anthropology 1*, London: Penguin Books, 1993.
- Lobban, Richard A., Jr., (ed.) *Middle Eastern Women and the Invisible Economy*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
- Mahfuz, Naguib, *The Beginning and the End*, trans., Ramses Awad, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985.
- Makarius, Raoul, *La jeunesse intellectuelle d'Egypte après la deuxième guerre mondiale*, Paris: La Haye, 1960.
- Malkmus, Lizabeth and Roy Armes, *Arab and African Film making*, London: Zed, 1991.
- Malti-Douglas, Fedwa, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabic-Islamic Writing*, Princeton: Princeton University, 1991.
- Mast, Gerald, and Marshall Cohen, (eds.) *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Mattelart, Michèle, *Women, Media Crisis: Femininity and Disorder*, London: Comedia, 1986.
- Mernissi, Fatima, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society*, London: Al Saqi Books, 1985.
- Metz, Christian, *Language and Cinema*, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok, The Hague: Mouton, 1974.
- Metz, Christian, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Mikhail, Mona, *Images of Arab Women: Facts and Fiction*, Washington D.C.: Three Continents, 1979.
- Milson, Menahem, *Najib Mahfuz, the Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- Mohamed Aziza, *L'Image et l'Islam*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1978.
- Morin, Edgar, *Le Cinéma et l'homme imaginaire*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1956.
- Mosharrafa, M.M., *Cultural Survey of Modern Egypt*, 2 vols., London: Longmans, 1947-1948.
- Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey, (ed.) *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 8, Chicago: Chicago University, 1992.
- Panayiotis, Vatikiotis, J., *The History of Egypt*, London: Weidenfeld, 1985.
- Penley, Constance, (ed.) *Feminism and Film Theory*, London: Routledge, 1988.
- Peristiany, J.G., (ed.) *Honour and Shame*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.
- Philipp, Thomas, *The Syrians in Egypt 1725 - 1975*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985.
- Pines, Jim and Willemen Paul, (eds.) *Questions of Third Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1994.
- Postelthwaite, Neville, T., (ed.) *International Encyclopaedia of National Systems of Education*, Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd., 1995.
- Qasim, Amin, *The New Woman - A document in the early debate on Egyptian Feminism*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 1995.
- Rachety, Gehan and Sabat, Khalil, *Communication and Society: Importation of Films for Cinema and Television in Egypt*, Paris: UNESCO, 1980.
- Al-Rāfi^{ʿī}, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Thawrat Sanat 1919*, Volume I, Cairo: n.p., 1955.
- Al-Rāfi^{ʿī}, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Fī A^ʿqāb al-Thawra al-Miṣriyya*, Volume I, Cairo: n.p., 1969.
- Raghib, Nabīl, *Qadiyyat al-Shakl al-Fannī ʿinda Najib Mahfuz*, Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb, 1975.
- Al-Ray, Ali, *Etude sur le roman Egyptien*, Cairo: Organisme Egyptien de l'Édition, 1964.
- Richards, Jeffrey, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1984.
- Roded, Ruth, *Women in Islam and the Middle East: A Reader*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1999.
- Rugh, Andrea, B., *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984.
- Sa^ʿd al-Dīn, Tawfiq, *Qiṣṣat al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr: Dirāsa Naqdīyya*, Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1969.
- Sadoul, Georges, (ed.) *The Cinema in the Arab Countries*, Beirut: Arab Film and Television Centre, 1966.

- Sadoul Georges, *History of the Cinema*, Paris: Seuil, 1990.
- Sadoul Georges, *Film Dictionary*, Paris: Seuil, 1990.
- Sadoul, Georges, *Dictionary of Film Makers*, Paris: Seuil, 1990.
- Al-Sa^cdāwī, Nawal, *Les femmes et la névrose*, Beirut: Etudes et Publications Arabe, 1977.
- Saiah, Ysabel, *Oum Kalsoum*, Paris: Denöel, 1985.
- Sari, Thomas, (ed.) *Film/Culture*, London: Scarecrow, 1982.
- Shafik, Viola, *Arab Cinema History and Cultural Identity*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998.
- Shalsh, ^cAli, *Al-Naqd al-Sīnimāī fī al-Ṣaḥāfa al-Miṣrīya*, Cairo: The General Egyptian Organization for the Book, 1986.
- Shami, Seteney, Taminian, Lucine, Soheir, A. Morsy, et al, *Women in Arab Society: Work Patterns and Gender Relations in Egypt, Jordan and the Sudan*, Paris: UNESCO, 1990.
- Sharqāwī, Jalāl, *Risāla fī Tārīkh al-Sīnimā al-^cArabīyya (An Essay on the History of Arab Cinema)*, Cairo: Egyptian Printing and Publishing Company, 1970.
- Sharaf al-Dīn, Duriyah, *Al-Siyāsa wa al-Sīnimā fī Miṣr 1961-81*, Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1992.
- Short, K.R.M., (ed.) *Feature Films as History*, London: Croom Helm, 1981.
- Thomas, Sari, (ed.) *Film /Culture: Explorations of Cinema in its Social Context*, London: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1982.
- Thompson Kristin & Bordwell David, *Film History: an Introduction*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.
- Thoraval, Yves, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien 1895-1975*, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1974.
- Thoraval, Yves, *Regards sur le cinéma égyptien 1895-1975*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988.
- Tignor, Robert, *Modernization and the British Rule in Egypt (1882-1914)*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Tucker, Judith, (ed.) *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Tudor, Andrew, *Image and Influence*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1973.

- Tudor, Andrew, *Theories of Film*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1974.
- Turner, Graeme, *Film as Social Practice*, London: Routledge, 1993.
- UNESCO, *Press, Film, Radio*, Vols. III - V, Paris, 1949 - 1951.
- Wach, Joachim, *The Sociology of Religion*, Chicago: n.p., 1944.
- Wakin, Edward, *A Lonely Minority: the Modern Story of Egypt's Copts*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1963.
- Walther, W., *Woman in Islam: from Medieval to Modern times*, Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 1993.
- Wassef, Hind and Wassef, Nadia, (eds.) *Daughters of the Nile*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001.
- Wassef, Magda, (ed.) *Egypte 100 ans de cinéma*, Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1995.
- Watson, Helen, *Women in the City of the Dead*, London: Hurst & Company, 1992.
- Watt, Montgomery, *Muhammed at Mecca*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.
- Watt, Montgomery, *Muhammed at Medina*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Watterson, Barbara, *Coptic Egypt*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988.
- Wikau, Unni, *Tomorrow, God Willing: Self-made Destinies in Cairo*, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996.
- Wollen, Peter, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1969.
- Yamani, Mai, (ed.) *Feminism and Islam*, Berkshire: Ithaca Press, 1996.
- Al-Zayyat, Latifa, *The Open Door*, trans. Booth Marilyn, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2000.
- Zuhur, Sherifa, (ed.) *Images of Enchantment: Visual and Performing Arts of the Middle East*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998.
- Zuhur, Sherifa, (ed.) *Colours of Enchantment: Theater, Music, Dance and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002.

Articles, Journals and Newspapers

Abū al-Faḍl, Fathī, "Al-Qiṣṣa fī Ṣināʿat al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya", *Al-Ahrām*, 9 June, 1952: 3.

Ahmed, Leila, "Women and the Advent of Islam", *Signs* 11 (1986): 665-91.

Al-Ahrām, 6 January 1896.

Akhbār al-Yawm, 2 November 1966.

Al-'Antablī, 'Uthmān, "Al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya fī al-ʿahd al-Jadīd", *Al-Miṣri*, 18 August, 1952: 8.

Arab Film and Television Centre Periodicals, Ministry of Information, Beirut, Lebanon:-

"Activities of the Cairo Cine-Club During 1970-71 Season", 96-97 (15/06/1971): 15.

"*Akhnaton* and Shadi Abdel Salam", 108-109 (15/01/1972): 9-10.

"Bulgarian Film Week in Cairo & being made in Egyptian Studios", 90-91 (15/03/1971): 16.

"Changements à l'organisme du cinéma", 52-53 (1/06/1969): 10.

"Concerning the Competition for the Best Egyptian Documentary Film", 72 (30/04/1970): 5-7.

"Concerning the New Cinema", 96-97 (15/06/1971): 16.

"Dialogue with Hashem Nahas", 144-145 (15/08/1973): 8-10.

"Documentary Week", 70-71 (15/03/1970): 17.

"Dramatiques pour petits écrans", 62-63 (15/11/1969): 15.

"Du côté des courts métrages", 41 (15/06/1968): 4.

"Edition de la première partie du *Livre du Cinéma*", 54-55 (1/07/1969): 14.

"Egyptian Film Week in Berlin", 76 (31/07/1970): 6.

"Egyptian Political Cinema", 122-123 (15/09/1972): 9.

"En tournage dans les studios égyptiens", 59 (15/09/1969): 4.

"Filmography of the Egyptian Director Atif Salem", 122-123 (15/09/1972): 13-18.

- “Films Being Made”, 96-97 (15/06/1971): 15.
- “Films en tournage”, 62-63 (15/11/1969): 14.
- “Films made by Kamal al-Sheikh”, 106 -107 (15/11/1971): 15-19.
- “First Declaration of the Egyptian Makers of Documentary Films”, 114-115 (15/05/1972): 9.
- “40 ème anniversaire du cinéma égyptien”, 30 (1/11/1967): 9.
- “Interview with Kamal al-Sheikh”, 106-107 (15/11/1971): 7-14.
- “Interview with the Director Atif Salem”, 122-123 (15/09/1972): 10-12.
- “Interview with the Egyptian Director Ashraf Fahmi”, 124-127 (October - November 1972): 31-32.
- “Interview with the Egyptian director Salah Abu Seif”, 110-111 (15/02/1972): 7-16.
- “Jeunes cinéastes à l’action”, 36-37 (15/02/1968): 13.
- “*La maison de la mort certaine*”, 52-53 (1/06/1969): 7.
- “*La Terre: drame paysan*”, 56-57 (1/08/1969): 15.
- “*Le Caire 68* d’Abou Seif”, 41 (15/06/1968): 5.
- “*Le Facteur* à Locarno et Carthage / statistiques”, 42 (1/07/1968): 9.
- “Les gens et le nil”, 36-37 (15/02/1968): 14.
- “Les prix du cinéma égyptien pour 1967-68”, 43 (15/07/1968): 9.
- “List of Khalil Shawki’s films”, 69 (15/02/1970): 12.
- “Nouvelles tendances du cinéma égyptien”, 54-55 (1/07/1969): 16-17.
- “On tourne... On prépare...”, 43 (15/07/1968): 8.
- “Petites nouvelles”, 35 (15/01/1968): 7-8.
- “Petites nouvelles”, 36-37 (15/02/1968): 15.
- “Petites nouvelles”, 38 (1/04/1968): 10.
- “Petites nouvelles du cinéma”, 48 (1/10/1968): 2.
- “Production projects”, 94-95 (15/05/1971): 12.

- “Projets immédiates”, 52-53 (1/06/1969): 9.
- “Propos de H. Kamal”, 56-57 (1/08/1969): 14.
- “Propos de Y. Chahine”, *ibid.*, 16-17.
- “Remous autour de la censure”, 48 (1/06/1968): 11.
- “Round Table on the Sound Track in African and Arabic films”, 81-82-83 (15/11/1970): 2-3.
- “Taha Hussein adapté par Barakat”, 52-53 (1/06/1969): 10.
- “The Egyptian cinema in 1972”, 128-129 (15/12/1972): 13-18.
- “The Egyptian Cinema in Italy, Moscow, London, Berlin”, 94-95 (15/05/1971): 9-11.
- “The Egyptian Film Industry re-organised”, 76 (31/07/1970): 5.
- “*The Eloquent Peasant*”, 78-79 (1/10/1970): 6.
- “The Most Important Events in the Egyptian Cinema for 1971”, 110-111 (15/02/1972): 2-6.
- “*The Mummy*”, 78-79 (1/10/1970): 7-10.
- “The Third National Festival of Documentary Short Films and the Second National Festival of Fiction Feature Films”, 120-121 (15/08/1972): 2-5.
- “Trois oeuvres de T. Hakim portée à l’écran”, 48 (1/10/1968): 3.
- “U.A.R. participation”, 81-82-83 (15/11/1970): 19-24.
- “Un film sur l’histoire du cinéma Egyptien”, 56-57 (1/08/1969): 18.
- “Yussuf Shahin”, 100-101 (15/08/1971): 9-13.
- “Yussuf Shahin: Cinema is a Medium of Information and Education - Interview by Yussuf Al-Sadiq”, 138-139 (15/05/1973): 2-8.
- “Yussuf Shahin Returned to the Shooting of *Men and the Nile*”, 72 (30/04/1970): 8.

Al-‘Arūsa, 15 May 1929.

Ateek, A.A., “The Development of the Cinema in Egypt”, in *The Bulletin of the Egyptian Educational Bureau*, 51 (Jan., 1951): 5-7.

- Atiyya, Kamāl, "al-Qiṣṣa al-Sīnimā'iyya", *al-Akḥbār al-Jadīda*, 31 October, 1952: 8.
- Baker, N.V., Gregware, P.R., and Cassidy, M.A., "Family Killing Fields", *Violence against women*, 5(1999): 164-184.
- Baron, Beth, "Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25 (1989): 370-385.
- Al-Bundarī, Jalīl, "Azmat Mukhrijīn fī al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya", *Ākhir Saʿa*, 28 October, 1953: 26.
- Cluny, Claude-Michel, "Actualité du cinéma arabe", *Cinéma 77*, no. 222 Paris, (1977): 31-40.
- Cole, Juan Ricardo, "Feminism, Class and Islam in Turn-of-the-Century Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13 (1981): 387-407.
- "Facts about the Film Industry in Egypt", *The Bulletin of the Egyptian Educational Bureau*, 9 (Feb., 1947): 7-8.
- Farid, Samir, "Les six générations du cinéma égyptien", *Ecran*, 15, (May 1973): 38-48.
- Farīd, Samīr, "Sūrat al-Mar'a fī al-Sīnimā al-ʿArabīya", *Al-Ḥayāt al-Sīnimā'iya*, 21 (Spring, 1984): 4 - 15.
- Ferro, Marc, "Le film, une contre analyse de la société?", *Annales*, (Jan-Feb, 1973): 31-62.
- Germanus, Julius, "The Trend of Contemporary Arabic literature: The Role of Women in Arabic Literature", *Islamic Quarterly*, 4 (October 1957, No. 3): 114-122.
- Ghanim, Fathī, "Al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya laysat fī Khaṭar", *Ākhir Saʿa*, 29 December, 1954: 46 - 47.
- Haddad, Yvonne Y., "Islam, Women and Revolution in Twentieth-Century Arab Thought", *The Muslim World* 74 (1984): 160.
- Ḥāfez, Bahīja, "Al-Āthār al-Miṣriyya fī al-Sīnimā wa Nashāṭātī lahā", *Al-Miṣriyya* (1 June 1937): 33-34.
- Ḥammādah, Muḥammed, "Al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya fī Khaṭar", *Ākhir Saʿa*, 15 April 1953: 5.
- Al-Hayat*, 14090 (13, October 2001).
- Heath, Stephen, "Film: the Art of the Real", *Cambridge Review*, (October 1974): 17-20.

Ibrāhīm, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, “Al-Shāsha al-Bayḍā’ fī Miṣr”, *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, 9 (June 1946): 139 - 140.

Ilyas, Ilyas Maqdisī, “Nawaḥī’ al-Naqs fī al-Film al-Miṣrī”, *Dunya al-Kawākib*, 15 September, 1952: 25.

The International Herald Tribune, 29 December 1970.

Ismael, Jacqueline and Ismael, Tareq, “Social Policy in the Arab World”, *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, 18 (1995): 23 - 63.

Jacobs, M., “The Cinema”, *The Bulletin of the Egyptian Educational Bureau*, 24 (May, 1948): 39 - 40.

Jacobs, M., “Egyptian Stage Actresses”, *The Bulletin of the Egyptian Educational Bureau*, 22 (March, 1948): 15 - 17.

Al-Jadīd, 13 May 1929.

Al-Jins al-Laṭif 9, ii (1916).

Jawkar, Forouz, “Honour and Shame: A Feminist View from within”, *Feminist Issues* 6, I(1986): 45-63.

Jonassaint, Jean, “Chahine et le cinéma égyptien”, *Dérives*, 43 (1984): 2 - 70.

Kamil, Rushdī, “Ḥawl al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya”, *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, 26 (November, 1947): 291 - 295.

Kamil, Rushdī, “Intibā‘āt min al-Sīnimā al-Miṣrīya”, *al-Kātib al-Miṣrī*, 12 (September 1946): 736 - 738.

Kandiyoti, D.A., “Emancipated but unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish case”, *Feminist Studies*, 13(1987): 317 – 338.

Al-Khalidi, Anbara, “Woman’s role in Arab society”, *Islamic Review*, 37 (November 1949): 19 - 22.

Khayati, Khémais, “Cinéma arabe - cinéma dans le tiers monde - cinéma militant”, *Dérives*, 3 - 4 (1976): 3 - 16.

Khayati, Khémais, “Egypte - Tunisie: ‘La guerre du cinéma’”, *Arabies*, 45 (September, 1990): 77 - 80.

Landau, Jacob, M., “The Arab Cinema”, *Middle Eastern Affairs*. Vol. 4 (November, 1953): 349-358.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, “The Structural Study of Myth”, *Journal of American Folklore*, 1955, LXXVIII.

- Majallat al-ʿUsbūʿ*, 29 (13 June 1934).
- Al-Malāhī al-Muṣawwira*, 21 (20 February 1934).
- Malkmus, Lizabeth, “The ‘new’ Egyptian Cinema: Adapting Genre Conventions to a Changing Society”, *Cinéaste*, 16 (1988): 3 - 4.
- Al-Masrah*, 58 (31 January 1927).
- Mernissi, Fatima, “Patriarcado y la Virginidad”, *Woman* 144 (20 October 2001): 1-9.
- Al-Miṣriyya*, 1 June 1937.
- Miṣr al-Ḥadītha al-Muṣawwara*, 6 May 1929.
- Mourad, Leila, “A Year of the Egyptian cinema”, *The Arab World*, 21 (October 1954): 14.
- Al-Muqattam*, 1 December 1896.
- Al-Muṣawwir*, no. 3545, Cairo, September 1992.
- Nabarawi, Saiza, “Une nouvelle étoile du firmament égyptien”, *L’Egyptienne* (September 1928): 5-9.
- Nabarawi, Saiza, “Le Conservatoire de musique orientale”, *L’Egyptienne* (December 1930): 6-10.
- Al-Najjār, ʿAbd al-Wahab, “al-Sīnimā wa al-Islām”, *Majallat al-Shubbān al-Muslimīn*, February 1930/1348: 356 - 357.
- Al-Naqqāsh, Raja’, “Najib Mahfuz wa al-Mishwār al-Ṭawīl min al-Ḥusayn ila Stockholm”, *Al-Musawwar*, Cairo, 21 October, 1988.
- Al-Nāqid*, 8 (21 October 1927).
- Panzac, Daniel, “The Population of Egypt in the Nineteenth Century”, *Asian and African Studies*, 21 (1987): 11-32.
- Perlmann, M., “Women and Feminism in Egypt”, *Palestine Affairs*, (4 March 1949): 36 - 39.
- Queeny, Mary, “My Souvenirs”, *Revue Internationale du Cinéma*, 16 (1953): 42-43.
- Al-Risāla*, Cairo, 2 July 1951.
- Room, Abram, “Kino i teatr”, *Sovetskii ekran*, 8 (1925).
- Rūz al-Yūsuf*, 101 (13 October 1927), 103 (30 October 1927), 106 (17 November 1927), 107 (24 November 1927) and 111 (22 December 1927).

- Saad al-Din, M., "Theatre and Cinema", *The Bulletin*, 12 (May, 1947): 85 - 87.
- Al-Ṣabāḥ*, 61 (28 November 1927) and 63 (12 December 1927).
- Saʿd, Malaka, "Jāmiʿat al-Maḥabba", in *Al-Jins al-Laṭif*, 9, ii (1916): 68-70.
- Sadoul, Georges, "Le septième festival international du film de Cannes", *Les Lettres Françaises*, (April 8 - 15, 1954): 6.
- Schneider, Jane, "Of Vigilance and Virgins: Honour, Shame and Access to Resources in the Mediterranean Societies", *Ethnology* 10 (1971): 1-24.
- Shohat, Ella, "Egypt: Cinema and Revolution", *Critical Arts*, 2, no. 4 (1983): 22 – 32.
- Sidawi, E., "Le cinéma égyptien d'hier et d'aujourd'hui", *Le Monde Arabe*, 25 (June 15, 1952): 20 - 21.
- Al-Sitār*, 8 (28 November 1927) and 9 (31 November 1927).
- Surūr, Aḥmad Kamāl, "al-Diʿaya li Miṣr bi al-Sīnimā", *al-Radyū al-Miṣrī*, 9 January, 1937: 6, 11.
- Tarḡiyat al-Mar'a*, I, ix, 1908.
- Toynbee, Philip, "Egypt's Arabic Film Monopoly", *The Jerusalem Post*, (2 June 1950): 4.
- Tucker, Judith, "Decline of the Family Economy in the Mid-nineteenth Century Egypt", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 1:iii (1979): 245-271.
- Tulaymat, Zakī, "Khayṭ min al-Fann al-Sīnimā'ī fī Miṣr", *al-Kitāb*, 1 (January, 1946): 415 - 422.
- Wassef, Magda, "Egypte: Un miroir infidèle", *Le Courrier de l'UNESCO*, (July-August, 1995): 49 - 52.
- Williams, Raymond, "A Lecture on Realism", *Screen*, (Spring, 1977): 61-74.
- Al-Zayyat, Latifa, "On Political Commitment and Feminist Writing", *Alif* 10 (1980): 134.
- Zohny, S., "The Development of the Film Industry", *The Bulletin*, 35 (May - June 1949): 55-56.

Unpublished Material

- Abdel Kader, Soha, "The Image of Women in Drama and Women's Programs on Egyptian Television", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Cairo University, 1982.
- Ali, Jihad Racy, "Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt, 1904-1932", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Illinois, Illinois, 1977.
- Arabi, Afif, "The History of Lebanese Cinema 1929-1979", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, The Ohio State University, 1996.
- Arnett, Mary Flounders, "Qasim Amin and the Beginnings of the Feminist Movement in Egypt", Ph.D. Thesis, Dropsie College, Philadelphia, 1965.
- Al-Haraty, Salem Ahmad, "Study on the History of Cinema in the Libyan Popular Socialist Arab Jamahiriya", Unpublished Thesis, London: International Film School, 1988.
- Hassan, Amina, "La Représentation de la réussite sociale dans le cinéma égyptien des années soixante-dix", Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sorbonne, Paris, 1994.

Personal Interviews

- Personal interview with Henry Barakat, Cairo, April, 1996.
- Personal interview with Salah Abu Seyf, Cairo, April, 1996.

Audio Visual Material

- Boughedir, Farid, *Camera Arabe: The Young Arab Cinema*, U.K. 1987.
- Chahine, Youssef, public lecture on autobiographical elements in *Iskandariya Lih?* 1978 (Why Alexandria?) at Ewart Memorial Hall, Cairo, Winter 1981 broadcasted on *Voice of Cairo* radio in 1997, recorded copy at The Cinema Cultural Centre, Cairo, Egypt.
- Chemait, Walid, *History of Egyptian Cinema*, Lebanese T.V. Company 1972, T.V. Documentary on *Channel 7*, Lebanon.
- Gaunt, Marilyn, *A Veiled Revolution*, U.K. 1983.
- Gaunt, Marilyn, *The Price of Change*, U.K. 1983.

Gray, Hugh, interviewed by Edwin Gordon on *Voice of America* radio, 1972, recorded copy at the Educational and Cultural Affairs Directorate, United States International Communication Agency, Washington, D.C.

Kawaja, Jennifer, *Beyond Borders: Arab Feminists talk about their lives*, Canada, 1999.

Martin, Angela, *Arab Cinema*, London: U.K. Channel 4, 1988.

Internet Resources: Selected websites

Due to the temporary nature of some websites and their continually changing structure and content, there is no guarantee that the information/websites listed here will always be available.

<http://www.webislam.com/>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/world/middle_east/

http://www.torinofilmfest.org/html/om_egitto

<http://www.film.com/film/misc/other.sites.html>

http://www.csp.it/cinema._e.html

APPENDIX 1

Film details and synopsis

Title of Film:	Du ^ʿ ā' al-Karwān, <i>Call of the Curlew</i>
Date of release:	22 November 1959
Director:	Henry Barakat
Scriptwriter:	Yussef Gohar
Novelist:	Taha Husayn
Editing:	Mohammed Abbas and Ahmed Faruk
Cameraman:	Wahid Farid
Music:	Andre Ryder
Production:	Dollar Film (prop. Henry Barakat)
Duration:	109 minutes in black and white.
Cast:	Faten Hamama as Amna Zahret El Ola as Hanadi Ahmed Mazha as the engineer Amina Rizq as Zahra, the mother. Abdel Halim Khattab as Jabir, the uncle. Mimi Shakib as Zannuba Ragaa al-Gidawi as Khadija

Synopsis The sisters Hanadi and Amna lead a quiet life in their village. But their happy days do not last long when their wayward father is murdered in a scandal involving one of the women villagers. The village men, among whom was their maternal uncle, decide to expel the widowed mother and her daughters from the village to stifle the controversy. In blind obedience to her brother's wishes, Zahra accepts exile. The mother and her daughters roam about on the roads until they arrive to the nearest town. They settle there and look for work. Hanadi, the eldest, is employed as a maid by a handsome agricultural engineer who is a bachelor and lives alone. Amna, the younger sister, is also employed as a maid in the home of the village prefect. At first life for all of them looks promising in the town until

Hanadi's fate is sealed. She returns one day to her mother and discretely reveals to her that she has lost her virginity to her employer. Zahra is astounded and decides to leave the town at once, followed by Amna's inquisitive attitude who could not figure out the reason of their sudden departure and also by an anxious and silent Hanadi. During their second journey, Hanadi reveals her secret to Amna and expresses her concern over her future and her mother's plans. On their way they are joined by the uncle, who had been summoned by their mother. To preserve the honour of the family, uncle Jabir murders the pregnant Hanadi and buries her in the middle of the night in the desert and in the presence of Amna and her mother. At this treacherous scene, Amna faints and wakes up later to find herself in her old home in the village, surrounded by her mother and other women in black. But Amna is not resigned; she runs away and vows vengeance on the engineer who had caused her sister's misfortune. Amna gets re-employed in her previous job. All this is timed by her, with the aim of getting employed at the engineer's house. After several attempts she succeeds. Amna's plan is simple: she would let the engineer fall for her and she will see him perish like her sister. But what she had not foreseen was that she would become emotionally involved and she develops a love-hate relationship with him. In the course of the dramatic trial of wills between them, without her realising it, she falls in love with him. The engineer gradually changes his hedonistic lifestyle and becomes a truly repentant character. His marriage proposal follows shortly after, whereupon Amna reveals the secret of her sister's fate with him. But uncle Jabir reappears at the gate of the engineer's house. Jabir aims his shotgun at Amna but her lover swerves around to shield her and he gets killed instead. The film comes to an end with the uncle getting arrested later.

Film Title: Bidāya wa Nihāya, *The Beginning and the End*

Date of release: 31 October 1960

Director: Salah Abu Seyf

Scriptwriter: Salah Izz al-Din and Salah Abu Seyf

Novelist: Najib Mahfuz

Editing: Amil Bahri

Cameramen: Kamal Karim and Salah Karim

Music: Fuad Al-Dzahiri

Production: Dinar Film

Duration: 130 minutes in black and white.

Cast: Farid Shawki as Hasan

Omar Sharif as Hasanayn

Sana Jamil as Nafisa

Amina Rizq as the mother

Kamal Huseyn as Huseyn

Amal Farid as Bahiya

Synopsis A lower-middle class Cariene family is reduced to poverty following the sudden death of the father, the sole breadwinner. His widow together with her three sons and a daughter slowly learn how to survive on the meagre pension left by the deceased father together with harsh austerity measures. The widow makes heroic efforts to keep the family together and make ends meet and does so by selling nearly all the house's furniture and feeding the grown-up children only a small meal a day. The rest is provided by Nafisa, the daughter, who sacrifices her own reputation for the sake of the younger brothers. Nafisa is reduced first to a dressmaker and then to a whore. She is seduced and later rejected by a local grocer. Her strong sexual urges make her resort to occasional prostitution. Hasan, the eldest brother, who aspired to become a singer, turns to a life of crime: a drug-pusher and a nightclub bouncer living with a prostitute. Husayn, the middle brother gives up any

plans for a higher education or even marriage and agrees to become a petty clerk to pave the way for his youngest brother Hasanayn. The youngest brother turns out to be a ruthlessly ambitious son with wild dreams of climbing the social ladder. Thanks to the help and sacrifices of Nafisa and the rest of the family, Hasanayn graduates as an army officer after a year and proudly returns home. However, just as he prepares to begin a new life, fate had other plans for him and with alarming speed his world falls apart: his marriage proposal to an upper-class woman is turned down due to his humble origins; his eldest brother is sought by the police as a drug dealer and a criminal; and his sister is arrested in a brothel. Unable to face the shame and the scandal, he forces her to commit suicide before he follows suit.

Title of Film: Al-Bāb al-Maftūh, *The Open Door*

Date of release: 7 October 1963

Director: Henry Barakat

Scriptwriters: Henry Barakat, Lafifa al-Zayyat and Yussef Issa

Novelist: Latifa al-Zayyat

Editing: Fathi Qasim

Cameraman: Wahid Farid

Music: André Ryder

Production: Dollar Film (prop. Henry Barakat)

Duration: 105 minutes in black and white

Cast: Faten Hamama as Layla

Hasan Yussef as Isam, the cousin

Shawkar Sakkal as Jamila, the cousin

Mahmud Morsi as Professor Fuad Ramzi

Shireen as university colleague

Naheed Samir as university colleague

Saleh Selim as Husayn, the engineer

Mimi Shakib as Zuzu Hanem, Jamila's mother

Mahmud Al-Heddini as brother Mahmud

Siham Fathi as Sanaa

Yakkub Mikhail as Soliman Effendi, the father

Synopsis The film begins with demonstrations, gunfire on the front, with men and women adjusting to military routine and training to carry weapons. Layla's activism is emphasised from the outset, she is a convinced patriot. Young Layla runs through excited groups of girls confined within the school grounds. She leads her friends during political activities outside the school premises. This neither

pleases her father nor her cousin Isam, an unprincipled young man, or Jamila her cousin, a spoilt young girl. On the other hand, her brother Mahmud and his friend, Husayn, used to encourage her immensely in her patriotic beliefs. Meanwhile her cousin Isam becomes infatuated with Layla, who also is attracted to him and both of them aspire to get engaged when they grow older. However, during Jamila's wedding, Isam tries to sexually assault Layla. Despite her love for him, she strongly resists his advances. When she later discovers Isam's ongoing affair with the maid, she is emotionally shattered, becomes an introvert person and closes her door to Isam's pleas.

After the burning of Cairo in 1952, Mahmud and Husayn are arrested for political activities. After the revolution, they are released from jail. Husayn attempts to make Layla reciprocate her love to him but his sincere attempts are turned down. Meanwhile Husayn leaves for Germany to pursue his studies and makes it a habit to correspond regularly with Layla. The latter enters university and tries hard to suppress her feelings for Husayn. At the university Layla is admired by Professor Ramzi, her philosophy lecturer who makes a marriage proposal to her parents. At first Layla feels proud of this engagement but she soon discovers Professor Ramzi's selfish and arrogant character. He announces that he considers a wife to be as any object in her husband's house. Contrary to her brother, his friend Husayn and herself, Professor Ramzi did not show any inclination to patriotism or bothered about Egypt's socio-political problems. During the tripartite aggression on Cairo, Professor Ramzi advises Layla's family to take refuge in Al-Fayyum to avoid the enemy's air raids. At the train station, which is overcrowded with people travelling to the Suez zone in defence of their country, Layla is suddenly overtaken by courage and love for her country and Husayn. She breaks off her engagement with Professor Ramzi, ignores her parents' orders and runs to catch the same train that Husayn had taken and with him makes it to the front to save her country from foreign aggression.

APPENDIX 2

Filmography

Egyptian Feature Films

Al-Baḥr Biyiḍḥak lih? / Why Does the Sea Laugh? (1928)

Directed by Istephan Rosti

Shajarat al-Durr / Shajarat al-Durr (1935)

Directed by Ahmad Jalal

Bint al-Bāshā al-Mudīr / The Daughter of the Director (1938)

Directed by Ahmad Jalal

Al-ʿazima / The Will (1939)

Directed by Kamal Salim

Fatāt Mutamarrida / Rebellious Woman (1940)

Directed by Ahmad Jalal

Al-Muttahama / The Accused (1942)

Directed by Henry Barakat

Al-Sūq al-Sawdā' / The Black Market (1945)

Directed by Kamal al-Telemesani

Fāṭima wa Mārīka wa Rāshīl / Fatima, Marica and Rachel (1949)

Directed by Helmi Rafla

Sitt al-Bayt / The Mistress of the House (1949)

Directed by Ahmad Kamal Mursi

Al-Avōkāto Madiha / Madiha the Lawyer (1950)

Directed by Yussef Wahbi

Al-Manzil Raqam 13 / House No. 13 (1952)

Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Sayyidat al-Qiṭār / The Lady of the Train (1952)

Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Ustādha Fāṭima / Dr. Fatima (1952)

Directed by Fatine Abd al-Wahab

Yasqūṭ al-Isti'mār / Down with Colonialism (1952)
Directed by Hussein Sidki

Nisā' bilā Rijāl / Women without Men (1953)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Uṣṭā Ḥasan / Foreman Hasan (1953)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Rayyā wa Sakkīna / Raya and Sakkina (1953)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Al-Fāris al-Aswad / The Black Knight (1954)
Directed by Niyazi Mustafa

Futuwwāt al-Ḥusseiniyya / The Tough Guys of Al-Husseiniyyah (1954)
Directed by Niyazi Mustafa

Ḥayāt Aw Mawt / Life or Death (1954)
Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Ja' alūnī Mujriman / They made Me a Criminal (1954)
Directed by Atef Salem

Ṣirā' fī al-Wādī / Blazing Sun (1954)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Waḥsh / The Monster (1954)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Allāh Ma'anā / God is with Us (1955)
Directed by Ahmed Badrakhan

Ḍaḥāyā al-Iqṭā' / Victims of the Feudal System (1955)
Directed by Mustafa al-Badawi

Darb al-Mahābīl / Alley of Fools (1955)
Directed by Tawfiq Saleh

Rannat al-Khulkhāl / The Song of the Anklet (1955)
Directed by Mahmud Zulficar

Ayna 'Umri / Where is my Life? (1956)
Directed by Ahmad Diya' al-Din

Shabāb Imra'a / A Woman's Youth (1956)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Wadda'tu Ḥubbak / Farewell to your love (1956)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Anta Ḥabībī / You are my love (1957)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Arḍ al-Salām / The Land of Peace (1957)
Directed by Kamal Al-Sheykh

Al-Futuwwa / The Daring Youth (1957)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Būr Saʿīd / Port Said (1957)
Directed by Izz al-Din Zulficar

Lā 'Anām / Sleepless Nights (1957)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Rudda Qalbī / Give me back my Heart (1957)
Directed by Izz al-Din Zulficar

Sijīn Abu Zaʿbel / The Prisoner at Abu Zabel (1957)
Directed by Niyazi Mustafa

Al-Wisāda al-Khāliya / The Empty Pillow (1957)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Bāb al-Ḥadīd / The Railway Station (1958)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Hadhā huwa al-Ḥubb / This is love (1958)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Ḥubb min Nār / Passionate love (1958)
Directed by Hasan al-Imam

Jamīla / Jamila, the Algerian (1958)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Ṭarīq al-Masdūd / Dead End (1958)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Anā Ḥurra / I am Free (1959)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Bayna al-Aṭlāl / Among the Ruins (1959)
Directed by Izz al-Din Zulficar

Duʿā' al-Karwān / Call of the Curlew (1959)
Directed by Henry Barakat

Samrā' Sīnā' / The Dark Beauty of Sinai (1959)
Directed by Niyazi Mustafa

Bayna Iydayk / In your hands (1960)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Bidāya wa Nihāya / The Beginning and the End (1960)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Law'at al-Ḥubb / The Anguish of Love (1960)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Nahr al-Ḥubb / River of Love (1960)
Directed by Izz al-Din Zulficar

‘Amāliqāt al-Bihār / The Giants of the Seas (1960)
Directed by Al-Sayyid Badir

Lā Tutfi' al-Shams / Do not extinguish the Sun (1961)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Fī Baytunā Rajul / There is a Man in our House (1961)
Directed by Henry Barakat

Al-Liṣṣ wa al-Kilāb / The Thief and the Dogs (1962)
Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Al-Zawja Raqam 13 / Wife No. 13 (1962)
Directed by Fatine Abd al-Wahab

Risāla Min Imra'a Majhūla / A Letter from an unknown Woman (1962)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Al-Bāb al-Maftūḥ / The Open Door (1963)
Directed by Henry Barakat

Al-Nāṣir Ṣalāh al-Dīn / Saladin (1963)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Lā Waqt li al-Ḥubb / No Time for Love (1963)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Zuqāq al-Midaq / Midaq Alley (1963)
Directed by Hasan al-Iman

Bayn al-Qaṣrayn / Between the Two Palaces (1964)
Directed by Hasan al-Iman

Fajr Yawm Jadīd / The Dawn of a new Day (1965)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Ḥarām / The Sin (1965)
Directed by Henry Barakat

Al-Khā'ina / The Traitor (1965)
Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Al-Qāhira Thalāthīn / Cairo 30 (1966)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Zawjati Muḍīr 'Āmm / My Wife is Director General (1966)
Directed by Fatine Abd al-Wahab

Jaffat al-Amṭār / Draughts (1967)
Directed by Sayed Issa

Qaṣr al-Shawq / Palace of Desire (1967)
Directed by Hasan al-Iman

Al-Zawja al-Thāniya / The Second Wife (1967)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Al-Buṣṭagī / The Postman (1968)
Directed by Hussein Kamal

Al-Qaḍiya 68 / Trial 68 (1968)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf

Al-Mutamarridūn / The Rebels (1968)
Directed by Tawfiq Saleh

Jarimat 'Ird / Crime of Honour (1969)
Directed by Shafik Shamia

Mirāmār / Miramar (1969)
Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Al-Sayyid al-Bulṭī / Mr. Bolti (1969)
Directed by Tawfiq Saleh

Thalāth Nisā' / Three Women (1969)
Directed by Salah Abu Seyf, Henry Barakat, and Mahmud Zulficar

Yawmiyyāt Nā'ib fī al-Aryāf / The Diary of a Country Prosecutor (1969)
Directed by Tawfiq Saleh

Al-Ard / The Earth (1970)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Ghurūb wa Shurūq / Sunset and Sunrise (1970)
Directed by Kamal al-Sheykh

Tharthara fawq al-Nīl / Chatter on the Nile (1971)
Directed by Hussein Kamal

Al-Khawf / Fear (1972)
Directed by Said Marzuk

Al-Ikhtiyār / The Choice (1972)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Ughniya °alā al-Mamarr / A Song in the Corridor (1972)
Directed by Ali Abd al-Khaliq

Al-Sukkariya / Sugar Street (1973)
Directed by Hasan al-Iman

Al-°Usfūr / The Sparrow (1973)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Al-Karnak / Al-Karnak (1975)
Directed by Ali Badrakhan

Iskandariya Lih? / Why Alexandria (1978)
Directed by Yussef Chahine

Ahl al-Qimma / People at their Summit (1981)
Directed by Ali Badrakhan

Nāšir '56 / Nasser '56 (1994)
Directed by Muhammad Fadil