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Entrepreneurship in a State of Flux: Egypt's Silent Cinema and Its Transition to Synchronized
Sound, 1896-1934

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Film and Television

by

Mohannad Ghawanmeh

2020

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Entrepreneurship in a State of Flux: Egypt's Silent Cinema and Its Transition to Synchronized Sound, 1896-1934

by

Mohannad Ghawanmeh

Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Television

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Chon A. Noriega, Chair

This is a work of cultural history, mainly because it had to be, because I realized that such a history would most enable my writing a dissertation length work about a cultural industry scarcely documented in primary sources and restrictively written about since. As for my conceiving the early cinema on the Nile as a cultural industry, that was because I found the conception of *Egyptian cinema* presumptive. Egypt gained its status as a (nominally) independent modern nation-state in 1922, so that for much of the cinema's early existence in Egypt it and the people who interacted with it were governed according to systems in good part delineated centuries earlier. Moreover, at no time during this study was the most dominant governmental power in Egypt headed by "native" Egyptians.

Egyptian cinema foreclosed people and institutions qualified as non-Egyptian. As it turned out, the most influential, most capitalized practitioners in Egypt's cinema into the mid-1930s were not of Egyptian origin, though some may have "naturalized." I also learned that of

the totality of activity we may qualify as cinema, most was not in production of films, but in their exhibition, an industrial subsector that directly engaged far more people than did filmmaking in Egypt's urban and rural locals. As I learned, exhibition was industrially linked to distribution by the most powerful institutions of what I came to describe as the early cinema industry, 1896-1934. *Egyptian cinema* had methodologically restricted studies past, produced within Egypt and without, in delimiting the seemingly non-Egyptian, whether people or institutions. The term had also relatively promoted the study of textual production within the cinema, often as a facet of cultural creation and commodification overseen if not undertaken by the state. A study of the early *Egyptian cinema* would be limited materially and restrictive conceptually. I would study the cinema in Egypt as a collective activity that organized overtime and was propelled by exchange among people and institutions, Egyptian or not, regardless of points of origination or conclusion to instances or patterns of exchange.

By examining complex power relations of the political economy of Egypt's early cinema industry I move to justify the noted methodological shift declared in the title of the first chapter. "How the Cinema in Egypt Egyptianized" is framed as a reflexive investigative journey into such modern history of relevant power relations centered in Egypt and affecting its cinema. I interrogate the concept of *national cinema* in the second chapter and bespeak *Egyptianizing* (tamassur), two addresses on which I elaborate theoretically and historically. I follow this discussion with two illustrative case studies of Egyptianizing of cineastes and their institutions in tow, from the operative era. The third chapter attends to the intersecting histories of film pioneer Mohammed Bayoumi and the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, later Studio Misr, the first bona fide film studio in the Middle East, as led by Tal`at Harb. Both men avowed nationalism and both contributed to the development of the cinema in Egypt in the name of the nation. Chapter three integrates analysis of Bayoumi's nonfiction films, among those survived silent productions noted, an examination that situates their texts within their cultural and

historical contexts. The final chapter makes the case for the significance of the interaction between the theater and cinema industries in Egypt in the studied era. It does so by charting the generic interlinks between stage and screen, specific as they had been to Egypt: (melo)drama, comedy, and singing. In keeping with previous chapters that have instrumentally elaborated on domains of cinematic activity other than production—distribution, exhibition, and press—productions and practitioners are linked to audiences, playhouses, and movie houses. This final chapter also complements or augments discussions from the earlier chapters in each of its three genre-bound segments. In the end, this work is intended to critically assess nationalism as it relates to the cinema, while drawing attention to a cinema underserved by media histories.

The dissertation submitted by Mohannad Ghawanmeh is approved.

Ross Melnick

Ellen Scott

Jasmine Nadua Trice

Chon A. Noriega, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2020

To the Egyptian people, wherever and whenever

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Instrumentalizing Political Economy to Examine Cultural History	
Chapter One	9
How the Cinema in Egypt Egyptianized	
Chapter Two	87
Defining National Cinema, Theorizing Nationalist Cinema, and Examining the Egyptianizing Cinema, 1896-1934	
Chapter Three	136
News of the Nation: Mohamed Bayoumi's Newsfilms and the Emergence of National Cinema in the Newly Independent Egypt, 1923-1935	
Chapter Four	186
Theatre to Cinema: Fostering and Facilitating	
Conclusion	273
The Burden of Nationalism	
Filmography	
Egypt's Domestic Silent Films	280
Bibliography	292

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Over the course of my years as a PhD student and in the acknowledgements pages I have perused in preparing to write my own, I have encountered references to the writing of a dissertation as a solitary, even lonely process. My experience was very much the contrary. I became acquainted, at times intimately, with the life and work of the people who populate the history in which I had immersed myself for several years. I must first, therefore, acknowledge these characters who contributed to the collective activity that amounted to the cinema in Egypt in the era under study, especially those entrepreneurs who dedicated their resources to such activity, who took chances that cumulatively built the early industrial cinema on the Nile. I must also pay tribute, even in passing, to all those who put thought to paper from which I gleaned, learned, or borrowed.

I owe a great debt to the exceptional scholars and educators of my dissertation committee. Ross Melnick's enthusiasm declared for my research project so early reassured and encouraged me, as he continued to applaud my research adventures and acknowledge its misadventures! Jasmine Nadua Trice set me on a course of improved scholastic writing by adroitly locating my challenges thereof and considerately suggesting strategies for improvement. Beside unwavering rhetorical support, Ellen Scott was instrumental in my locating research travel funding on not one but two occasions and in two capacities. Chon Noriega deserves a special recognition as my dissertation advisor, bringing his varied, expansive knowledge and exceptional memory to my aid so pivotally on numerous occasions. These luminaries of my dissertation committee have immeasurably informed my dissertation as they already have the book manuscript into which it is being transformed.

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Indeed, I must acknowledge my wonderful department of Film, Television and Digital Media and its subsuming School of Theater, Film, and Television for recognizing me with awards and other gestures of encouragement and support, material and otherwise. Similarly, the University of California, Los Angeles Graduate Division and the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies have generously supported my research financially. Furthermore, my research was ignited when I watched Mohamed Bayoumi's films in the UCLA Film and Television Archives and would have not advanced to the degree that it has were it not for the impressive holdings of the University of California Libraries. I have more people to

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As mentioned, I had become a cineaste during my years in the Twin Cities, an experience that motivated me to invest in becoming a cinema scholar. My education had begun before attending UCLA, thanks to mentors Mazhar al-Zo`by and especially Hisham Bizri who inexplicably seemed to think the world of me and who taught me a great deal. Bizri in particular has extended council and support voluntarily, repeatedly, and unwaveringly. I wish to acknowledge the marvelous organization that is Mizna, whose founder Kathryn Haddad and longstanding executive and artistic director Lana Barkawi presented me with a forum to develop my skills in project leadership. I must extend special gratitude to those who advised and

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VITA

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“School of Satan: Al-Azhar’s Censure, Government Censorship and the Vogue of Islamic History Films, 1951-1972,” *Muslims in the Movies: A Global Anthology*, edited by Kristian Petersen. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (Forthcoming 2020)

“Displacement and the Vicissitudes of Pan-Arabism: Between *The Dupes* and *In the Last Days of the City*,” *Migrants’ Perspective/Migrants in Perspective: Human Displacement in 21st century film*, edited by Frank Jacob and Nicole Beth Wallenbrock. Edenborough: University of Edenborough Press, (Forthcoming 2020)

“Tracing Early News Cinema in Egypt on the Pages of *Motion Pictures* (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika, 1923-1925),” *Documentary Filmmaking in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Viola Shafik. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2020

“Critical Review of *Barakah Meets Barakah*,” *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, (November 2018)

Introduction

Instrumentalizing Political Economy to Examine Cultural History

My dissertation study, “Entrepreneurship in State of Flux: Egypt’s Silent Cinema and Its Transition to Synchronized Sound, 1896-1934,” principally employs a political economy approach to examine practices of those who worked in the field of cinema broadly, including in production, distribution, exhibition, and in the cinema press. It regards cinema as a collection of activities: commercial relations, exchanges of expertise, and movements of celluloid, equipment and people. This research project breaks new ground, expanding dramatically the limited, restricted literature heretofore. It uniquely situates the cinema in Egypt of the era within a complex and dynamic transnational arena of exchange and influence, to include cinema practitioners, public and private institutions, popular and industry press, as well as audiences. English language literature on the silent cinema of Egypt hardly exists and my project is set to introduce this era as one of origination of the most productive and influential cinema in the Middle East.

Limitations to researching Egypt’s cinema early cinema became apparent about midway in researching for this work: all but sixteen of over 150 silent domestic productions lost, limited press coverage, and scarce government papers before 1930, having probed three national archives in three countries. Partly due to such paucity of primary materials, I determined that a cultural history was in order, one that would situate the cinema in Egypt at the center of a concerted project of nationalization. This was to be a work of historical production studies that accounted for the early industrial landscape of the cinema of Egypt in its totality—production, distribution, exhibition, press, and reception. As film scholars Richard Abel and Barbara Klinger

have observed, works of cultural history must reach into fields other than media studies to describe the historical contexts to examined cinemas, especially in terms of reception. Indeed, mine is a work far reaching in its interdisciplinary ambitions, integrating content from such fields as international relations, political philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, theater, Islamic studies, musicology, Egyptology, and multiple subdisciplines of history.

My analysis would account for shifts in governance within the political landscape that impacted cinema, including distribution of authority and the legal and actual exercise of political power, colonial then postcolonial as it were. This was to be a work in cultural history expanded to account for domains of economic facets of the cinema that may not seem culturally significant—taxation, agency, and booking for example—but which continually impacted the cinema of Egypt during the era of study.

My project, the first on the subject in the English language, expands on early cinema studies authored by Egyptian film historians, by situating the cinema in Egypt within regional and global networks of exchange of ideas, people, and celluloid. Although my research has been principally archival, I did visit with film scholars, critics, and curators in Egypt as well as with Egyptian intelligence, in an obligatory, impromptu meeting in an historic disused synagogue! Beside the aversely accessible national archives, I have poured over thousands of documents in a variety of institutions in Egypt. Unprecedented to Egyptian early cinema histories is my examination of materials in recently developed digital archives, as well as in private and public institutional archives outside of France and Egypt, including the national archives of the United Kingdom, then occupier of Egypt, and of the United States, whose product increasingly dominated Egyptian screens over the span of my study. My research project adds to revisionist Egyptian histories that have emerged especially in this century to challenge those produced

according to national narratives, histories that had served the political interests of successive republican Egyptian governments, beginning with the Officer's Coup of 1952, that which toppled the country's constitutional monarchy. In doing so, this work tackles matters that Egyptian histories have largely ignored such as xenophobia, ethnicism, and sexism that impacted the cultures of film production, exhibition, and the press covering these during the era under study.

The chapters constituting this study transition, not merely differ, in their instrumentalization of political economy to examine the early industrial era of the cinema in Egypt, accounting for the country's unique transition into constitutional nation-statehood from a proto-modern, viceregal province of the Ottoman Empire, all while under effective British rule. Typically, a dissertation media study commences by reviewing relevant studies to engage a dialectic that informs conceptual approaches to the subject under study, which aggregately shape the dissertation's theoretical framework. This I do herewith in the second chapter, to follow a chapter that hones in on the network of power, individual and institutional, shaping the cinema in Egypt, a network whose nodes extended beyond the borders of the country, in association to the network of power governmental, Egyptian and otherwise. I found that I could only effectively argue for a reconceptualization of national cinema, a concept I contend in the measure is useful for studying the medium, after elucidating the two interconnected networks of power noted, those of cinema and state, specifically the nodes to such global networks extending within or linking to those in the national territory that is Egypt. Rather than illustrate such networks of state and cinema independently and schematically, I do so by framing the chapter's exploration as my scholastic experience of undertaking an historical investigation into how the cinema in Egypt Egyptianized, which infers from the amply historicized concurrent Egyptianizing

(tamassur) of the Egyptian state, cinema and state in Egypt remaining largely under the control of non-native Egyptians during the period examined. The operative historical investigation centers on a boycott of “foreign”-owned cinemas in Egypt during the 1933-1934 exhibition season discussed in three primary texts—United States Department of Commerce papers archival papers, the entire run of the short-lived nationalist film magazine *Screen Art* (Fan al-sinema) coinciding the noted boycott, and the memoir published decades later by the writer-director of the Egyptian film at the center of the boycott *The White Rose*, Mohamed Karim. The chapter’s investigation not only defines the relationship among the leading power players individual and institutional in the closing years of my study, but also traces the conditions and developments over the decades, even centuries, that facilitated the prominence of such actors.

The second chapter, like the first, addresses governmentality squarely in relation to the nationalism, specifically the Egyptianess, of the early industrial cinema in Egypt. Having shed historical light in the first chapter, in an expansive, intimate scholastic journey, on conditions of state, Egyptian nation, and cinema, I next attend to theorizing national cinema and Egyptianess respectively, referencing relevant literature extensively and citing supportive industrial examples, including to conclude the chapter with two case studies of significant cinema practitioners who Egyptianized. Like the first, this chapter references archival government documents, the Egyptian in this case, this in addition to Egyptian press of the era and the plethora of English and Arabic language secondary sources cited in the review of literature on national cinema instrumental to its theorizing.

The dissertation’s third chapter follows the first two chapters’ suit in attending to powerful actors in the early industrial cinema of Egypt as nexus points in the power network that shaped the noted industry as it developed. Here I examine the work relationship between two

exponents of the early cinema in Egypt, renowned early industrialist Tal'at Harb, a national hero in life, and early cinema practitioner Mohamed Bayoumi, lionized long after his death, following the discovery of his films half a century after the conclusion of his film career in 1934, year of this study's conclusion. Like the dissertation's fourth and last chapter, the third integrates analysis of filmic texts, here of several of Bayoumi's survived nonfiction, particularly newsfilms, rendering their events captured as windows through which to throw further light on the political economic conditions of Egypt in the era under study. The chapter also dwells on the industrial yoke that linked these two professedly nationalist figures, the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, a native-Egyptian owned film production outfit founded in 1925 that would stutter operationally for a decade before its opening of Studio Misr, an event that I argue brought an end to the early industrial era of cinema production in the country, on the heels of a consolidation of exhibition and distribution interests occasioning the industrial adoption of synchronized sound, beginning in the late 1920s. In addition to the rare archival prints of Bayoumi's survived films, analyzed herein, this third chapter, like the fourth, extensively references Egyptian press from the studied era, along with Egyptian secondary texts in cinema, modern history, and other disciplines.

In producing this work, I have sought not only to draw from disciplines other than media studies, but also to contribute to some such fields in return, especially to theatre. One striking omission from Egyptian film histories is rigorous scholarship linking the two artforms, the sibling cultural industries. I have in this study dedicated the final and longest chapter to elucidating the Egyptian theatre's fostering, as I later describe it, of the cinema. This final chapter also serves to augment and further contextualize examinations and analyses from earlier chapters.

The final “Theatre to Cinema” chapter, attends to the genres of (melo)drama, comedy, and singing in Egypt’s theatre then cinema. Therein I discuss the fiction films of Mohamed Bayoumi, the first native Egyptian to photograph and direct a domestic production, linking his narrative works, all comedies, to Bayoumi’s earlier work in comedic theatre. In the third chapter, I examine nonfiction cinema, paying special attention to the intersecting histories of film pioneer Mohamed Bayoumi and the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, later Studio Misr, the first bona fide film studio in the Middle East. Moreover, in the third chapter I perform a screen analysis of Bayoumi’s survived nonfiction films, most of which newsfilms whose covered events spoke to a nation reborn and engaged in asserting itself.

Modern theatre in Egypt was first a (melo)dramatic theatre, “serious” as it were, which influenced the (melo)dramatic cinema intensely, including in positioning women to emerge in the first years of narrative feature film production to grasp leadership positions in industrial filmmaking to a degree not since matched. None of the women pioneers of the early industrial production era directed films after Studio Misr had launched its operations in 1935, and none managed to produce more than a single film after that year, with the exception of Assia Dagher, who also happens to be the only woman pioneer who was a non-native. Assia’s experience as an Egyptianized multi-practitioner of the cinema is examined independently in this study’s second chapter, one that principally lays the theoretical foundation for the dissertation by identifying national cinema as disambiguated from nationalist cinema, a term I offer and define. This chapter links this theoretical disambiguation to an historical examination of Egyptianess during the decided period of study.

Notable is that the majority of cinema practitioners in Egypt’s silent and early sound cinemas were immigrants or expats who functioned within a colonial then a postcolonial milieu

whose nationalist slogan par excellence was “Egypt for Egyptians.” I theorize indigenouness as I assess discourse on the subject, dating to the era in question, accounting for the politics of Egyptian nativity manifest in the period’s liberal, Islamist, and fascistic currents. Media history literature has attended to indigenouness in the “New World,” but scarcely tackles the intersection of nativity and nationalism in the “Old World,” as does the work herewith. Significantly, my study is of a country occupied, rather than colonized, entailing a theoretical and historical assessment of cultural production, communication, and consumption distinct from that which took places in countries colonized in modernity, such as Algeria, India, and Palestine—a distinction inadequately made in relevant scholarship in media studies that I have encountered.

“Theatre to Cinema” closes by examining the tradition of performed song, distinguished from music in the Egyptian tradition, so that that films that investors rushed to back when synchronized sound cinema industrialized were identified as “singing films,” not “musical films” by the era’s contemporaries. The distinction between the two terms is assessed in relation to the historical development of singing theatre, which then alimented early singing films, including the most successful Egyptian film in the era under study, *The White Rose*. Alluded to earlier is a boycott of this film called for by Egyptian nationalists in 1933, a protest history which once examined led me to form the key historical argument of this study, one elaborated in this dissertation’s first chapter: The cinema in Egypt, dominated by non-Egyptians in its early decades, Egyptianized mainly on the face rather than in the head. Native Egyptians engaged particularly in authorship, performance and in the final years of my study in production, but not in distribution and scarcely in exhibition. Moreover, Egyptianizing of the cinema industry enfolded nationalist attacks, mainly discursive, but aided by disruptive boycott campaigns, such

as that targeting *The White Rose*, assaults that recalled the decades earlier discourses of the Egyptianized as “infiltrators.” These attacks illustrated nationalism’s tendency toward xenophobia, an ethnicist xenophobia actuated with the aim of restoring the nation’s lost glory, of making Egypt great again.

Chapter 1

How the Cinema in Egypt Egyptianized

In the title of this work as in its body, I have resorted to “cinema in Egypt” rather than “Egyptian cinema.” This terminological pivot underscores the methodological shift instrumentalized herein. Relevant literature published in Egypt and elsewhere has treated the operative cinema as a cultural facet of Egypt as a nation-state. As revealed in the chapter to follow, in the case of literature produced in Egypt such an approach implicitly attributed the cinema as a domain of cultural activity to a governmental project of nation building in the name of independent statehood. Whereas cinema studies of Egypt not published therein mostly employed the trenchant convention of examining “world cinema” according to delimitations of nation-state borders, for reasons later examined.

This study does not take for granted the Egyptianess (tamassur) of the cinema that proliferated in the Nile Valley. Egypt’s early industrial cinema, as I have dubbed it, the concept of Egyptianess, and the very governmentalities that interacted so as to represent legal and political authority over Egypt were themselves in marked flux. Instead of studying the cinema in Egypt as cultural expression reflective of a nation in the guise of a state, I posit it a dynamic industry engaged with existing market institutions, forces, and currents within Egypt and without, as well as with the governmentalities which sought, contested, and negotiated power within a network of relations that following Egypt’s nominal independence in 1922 came to be identified with the state.

This first chapter serves as justification for the instrumental shift in methodological registers undertaken, not least the case than because distribution and exhibition as clearly

demonstrated herewith were far more robust sectors of the cinema in Egypt than was production, before the founding of Studio Misr in 1935. The political and economic conditions of an Egypt wherein cinematic institutions, practitioners, and activities situated challenge conceptions of national cinema promulgated by media scholars and compel an interrogation of the very Egyptianess (tamassur) of such a cinema. I expect most readers to be as I was, unfamiliar with the country's power players and their relations in the studied period, and accordingly have fashioned this chapter as a journey of exploration that uncovers the history that compels and informs the theorizing of national cinema, Egyptianess, and related concepts elaborated in the second chapter.

“Native” Egyptians wrote and adapted scripts, acted, and, near the conclusion of the operative period, produced and directed as well. Yet, they could not break into distribution and scarcely participated, let alone led, in theatre ownership and management. Tensions over exclusive and anticompetitive practices in the latter two sectors especially engendered resentment among “native” Egyptian cinephiles and cineastes against non-Egyptian cinema owners especially, tensions that festered as resentments which eventually boiled over with the launch of a campaign to boycott “foreign”-owned cinemas in the last year or so of my study. This boycott campaign coincided the international anti-Nazi boycott campaign, against all German products, in a standoff that disclosed politics uncommon to the country's major and mainstream press, thereby presenting me with an opportunity to better examine how nationalism met the cinema during an era in which Egyptians were ruled by three distinct regimes under multiple governmentalities, as revealed in what follows.

A Cinema Underexamined

The silent cinema had fascinated me for years, as had the cinema of Egypt, so when I learned a decade ago that Egyptians had made silent films, I wondered why I had not years earlier heard of the works of Mohamed Bayoumi and other silent cinema pioneers. Bayoumi was nearly unique in his films' having survived the silent era of Egypt's cinema, films discovered over half a century after their making. Silent films have been lost to time the world over, but the Egyptian case is particularly sorry. Early Egyptian sound films have fared only slightly better. As pervasive as image and textual studies approaches to the cinema are, there were hardly any films left to write about among the tens of titles domestically produced before the year of the production of the first Egyptian talkie in 1932.¹ As it happened, rare copies of Bayoumi's films were held by the UCLA Film and Television Archive, in my own city of residence. Bayoumi had made two dozen or so films between 1923 and 1933, the last of which *Night in a Lifetime* (Layla fi al-`umr, 1933) I could see had been made to accompany a dialog soundtrack. Could the emergence of synchronized sound cinema have contributed to the early and final folding of a pioneering filmmaker's career, I asked. The study herewith eventuating would likewise conclude once synchronized sound cinema had become a market imperative, in 1934 or so.²

¹ I have assembled a list of over 150 domestically produced silent film, the longest to date, though likely incomplete, derived from disparate secondary sources, especially `Ali Abu Sahdi's *Waqqa' al-sinima al-misriya* [Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema] (Damascus: Ministry of Cultural Press, 2004), as well as from historical English language industry and fan magazines. See the appendix in this study's backmatter.

² Bayoumi shot *Night in a Lifetime* in December of 1933 and as such likely continued to develop the project into 1934, the first year in which all domestic narrative features produced were talkies. For the noted date of production, see Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, Muhammad Bayoumi: al-ra'id al-awal lil-sinima al-misriya [Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema] (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 106. The observation about the full conversion to synchronized sound films is made by Ahmed El Hadary, author of the essential history on the decade of the 1930s *Tarikh al-sinima fi Misr, al-juz' al-thani min bidayat 1931 ila akhir 1940* [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II from 1931-1940] (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization), 129.

I then learned, having absorbed most Egyptian literature on the country's early cinema that Bayoumi had interacted with the Bank Misr affiliated Company for Acting and Cinema (Sharikat Misr lil-tamthil wa al-sinema). Bank Misr, literally *Bank of Egypt*, was established in 1920, year following the Popular Revolution of 1919, as a nationalist organization par excellence. Its board of directors were all Egyptian by requirement, as were its shareholders. Arabic was its language of communication by decree. The bank was led by its Vice Chairman and Managing Director Tal'at Harb, a staunch nationalist himself and a star among Egyptian capitalists of the Liberal Age, the period roughly corresponding to the duration of the constitutional monarchy, 1923-1952.³ Although not a national organization, as it was not state owned at any point, Bank Misr presented itself as a holding company that would Egyptianize sectors of the country's modern economy, as it begat over a dozen manufacturing, financial, and commercial interests by the time Mohamed Bayoumi had concluded his career in cinema, in 1934 or so.⁴

The link between the cinema of Egypt and varied discourses and practices of nationalism, governmental and otherwise, has commonly described studies of the cinema in Egypt and I found myself drawn to an exploration along these lines for four reasons. First, the cinema in Egypt thrived and developed more rapidly and intensely than in all other territories in Africa and the Middle East, with the exception of Constantinople/Istanbul. This growth in the country's

³ See Robert L. Tignor, "Bank Misr and Foreign Capitalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8, no. 2 (1977): 166. Also see "Cinema Muhammad Bayoumi: al-ra'id al-awal lil-sinema al-misriya" (Cinema Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema), Banque Misr, 2014, <https://www.banquemisr.com/en/about-us/talaatharb>

⁴ In addition to Tignor's "Bank Misr and Foreign Capitalism" cited above, for a study of Harb's contribution to the cinema in Egypt see Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal'at Harb: rai'd sina'at al-cinema al-misriya, 1867-1941* [Mohamed Tal'at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941] (Cairo: The Public Egyptian Organization for Book, 1986). The most expansive study of Bank Misr is Eric Davis's *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Misr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920- 1941* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

cinema was certainly territorial and distinct, even before Egypt's nominal independence in 1922.⁵ Second, in light of the paucity of survived films from the silent era, I could not have conducted a study based on Egyptian filmic texts, with the exception of Bayoumi's films, which I analyze in the third and fourth chapters. Yet, because most of Bayoumi's survived films are newsfilms that minded the nation's special occasions as a matter of course, and because of his business dealing(s) with the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, a nationalist enterprise, even the relevant third chapter deals with nationalism centrally.⁶ Third, discourses on nationalism abounded and varied during the decades of the silent cinema, lending ample discursive data for the study of national—and nationalist—cinemas.⁷

Fourth, I had noted that national cinema theory had gone by the wayside over the last fifteen years or so. Curiously though unsurprisingly, such period of drought in theorizing national cinema has not coincided a diminished popularity of national cinema as a mode of studying cinemas of nation-states or geopolitical regions. Upon further examination, I learned that the recent drought in national cinema theory had been preceded by prominent film theorists' dismissal of national cinema's theoretical utility, at a time when a supranational structure as the European Union thrived, while diasporic and immigrant communities gained greater visibility

⁵ Film distribution has always been based on territorial rights granted to distributors, who in turn oversee exhibition rights in operative territories. See Andrew Higson, "Options for American Foreign Distribution: United Artists in Europe, 1919-1930," in *"Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920-1939*, eds. Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 135-158. Also find Frank Kessler and Nanna Verhoeff, *Networks of Entertainment: Early Film Distribution 1895-1915* (Eastleigh: J. Libbey Pub, 2007). Hardly any film history books have been written about the underexplored by vital field of industrial cinematic practice, distribution.

⁶ In 1987, scholar and filmmaker Mohamed Al-Qalyoubi connected with Bayoumi's family, who had held onto his films. He then made a documentary about Bayoumi in 1987. Al-Qalyoubi, in 2009, published a book about the director titled *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema*, which has regrettably gone out of print.

⁷ How could discourses relating to the state of the Egyptian homeland and people not abound, what with over a thousand periodicals having been put into circulation by 1930? See Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation through Popular Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 74-77.

and participation in the cultural scenes of their adoptive nation states, and as digital communication and borderless access to media shattered historical barriers to distribution and exhibition of movies.⁸ Looking at the state of the European Union in 2019; at the territorial fracturing of Middle Eastern nation states in the last decade, including into the new state of South Sudan; and at the irrepressible call on the part of members of stateless nations—Kurds, Palestinians, and Sahrawis, to be sure—for state-bound sovereignty led me to conclude that the nation-state was hardly exhausted as a means of representing nations territorially.

National cinema is appropriate for analysis of cinemas today, I determined, but would it suit an analysis of a cinema that had spanned three systems of territorial governance—khedivate, followed by a sultanate, then by a constitutional monarchy the only system of the three that stood for a modern nation-state? Here I was presented with an opportunity to address a confusion, even exhaustion with the concept of national cinema, discussed in the chapter following, as transnational cinema theory developed in the 1990s and into the early years of the 2000s. I was also presented with the challenge of reasonably applying a theoretical framework of national cinema to that of the silent era in Egypt, most of whose existence had preceded the founding of the modern Egyptian nation-state. A solution to both concerns was the concept of *nationalist*

⁸ Andrew Higson opened up the concept of national cinema theoretically in his influential essay “The Concept of National Cinema” in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 52-67. Higson’s essay was published at the end of the 1980s. A decade later, Higson had soured on national cinema as in his essay “The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema,” in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Matte Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 63-74. Dudley Andrew observed in 2006 that scholars had in recent years moved away from national cinema for its “territorial” restriction, in favor of transnational cinema. See “Islands in the Sea of Cinema” in *National Cinemas and World Cinemas: Studies in Irish Film 3*, eds. Kevin Rockett and John Hill (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 15. An exception to the noted drought was an article titled “Where is National Cinema Today (and Do We Still Need It)?,” curiously in film history, as is my own work. Ian Christie in 2013 had reacted to the dismissal and neglect of national cinema theory as of late, while noting as I have that the conceptual category of national cinema obtained in publishing even as its framework had been put into theoretical doubt. I discuss this article in the chapter to follow. See in *Film History* 25, no. 1-2: (2013), 19-30.

cinema—not national cinema nor merely a patriotic cinema, as I explain in this study’s second chapter.

Then there was the matter of the economies of industrialization. Arguably, cinematic distribution and exhibition in Egypt had industrialized in the 1910s. As the Great War waged Banco di Roma backed the creation of the Italian Cinematographic Society (SITCIA) in 1917, an outfit that produced Egypt’s first domestic narrative films.⁹ By the mid-1920s, Gaumont had built a Gaumont Palace in each of Cairo and Alexandria, in 1923¹⁰ and 1924¹¹ respectively, cinemas in which MGM took ownership when Marcus Loew bought an interest in eleven of Gaumont’s grandest houses in France and Egypt, among the latter’s unmatched empire of 800 cinemas or so, an act integral to the merger of the two companies, one in which MGM held the upper hand as it rescued the French major on the brink of bankruptcy.¹² The Gaumont Palace, Cairo, hardly wasted time in exhibiting MGM movies as it opened the 1925 season with a Metro Pictures movie and by the end of the decade would bring illustrious MGM productions to Egyptian audiences.¹³ Egypt by the mid-1920s had become important enough a regional center for the global cinema industry to warrant direct engagement by not only the Hollywood studios, but also by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA, founded in 1922, year of Egypt’s quasi-independence), and by the US federal government. Egyptian newspapers and magazines covered Egyptian film production attentively, beginning in the late

⁹ See Ahmed El Hadary, *Tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz’ al-awwal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930* [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930] (Cairo: The Cinema Club, 1987), 125-127.

¹⁰ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 176.

¹¹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 188.

¹² “Marcus Loew Buying in on 11 Big Theatres in France and Egypt,” *Variety*, June 3, 1925, 5. Richard Abel observes MGM’s mortifying merger that amounted to a takeover of Gaumont in his *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 44.

¹³ *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, screened to smashing and sustained success in Cairo more than two years after its initial release in the United States. See “Egypt,” *Variety*, April 4, 1928, 2.

1920s and intensely from the early 1930s, but the same could hardly be said of earlier Egyptian productions dating to before the 1920s, as early as 1905.¹⁴ Such is the scarcity of early cinema press on production, adding to the dearth of data available on film distribution and exhibition throughout the silent and early sound cinema eras, that employing an approach as industry studies to examining the period in question would have suffered for inadequate primary materials. An industry studies approach would further not have dwelled on cultural facets of the cinema industry in Egypt, factors that linked the economic to the political, on the grounds of decentralized nationalist projects of industrialization.

Rather a cultural history of the cinema activity in Egypt was in order, a work of historical production studies that took into account the early industrial landscape of the cinema of Egypt, in its totality—production, distribution, exhibition, press, reception, and links to other domains of cultural practice, particularly the theater, an industrial cultural field like the cinema, whose relationship with the cinema of Egypt was rich and multifarious, as elaborated in this work's final chapter. Further, the operative treatment would account for shifts in governance and in the political landscape that impacted cinema—legislation, taxation, distribution of authority and the legal and actual exercise of political power, colonial and postcolonial as it were. This was to be a study in cultural history expanded to account for domains of economic facets of the cinema that may not seem culturally significant—taxation, agency, and booking for example—but which continually impacted the cinema of Egypt during the era of study.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Mahmoud `Ali, *Fajr al-Sinama fi Misr* [Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt] (Cairo: Egypt Ministry of Culture, Cultural Development Fund, 2008), 55-57.

¹⁵ In a way, the approach I have adopted is that of Media capitalism that Ziad Fahmy employs in his own study of modern Egyptian cultural history *Ordinary Egyptians*, but with a decided focus on cinema, and concerned with economic activity whose impact on Egypt's culture of the cinema was direct.

As film scholars Richard Abel and Barbara Klinger have observed, works of cultural history must reach into fields other than media studies to describe the historical contexts to examined cinemas, especially in terms of reception. I had already embarked on a keen examination of Egypt's modern history and more in varied fields when I found a likeminded work by American Film historian Abel that offers, "*The Red Rooster Scare*, then, is not simply a history of the Pathé company in the United States, nor is it an economic history of the American cinema between 1900 and 1910. Instead, by telling a more or less 'new' story about the early American cinema, with French Pathé at its center, it offers something more like a cultural history of our own cinema's nationalization."¹⁶ The chapter herewith is one of a nationalization specific to Egypt, an Egyptianization inscribed by the cinema upon the country's society and culture preceding an elevated standard of industrialization obtained by the founding of Studio Misr in 1935, as soon elaborated. In historicizing a cinema Egyptianized over nearly four decades, spanning three systems of state governance, themselves variegated by colonialism then postcolonialism as it were, I sought literature in such fields as international relations, political philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, theater, Islamic studies, musicology, Egyptology, and multiple subdisciplines of history. Having learned of Egypt of the era under study according to such disciplines it was time to leave Los Angeles for relevant government documents to add to knowledge I had amassed.

¹⁶ See *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), viii. Abel's is an history original in its exploring a unique moment of national vulnerability in terms of the cinema industry in the United States, relating to years when Pathé films dominated American screens. Abel affirms Klinger's proviso concerning the scholastic work requisite to producing cultural history by quoting from her "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies," *Screen* 38, no. 2 (1997): 107-128.

Agitation Iterated and Infiltration Charged

In the US National Archives, I located highly relevant Department of Commerce documents that offered valuable information not discussed in the secondary and primary sources I had already accessed. Some of this information related to what I had already learned, while some entailed questions that struck me as important, questions whose answers I did not know. Provocative such questions emerged from my review of reports of disruptive activities by young Egyptian nationalists against foreign owned cinemas in Cairo for a few months spanning late 1933 to early 1934. This campaign of agitation was in effect against all first run cinemas in Cairo and in spirit against all first run cinemas in the country, considering that until 1933 no first run cinemas were owned by “native” Egyptians, except for one that had just opened.¹⁷ In these reports, the clerk to the commercial attaché in Egypt repeatedly characterizes nationalist discourse as propaganda, not only when critical of foreign economic interests in Egypt, but also when promotive of interests Egyptian.¹⁸ The campaign “which has been stirred up among Egyptian students on nationalistic grounds by the more hotheaded native newspapers and allegedly by the Egyptian owners of the Fouad Cinema has been rising,” reported the clerk to the commercial attaché in January, 1934, having described the affair a month earlier as largely a “whispering campaign.”¹⁹

¹⁷ In 1933, the Fouad, previously the American Cosmograph, opened under Egyptian ownership. Boyed by the success of the first talkie *Sons of the Aristocrats*, Youssef Wahby opened his own Wahby Cinema near the end of the year. For a report about the market positioning of these two cinemas, see George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters,” Dec 19, 1933, 3, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. For an explanation of the financial woes of the Fouad and the Wahby, see Charles E Dickerson, “Motion Picture Notes: Cairo Winter Season Opens,” October 1, 1934, 1, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁸ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters,” December 19, 1933, 3, Box 193. George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Nationalist Propaganda Against Foreign Owned Theatres Increasing,” Jan 30, 1934, 3, Box 194. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Government to Take Its own Propaganda Films,” May 18, 1934, 3, Box 194.

¹⁹ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Nationalist Propaganda Against Foreign Owned Theatres Increasing,” Jan 30, 1934, 3, Box 194.

This action of protest recalled one by Egyptian students led by Mustafa Kamil against the Levantine²⁰ owned, and British aligned, newspaper *al-Muqattam*, in Cairo, in January 1893. This earlier protest had “attacked the building of al-Muqattam.”²¹ Had the latter protests attacked any non-“native” owned cinemas? Whereas the protests against the “foreign” owned *al-Muqattam* newspaper had been led by a student in Mustafa Kamil, had the students who protested against the foreign owned cinemas who led the protests against “foreign” owned cinemas forty years later been led by a particular party, and if so then by whom? By what?

Kamil’s formulation of nationalism I found to have inspired the discourses on Egyptianness and Egyptianizing contemporary to the short-lived but pregnant protests against said cinemas, despite their taking place a quarter-century after the death of the influential national leader in 1908, a premature death that gained him celebrity, glory, and longstanding influence.²² About this formulation Thomas Philipp observes: “A convinced spokesman for Egyptian nationalism, [Kamil] was committed to a national community of all Egyptians Muslims and

²⁰ I elect to use *Levant* in its narrow sense to refer to the area also known as *Greater Syria*. Not quite the Levant of antiquity, *Levant* here is equivalent to the lands dubbed *al-Sham* in Arabic, according to Ottoman districting dating to the early sixteenth century. See Habib Ibrahim Katibah, “Syria for the Syrians: Under the Guardianship of the United States,” *The Syrian National Bulletin* 1, no. 9 (1919): 2-16. The Levant’s inhabitants, Levantines or *shawam*, are Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians, and Palestinians of today. Both *shami* and *suri*, *Levantine* and *Syrian* respectively, appear in the vast primary and secondary sources I have encountered. *Syrian* if used herewith could be understood to refer to people from the area governed by the modern nation-state of Syria as defined by borders according to the 1916 Sykes–Picot Agreement. Such a late modern conception would exclude Palestinians who did immigrate to Egypt in recent centuries. Moreover, it may confuse readers to refer to people from Beirut as Syrian, not knowing that Lebanon was part of Syria until its independence in 1943, well past the period of my study. For more on the modern history of the Levant and its people see Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Iraq and Syria* (Routledge: New York, 1995).

²¹ See Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1985), 108-109.

²² See Yunan Labib Rizq, “Misr taht al-haymana al-biritaniya, 1882-1918” (Egypt Under British Hegemony, 1882-1918) in *al-Marji` fi tarikh Misr al-hadith wa al-mu`asir* [The Reference on the Modern and Contemporary Histories of Egypt], ed. Yunan Labib Rizq (Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 2009), 401.

Copts, excluding all foreign immigrants.”²³ At this point I was compelled to address an overriding question that I had avoided posing: “Who were the Egyptians?”

On my first research trip to Egypt, I asked a knowing friend about Egyptian nativity, considering centuries of inhabitation by Greeks and Peninsular Arabs, not to mention rule by an array of outsiders. She looked at me with a face that read, “You want to go there, do you?” then responded, “Look Ghawanmeh, if you want to know about native Egyptians, then the ones you can guarantee are so are Coptic Upper Egyptians (Si`idi). Perhaps not Catholic Upper Egyptians in all cases, but certainly Upper Egyptian Copts. Like me.” I would have chuckled at her assessment’s self-service were it not for the earnestness with which she qualified. “If they think they can get rid of us, the Copts, they’re dreaming,” she soon defiantly added. Images of churches smoldering in Egypt’s cities and villages came to my mind, images that were still fresh in memory.²⁴ I reflected that *Copt* (Qibt) had been the Arabic word for *Egyptian*, not for Christian, long before the Arabs’ Islamic conquests had made their way into Egyptian lands.²⁵ I then recalled the moment of highest tension between Muslims and Copts during the period of my study, that of the assassination of Prime Minister Boutros Ghali in 1909. The shooting had followed months of persistent attacks in the press against Ghali’s perceived treachery, manifest in his pro-British statements and actions. These attacks were led by editor of *al-Liwa’*, the newspaper that Mustafa Kamil had founded in 1900. The assassination itself was later carried out

²³ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1985), 109.

²⁴ Nicholas Tampio, “On the Coptic Question,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 16, no. 1 (2017): 123–30.

²⁵ As Bahour Labib finds, *Copt* described the people of the Nile valley before Christianity’s arrival in Egypt with the conquests of Alexander the Great. *Copt* was totally equivalent to *Egyptian*, as the former was derived from the Greek term for the same people, *Aigyptios*. Copts happened to be Christian when Arabs first identified them and the association continued in Arabic thereafter. See *Lamahat min al-dirasat al-misriya al-qadima* [Glimpses of Ancient Egyptian Studies] (Giza, Egypt: Arab Press Agency, 1947).

by a young pharmacist affiliated with the Patriotic Party (al-Hizb al-watani), also founded by Mustafa Kamil, in 1895.²⁶

ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Jawish, editor of *al-Liwaʿ*, had authored a series of articles that expanded the target of their assault from the person of Coptic Prime Minister Boutros Ghali to the community of Coptic Egyptians, accusing them of collaboration and treachery against their country.²⁷ No matter how perfidious Jawish thought the Copts, he could not accuse them of foreignness, and not simply because he himself was of non-Egyptian origin.²⁸ Coptic nationalists would join their Muslim brethren in the Popular 1919 Revolution, unifying the two groups against the occupier, to whose removal Mustafa Kamil had committed his energies more than any other cause, more than to neutralizing “infiltrators” (*dukhalaʿ*) who, nevertheless, seemed to unhinge Kamil more than any other adversary.

Infiltrator is not the translation used by scholars who have waded into the relationship between nationalism and Egyptianess in modernity, in studies that have proved crucial to my own investigative journey. In *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*, Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski translate *dukhalaʿ* into “intruder,” as does Thomas Philipp in his *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*. Beth Baron renders *dukhalaʿ* more specifically into “intruding foreigners,”²⁹ perhaps to distinguish them from domestic intruders, such as rural Egyptians who had migrated to the country’s urban centers.³⁰ Although, it is

²⁶ See Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, “Fin-de-Siècle Egypt: A Nexus for Mediterranean and Global Radical Networks,” in *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, eds. James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 94.

²⁷ Copts rivaled their Muslim antagonists with their own sectarian writings, according to Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 75-76.

²⁸ Jawish was of Tunisian extraction. See Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 106.

²⁹ This is in Baron’s original investigation of gender’s role in nationalist politics of the era, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics* (Cairo, American University in Cairo Press, 2005) 29.

³⁰ See Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 27-28.

obvious from Kamil's use of *dukhala'* that by it he means people remote to Egyptian lands. In the essay "Egypt's Arabism: Mustafa Kamil's 1893 Play (Fath AlAndalus) on the Muslim Conquest of Spain," Dennis Walker offers three terms—"interlopers, intruders, aliens"—before settling on the first.³¹ All of the above translations minded the purport of *dukhala'*, but none sufficiently signified, for they excluded a particular sense intended by Kamil's use of the term—insidiousness, latent perfidy.

It surprised me that such accomplished scholars as mentioned had given Kamil a pass on a xenophobic bend that is in plain sight, specifically in Kamil's use of *dukhala'*. It is curious that Thomas Philipp in his colossal study of the Levantine experience in Egypt, having noted the apologism in writings by Levantine Egyptian contemporaries of Mustafa Kamil's about the latter's xenophobia, would count Kamil's publishing in the Levantine owned *al-Ahram*, as he often did, as a sign of an approval of the publication's Levantine ownership of his ideas, when Kamil's reason for publishing on the pages of *al-Ahram* likely had more to do with the newspaper's unmatched circulation and record of expressed anti-British sentiment. Thomas Philipp does well I found to have located a response by Kamil to accusations that he had meant the entirety of Levantines in Egypt by his *dukhala'*. However, Philipp does not critically assess this defensive note. In Kamil's published letter, he writes, "I say that Egypt has amongst the [Levantines] many friends and that the *dukhala'* are a known group..." Here he does refer to Levantines affirmatively, though not as citizens or family members or by some other ascription that connotes unity, but essentially as supportive outsiders. Kamil does not appear to have ever identified the *dukhala'* he railed against.³² Whereas his mentor `Abdullah al-Nadim, who

³¹ See *Islamic Studies* 33, no. 1 (1994): 59.

³² Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 107-108.

preceded his protegee in using *dukhala'*,³³ had referred to the “Levant” and to “Syrians” in his own tirades against the disloyalty of outsiders.³⁴

Kamil, who railed against the *dukhala'* repeatedly, discussed the mechanism of their infiltration in the opening paragraph to the play that he wrote around the turn of his nineteenth birthday, in 1893:

... And since nations' needs for authorship and books that differ with differing time and place, the authored works worthiest of examination those which guide the people onto the path of righteousness and good sense, those which direct it away from the courses of temptation and corruption. It occurred to me to write a play to reveal to my nation within it the intrigues of the infiltrators upon the peoples whose attire they don, whose language they speak, and with whom they intermingle in the way these peoples themselves comingle. Thus, they become like poison in the grease with their aim of bringing them down from the apogee of their glory to the perigee of its ignominy.³⁵

This passage is part of the prolog to *The Conquest of Spain*, and as such not part of its fictive script. Although Kamil does not name Egypt or Egyptians in it, the address thereof is obvious, as it is in a passage in the introduction to Kamil's subsequent 1898 book *The Eastern Question* (al-Mas'ala al-sharqiya) wherein the reference is to the Ottoman Empire:

And if difference in religion is among the diseases of the Ottoman Empire, rather its greatest disease, for the infiltrators in the Ottoman Empire are a chronic disease, and an unmatched

³³ Al-Nadim used it as early as in the first issue of his publication *al-Ustadh*, in August 1892. For a transcript of the article in which Nadim's *dukhala'* appears, see Muhammad Muhammad Husein, *al-Ittijahat al-wataniya fi al-adab al-mu`asir, al-juz' al-awal* [Patriotic Directions in Contemporary Literature, Part I], (Beirut, al-Risala, 1984), 165-172. In the same *al-Ustadh*, in January 1893, Nadim names the “Levant” and “Syrians” in an article condemning their siding with the occupying British against their Egyptian brethren. See Muhammad Husein, *Patriotic Directions*, 224-225

³⁴ *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930*, Israel Gershoni, James P. Jankowski, 16.

³⁵ See `Ali Fahmi Kamil, *Mustafa Kamil basha fi 34 rabi`an: Siratuh wa a`maluh min khutab wa ahadith wa rasa'il siyasiya wa `imratiya, al-juz' al-awal* [Mustafa Kamil Pasha in 34 Years: His Legacy and Works, speeches, Conversations, Political and Developmental Letters, Part I] (Cairo: al-Liwa' Press, 1908), 167.

calamity, for those who were among the causes of the Empire's losses at various wars are the infiltrators, and those who aided foreign intrigues are the infiltrators. As it were, the body of the Empire was penetrated by many foreign men and women who replaced theirs with Muslim names. They strived to rise in the ranks until some reached the highest and became among the closest associates, so they afflicted the Empire with destruction and gave away its secrets to its enemies...³⁶

Kamil refers to the condition of a then contemporary Ottoman Empire, though his readership is evidently Egyptian, a readership that is meant to learn from the lessons of Muslims past, a central thematic thrust to his play mentioned above. Evidently, Kamil's xenophobia was not merely vituperrious; it was also paranoiac.

Among the substantial literature on the life, career, and writings of Mustafa Kamil I found little examination of the reverberations of his xenophobic, inculpatory rhetoric by those who have identified it, even though Kamil's influence especially on educated, young, urban Egyptians arguably exceeded that of any other national leader. The audience to Kamil's remarks about the infiltrators varied but two groups seemed principally implicated—Egyptian nationalists and foreigners who could pass for Egyptian. Kamil in effect prodded the former to identify foreign agents in their own midst, from the latter group. Yet, how was an Egyptian concerned for the homeland to identify a foreigner whose name was Egyptian, who dressed like an Egyptian and talked like one? An ever-concerned nationalist would seek to identify such persons by exercising greater vigilance in scrutinizing people in power or poised for it, by looking for incongruities—a mannerism that does not fit, a reference misconstrued, a joke misunderstood, a

³⁶ Mustafa Kamil, *al-Mas'ala al-sharqiya* [The Eastern Question] (Cairo: Hindawi for Education and Culture, 2012), 12-13.

vowel taken too far. As it were, the stauncher the nationalism the more suspicion turned into paranoia.

On the other hand, Kamil's rhetoric would have put foreigners who passed or could hope to pass for Egyptian—mainly Levantines, but Armenians and Jews as well, particularly those who had moved to Egypt by way of the Levant—in a quandary of identification, whereby acculturating, such as adopting “Egyptian” customs, speaking in a Cairene dialect, intermixing with “native” Egyptians, and even converting to Islam could increase hostility from suspecting parties, not alley it. Resentments and repudiations may have largely remained latent, unpublished, at least not in mainstream, high-circulation periodicals. Ziad Fahmy had written a cultural history of modern pre-independence Egypt by examining colloquial and aural cultural production in which he affirmed the integrality of “conversations, rumors, speeches, demonstrations, and publicly performed dances, chants and songs” to “the collective voice of the Egyptian masses.”³⁷ I recalled the “whispering campaign” undertaken to rally cinema goers to boycott foreign owned cinemas. It struck me as entirely expected that discourses of speculation, scandalization, repudiation, and of outing would be expressed in confidence, into the ether, and away from official eyes.

As if largely whispered and hardly stated, I had encountered the term *Egyptianized* (al-mutamassirun) no more than a handful of times throughout my study, once in proximity to *infiltrator(s)* (al-dukhalā'). It was telling that this lone yoke had been made in 1929, more than two decades after Mustafa Kamil's death and a mere two months following the promulgation of the constitutional monarchy's first citizenship law in February of that year. It was as if the law in

³⁷ *Ordinary Egyptians*, 139.

question prodded Emile Zaydan to give vent to his own predicament as a Levantine Egyptian. Emile, co-owner of al-Hilal publishing group with his brother Shawkat, ran his article in *al-Hilal* magazine, which he and his brother edited and which his famed father Jurji Zaydan had founded as Egypt's first culture magazine in 1892.³⁸ This was an impassioned opinion piece which distinguished between the two forms of conversion, before dispensing with advice to each of the two groups primarily affected—(native) Egyptians and the Egyptianized. Zaydan addresses a “team of Egypt's sons,” to voice what reads like a personal grievance:

... If it is the case that some of those residing in Egypt are blamed for ignoring their duties toward Egypt then their guilt is diminished if we were to mention that a team of Egyptians used to look to every Egyptianized with suspicion and doubt, think ill of him, and level accusations against him randomly.

Add to this that those in charge in Egypt were not always on the side of fairness in treating the Egyptianized, for they often treated them as they would an infiltrator, so that they are not treated equally in terms of enjoying rights available to the rest of Egyptians.³⁹

Decades after `Abd al-`Aziz Jawish had introduced *infiltrator* into the Egyptian vernacular and since Mustafa Kamil had unpacked the term's potential for declaiming disclamation, the term had come to signify rejection of the Levantine contingent of Egyptian society, a community that had amassed since the eighteenth century, even though it had existed in Egypt for centuries.⁴⁰ Syrians may broadly not have been thought of as foreign in the nineteenth and early twentieth

³⁸ *Al-Ahram* newspaper published Emile Zaydan's “al-Tamassur al-qanuni wa al-tamassur al-fi`li” (Legal Egyptianizing and effective Egyptianizing), as well his own *al-Hilal*. See Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-thalith `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 13] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2005), 114-116.

³⁹ Emile Zaydan, “Legal Egyptianizing and Effective Egyptianizing,” *al-Hilal*, April 1, 1929, 718.

⁴⁰ Thomas Philipp relates that there has always been a Syrian colony in Egypt, but that immigration in the thousands commenced in the eighteenth century. See *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 1.

centuries, since like Egyptians they were Ottoman subjects,⁴¹ but such kinship could not obtain after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the Great War, and Syrians were increasingly thought of as foreign in the years to follow.

In his piece, a mixture of censure, admonition, and lament, Emile Zaydan acknowledges that there were two groups of “adopted Egyptians”—“those who have actually Egyptianized in their feelings, their bends, and their disputations,”⁴² a group whose number was not small according to Zaydan. The other group had Egyptianized according to the Citizenship Law but had failed to effectively Egyptianize for one of two broad reasons. The first of these was actuated loyalty to governments other than the Egyptian, such as their homelands. The second reason for failing to Egyptianize according to Emile Zaydan concerned assimilation and acculturation:

“And there were among the immigrants who spend year after another in Egypt, and hardly mix with its natives, do not affiliate with its communities external or dual loyalty, nor do they share [the natives’] celebrations and commiserations. They do not join in [the natives’] construction projects nor do they take up shares in their charitable works. Nor do they, nor do they ... As if this part is forming a foreign ‘colony’ independent in its affairs without relation to who surrounds it or what surrounds it.”⁴³

This failure to integrate on the part of a detached contingent of Egyptian adoptees, identified by Zaydan, was confirmed decades later by Robert Tignor: “Nor should the differences arising from way of life, nationality, and religion be ignored. The wealthy members of the foreign

⁴¹ Yunan Labib Rizk agrees with Philipp about the significance of the Ottoman union between the two peoples Egyptian and Levantine and about Levantine persistence in Egypt, although Rizk specifies the Lebanese and especially Maronite connection to Egypt as “never having been interrupted,” in *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-rabi` `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 14] (Cairo: Ahrām History Center, 2005), 14-15.

⁴² Emile Zaydan, “Legal Egyptianizing and Effective Egyptianizing,” 716

⁴³ Emile Zaydan, “Legal Egyptianizing and Effective Egyptianizing,” 717

communities stressed their attachment to European culture and made little effort to hide their contempt for the Egyptian, Arab, and Muslim heritage of the country.”⁴⁴ The Levantine business elite ranked by choice among such foreign communities, an elite that led a Levantine communal disintegration in Egypt beginning in mid-last century that Thomas Philipp has outlined.⁴⁵

Philipp observes that the Zaydan brothers had presided over a transition that exemplified a successfully adaptive continuation of a Levantine publication by way of Egyptianizing.⁴⁶ Levantines had established Arabic language newspaper and magazine publication in the final quarter of the 19th century. Although the first “native” Egyptian newspapers *al-Mu’ayad* and the earlier discussed *al-Liwa’* followed the founding of the country’s first daily newspaper *al-Ahram* by a mere thirteen and fourteen years, as their publication began in 1889 and 1890 respectively,⁴⁷ “native” Egyptian periodical circulation did not catch up with their older, Levantine owned counterparts until the early 1930s.⁴⁸ Yunan Labib Rizk agrees with Philipp to remark that Levantine publications withered and disappeared quickly, such as *al-Tijara*, *Abu Naddara Zarqa*, or at the end of a long life, such as *al-Muqattam*, because they failed to Egyptianize, whereas *al-*

⁴⁴ *State, Private Enterprise and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 6. Tignor’s study of Egypt’s political economy of the era, a work that principally follows the money, interjects the above quote into its introduction. It must be noted here that Tignor principally argues in his work that many members of the foreign business elite of the era pursued economic ventures to their own financial advantage, at times even to the detriment of metropolitan European business interests.

⁴⁵ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 159-164.

⁴⁶ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 152-153.

⁴⁷ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 98.

⁴⁸ A studied estimate of circulation for the country’s most popular newspapers in 1933 had *La bourse égyptienne*, in French, and *The Egyptian Gazette* and *The Egyptian Daily*, both in English, as outright leaders. These estimates, communicated internally by the secretary to the commercial attaché in Egypt, reported the Egyptian native owned *al-Jihad* as the Arabic language daily leading in circulation, slightly ahead of the mighty *al-Ahram*. See George Lewis Jones, “Estimated Circulations of Egyptian Advertising Media,” March 1, 1933, 1, Box 193. This lead was possibly temporary, considering that the same Department of Commerce operative had only a few months earlier marked *al-Ahram*, dubiously along with *al-Muqattam*, as circulation leaders among Egyptian Arabic daily newspapers. George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Film Notes: Large Newspaper Advertising Space Devoted to American Films,” Nov 13, 1932, 1, Box 192. Gershoni and Jankowski gather that by the late 1930s *al-Ahram*’s circulation would “far exceed that of any other newspaper.” See *Confronting Fascism in Egypt* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 57-58. In any case, *al-Jihad* had become an indisputable leader among Egypt’s dailies.

Ahram and *al-Hilal* survived because they did so.⁴⁹ Philipp would have likely attributed the demise of *al-Muqattam* to its overseers' refusal to turn over its editorial leadership to native Egyptians. Gershoni and Jankowsky attributed abatement in *al-Muqattam*'s circulation in part to its well-known British loyalty, down to 8,000-10,000 in 1937 from about 25,000 copies daily a decade earlier.⁵⁰ Based on US Department of Commerce, *al-Muqattam*'s circulation would have fallen from second among Egyptian Arabic language dailies and from a state of industry leadership, along with *al-Ahram*, for much of its publication life up to the late 1920s, to an industry position of fourth by 1932, well surpassed by the Arabic daily *al-Jihad*,⁵¹ established the year prior as a publication aligned with the dominant Wafd Party.⁵² Perhaps more than coincidentally, the beginning of the transition in press industry leadership from foreign to native Egyptian authorship and financial backing coincided a similar transition in the production of domestic native feature films, beginning with *Layla*, in 1927. It seems that "Native" Egyptians insisted on inscribing their voices on domestic cultural production by the late 1920s.

Possibly alert to the definitive split between the Egyptian and Levantine intelligentsia before the outset of the Great War or perhaps aware of his Egyptian readership's insistence on reading Egyptians, or conscious that only a single Levantine publication had emerged in Egypt since the foundation of the constitutional monarchy, Emile and his brother Shawkat elected to lend writing responsibilities entirely to their "native" countrymen and passed on editorial duties of their publications *al-Musawar* and *al-Hilal* to "native" Egyptians by the conclusion of my

⁴⁹ See 'Asr *al-takwin*, 1876-1926 [Age of Formation, 1876-1926] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2001).

⁵⁰ *Confronting Fascism in Egypt* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 57

⁵¹ See George Lewis Jones, "Estimated Circulations of Egyptian Advertising Media," March 1, 1933, 1, Box 193.

⁵² Muhammad Sa'd al-Hafidh, "Tawfiq Diab... khatib sahib al-jalala" (Tawfiq Diab... his royal majesty's speaker), *Aswat online*, August 1, 2018, <http://aswatonline.com/2018/08/01/%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%82-%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9/>

study's period. Yet, ownership of the most highly circulated and consequently the most influential, the most powerful remained in the hands of Levantine Egyptians through the years of my study.⁵³

The Cinema, Egyptianizing

Much was the same with the cinema business in Egypt over the span of my study I came to learn. Overall, cinema's industrial sectors gradually Egyptianized, but more in terms of representing the domestic industry to the public and authoring its texts as actors, writers, and directors. By the end of the era under study, "native" Egyptians had taken the industrial lead in these functions. "Native" Egyptians took film production lead as directors, producers and financiers by the end of the silent era, a lead which strengthened over the years to follow, as domestic productions largely proved successful in the domestic box office and expanded into international markets, having screened abroad beginning in 1929.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, of the tens of productions shown domestically in a given year, the number of Egyptian films screened in any year of my study did not exceed nine, in 1933, hardly exceeding 2% of titles that screened in the country in that year.⁵⁵ Moreover, "native" Egyptians did not take a lead in terms of production and financing to the same degree as the "authorship" duties noted.

⁵³ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 152-153.

⁵⁴ Egyptian short films may have screened abroad, such as news and travel films made by the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, but no evidence of particular public screenings exist prior to the screening of the comedy feature *al-Bahr biyidhak leh?* (Why Does the Sea Laugh?, 1928), in Beirut the year after its exhibition in Egypt. See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 264.

⁵⁵ According to US Department of commerce papers Egyptian and Italian films combined accounted for 2.6% in 1931 then for 2% of the exhibition market in each of 1932 and 1933. George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933," April 23, 1934, 2, Box 194.

More importantly, native Egyptians did not own the enterprises that distributed or principally screened domestic productions to the public. They did own and manage cinemas as early as the 1910s, but none owned first-run cinemas until 1932, year of the emergence of the Egyptian talkie.⁵⁶ Beside exhibition contracts restricted to single cinemas, native Egyptians did not operate as agents to foreign producers to my knowledge, nor did they own any distribution companies operating in the country by 1934, year before the opening of Studio Misr. This studio refashioned the decade-old, earlier discussed Misr Company for Acting and Cinema into what would become the country's leader in the Egyptian cinema industry's production sector.

Least had been written about distribution during the operative era. I amassed additional information about this mid-leg of the cinema industry's product delivery chain, including to indicate the inextricable link between distribution and exhibition in Egypt of the time, in that many of the industry's power players engaged in both. Some of the industry's practitioners ventured to combine production with one or both other legs, but these cases were less common than those fusing distribution and exhibition. Below I discuss Egyptianizing in domestic film production then examine that of distribution and exhibition in tandem.

Egyptianizing film production:

The first cinematographic footage taken in Egypt was captured by a Lumiere cinematographer named Alexandre Promio in 1897, commencing a relatively flourishing foreign film production activity in the country that would yield tens of films by the end of the silent era.⁵⁷ The year 1907 had long dated the first domestic production, until Egyptian film scholar Mahmoud `Ali

⁵⁶ The cinema in question is the Fouad, named after the standing monarch, and discussed in detail below.

⁵⁷ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 39-46, as well as Glenn Mirent, "Promio, Alexandre," in *Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel (New York: Routledge, 2005), 540.

uncovered evidence of domestic cinematography beginning in 1905.⁵⁸ Local cinematographers continued to shoot films, led by Italian partners Aziz and Dorés.⁵⁹ The first recorded participation by a native Egyptian in a domestic production coincided the making of the country's first narrative films, although not by coincidence. The aforementioned short-lived SITCIA embarked on producing narrative shorts in Alexandria and cast a single "native" in two of them, one Mohamed Karim, who would go on to become the first Egyptian director of distinction, including of films in the late silent and early sound eras, as discussed in the chapter on theatre to cinema.⁶⁰

Following the folding of SITCIA in 1918, non-Egyptian producers made more films starring native and native looking (Levantines and Jews—the very people poised to infiltrate Egyptian society) performers, seemingly persuaded that domestic revenues would benefit from portraying them instead of European performers who featured in the main in the few films made by the ill-fated Italian-Egyptian production house.⁶¹ Cinema enthusiasts, not merely cineastes, called for the establishment of an Egyptian film production company certainly no later than

⁵⁸ Mahmoud `Ali, *Fajr al-Sinima fi Misr* [Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt] (Cairo: Egypt Ministry of Culture, Cultural Development Fund, 2008), 47-50.

⁵⁹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 70-73. I suspect the name Aziz Bandarli, even though Ahmed El Hadary reports having encountered his complete name, possibly exclusively, in an article in *Sinima al-Sharq* (*Cinema of the Orient*) dating to 1949. El Hadary reportedly found the name in French as well as Arabic, which should allay my concern about mistranslation of a name put originally in Roman letters, were it not for two reasons. The man was according to El Hadary a foreigner, only that he would likely have been either a Muslim or Arab to have the first name of Aziz. Moreover, according to a snippet report in an American industry paper the name Ariz, not Aziz, is given as a last name. "Film Industry in Egypt," *The Motion Picture News*, July 25, 1914, 45. The partnership that held a photography shop in Alexandria before expanding into cinematographic production and exhibition are typically referred to as Aziz and Dorés in the Egyptian Arabic language literature, which in itself would suggest that Aziz (or Ariz) is a surname. See Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda, *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria* (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandria, 2007), 388.

⁶⁰ Karim's experience is related by himself in his *Mudhakkarat Mohamed Karim* [Mohamed Karim's Memoirs] (Cairo: Radio and Television Books, 1972), 24-33.

⁶¹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 145. Egyptian film historian Mahmoud `Ali found a telling advert for one of the *Masciste* franchise films; the add supplements its French description of the film with Arabic that claims that the Italian strongman is Egyptian! See *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 77-78.

coinciding the momentous transition to the new Egyptian governmental order. Several months before the first leg of parliamentary election in September 1923 was held, a month after the post-independence Egyptian constitution had been promulgated, in April of the same year, the editor of *Motion Pictures* (al-Suwar al-muharrrika) responded to a reader from Haret al-Qamah district in Cairo about why an Egyptian film company had not been founded: “Yours is a recondite question that is difficult to answer. I have asked the director to make it a general subject on which readers may opine and he has agreed. And I ask every reader to kindly respond to the question, instead of me, to the extent possible.”⁶² Beside calling for the founding of Egyptian cinematic production, Egyptian enthusiasts of the cinema, literate ones to be sure, launched efforts to form cinema clubs and societies no later than the pivotal year of 1923. *Motion Pictures* published the following notice in its fourth edition: “To members of the arts association: We request that members of this association inform us of their addresses and write to us personally to look into the matter of enlivening this association, following suit of other kingdoms wherein there is an association uniting fans of each actor distinctly.”⁶³

The first domestically produced narrative feature film *In the Lands of Tuankhamun* (Fi bilad Tut`ankhamun, 1924) similarly was financed, produced and directed by Italian resident of Egypt M Victor Rossetto. Unlike its earlier and contemporaneous narrative shorts, however, *Tutankhamun* was photographed by an Egyptian—Mohamed Bayoumi.⁶⁴ Earlier discussed, Tanta-born Mohamed Bayoumi began his decade-long film career in earnest in that year of 1923,

⁶² The person in question is Mohammed Tawfiq, identified on the back cover of the first edition as magazine owner and editor in chief. The regular feature in which reader questions and queries are addressed is titled “Da’irat ma’arif al-sinema” (Cinema information service: Questions and answers), *al-Suwar al-mutaharrrika* [Motion Pictures], May 31, 1923, 19, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶³ *Motion Pictures*, May 31, 1923, 4.

⁶⁴ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 167-174.

during which Bayoumi financed, authored, directed, photographed, designed and edited newsfilms and comedies, discussed in the third and fourth chapters respectively.

Industrial capital was put to work in the cinema with Bank Misr's entry into the fray with the founding of the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, mentioned earlier, in 1925. It was already producing films by the following year⁶⁵ and would produce them weekly by 1933 as a newsreel that figured into various local cinemas' programs.⁶⁶ As for feature films, the Company was contracted to undertake cinematography, film development, and printing for a number of late silent and early sound pictures, beginning with *Zaynab* (1930), then for a number of features made before the Company's entering its Studio Misr era.⁶⁷ The Misr Company for acting and cinema also produced educational films in concert with the Ministry of Education beginning in 1929, as examined in the latter chapter on the pre-Studio Misr (Egypt Studio) operations of the Company.

As I had uncovered, the first investment by a government of Egypt in film production predated the founding of the constitutional monarchy, when Sultan Hussein-Kamal commissioned *The Sultanic Guard* (al-Haras al-sultani) in 1916.⁶⁸ The film, likely an actuality,

⁶⁵ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 204.

⁶⁶ George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933," April 23, 1934, 13, Box 194. Also see George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Cairo Amusement Tax Enacted," December 19, 1933, 3, Box 193.

⁶⁷ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 145, 338, 341. The Company also shot the silent domestic portion of the first Egyptian talkie *Awlad al-dhawāt* (Sons of the Aristocrats, 1932) for Youssef Wahby's company Ramses Film; see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 33-34. It then shot *Repent for your Sin* (Kaffiri `an khati'atik, 1933), for `Aziza Amir's Isis Film. In 1933, it shot the silent *al-Dahaya* (The Victims) for Bahija Hafidh's company; see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 82-84. In the same year it shot the silent footage in *Indama Tuhib al-Mar'a* (When a Woman Loves), produced by Lotus Film, owned and run by Assia Dagher; see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 91-92.

⁶⁸ This is one of this study's most significant finds, one that has been missed even by historians who have reviewed the primary publication to discuss this affair, such as Faridah Mar'i and Ahmed El-Hadary. This find moves up the date of the Egyptian government's first investment in cinema by ten years from that marked in El Hadary's authoritative history, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 195.

depicting the functions of the guard, was screened non-theatrically to an audience that included Sultan himself, among other dignitaries, in the palaces of Gabares, in a rural area between Tanta and Damanhour, approximately 150 km outside of Cairo.⁶⁹ It seems that in the aftermath of nominal independence in 1922 the cinema's utility, in light of its mass influence and its integrative means of communication, persuaded multiple arms of the Egyptian government—beginning with its Ministry of Education in the mid-1920, with other government arms joining into such engagement in the early 1930s—to invest in it for the purpose of capture and presentation.⁷⁰ The Ministry of Education made films for the purpose of “visual education, which holds the interest of pupil better than the ordinary means, especially in Egypt's warm climate.” In 1934, this study's concluding year, the Ministry considered producing “scenic” educational films to be used not only in domestic, especially rural, schools but also for reasons of promoting Egypt abroad, according to the Egyptian Tourist Development Association and Egyptian consulates.⁷¹

In the same year of 1934, the Department of Commerce and Industry finally took advantage of a budgetary windfall to buy three motion picture cameras—a 35, a 16, and an 8 mm—and projectors for each. As with the Ministry of Education, it took promotional films for use abroad and hoped to later use its own productions for industrial and agricultural educational purposes by way of provincial cinemas and “motorized project units touring the provinces.” The Ministry of Agriculture had already announced an expedition similar, in 1929, for the capture and screening of motion pictures to Bedouin in the Sinai Desert,⁷² although whether such

⁶⁹ See “Ikliil min al-ghar: rajul `amil fi sabil fan Kabir” (Wreath of Laurels: A man working for the sake of a big art), *Motion Pictures*, June 4, 1925, 10.

⁷⁰ Maurice Ventura, “Egypt,” *Variety*, September 16, 1925, 30.

⁷¹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 327.

⁷² El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 327.

activities were carried out is not confirmed. In 1934, a committee was formed by the Ministry of Agriculture for the purpose of producing “a film showing the struggle against parasitic plants and especially against cotton worms... to be shown in the country in the open air and before farmers.”⁷³

The Egyptian government made a single venture into feature film production during this study's period, a domestic propaganda film as it were. A project initiated by Russell Pasha, commandant of the Cairo city police and backed by the Ministry of Interior, work on *Narcotics* began in 1929 and continued into 1930, though nothing was heard of it thereafter and no film resulting was ever screened.⁷⁴ The year 1927 had seen release of *Layla*, the second Egyptian narrative feature, itself produced and performed in the lead by theatre actor Aziza Amir and funded by Ahmed al-Shir'i, her spouse, wealthy mayor of Samalut in Upper Egypt.⁷⁵ He would become financial manager of Amir's production company Isis Films, which he bankrolled, and which released *Daughter of the Nile* (Bint al-Nil) in 1929, two years after the company's first release.⁷⁶ By the conclusion of this study in 1934, thirty-eight narrative feature films had been produced in Egypt and screened publicly, of which fifteen were produced or co-produced by individuals likely to have been from long-native Egyptian backgrounds. Native Egyptians did not lead important technical departments, such as cinematography and later sound work, although the most accomplished director in the Egyptian cinema of the late silent and early sound period was native Mohamed Karim.

⁷³ Charles E Dickerson, “Motion Picture Notes: Modern Agricultural Methods Taught by Cinema,” June 28, 1934, 13, Box 194.

⁷⁴ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 365-367.

⁷⁵ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 210, 302. Also see Muhammad al-Sayyid Shusha, *Ruwad wa-ra'idat al-sinema al-miṣriya* [Pioneers of the Egyptian Cinema] (Cairo: Rose al-Youssef Library, 1978), 8.

⁷⁶ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 220.

Screenplays to early narrative films themselves Egyptianized. A few of the late 1920s films included foreign characters, seemingly as an excuse to integrate scenic footage of spectacular sights of the country that attract foreigners such characters. They mimicked Hollywood orientalist adventure films, such as those involving Turkish literature Widad Orfi—*Layla* (1927), *Ghadat al-sahra'* (Flower of the Desert, 1929), and the unfinished works *Taht sama' Misr* (Under Egypt's Sky, 1928) and *Ma'sat al-haya* (Tragedy of Life, 1929)⁷⁷—and films by the Lama Brothers, especially their first *Qubla fi al-sahra'* (Kiss in the Desert, 1928), a blatant homage to the Hollywood spectacular *Son of the Sheikh* (1926).⁷⁸ The last title, a Rudolph Valentino vehicle, itself followed *The Sheikh* (1921) a smash hit in Egypt, a film whose story was serialized in an Arabic daily.⁷⁹ Scathing commentary in the press by journalists and readers alike, against the foreign and flagrant depiction of the country and its people persisted into the early sound era, especially in the films of the Lama brothers, who continued to rely on foreign texts for their films to the end of this study's period.

Other filmmakers, however, took greater care, including in the reproduced desert and antiquity adventure melodramas, to represent Egypt and its people. So did screenwriter-director Jack Schultz in making *Saada the Gypsy* (Su'ad al-ghajariya, 1929) for producer Amadeo Puccini,⁸⁰ producer-actor Aziza Amir in hiring Muhammad `Abd al-Quddus to adapt his play *Ihsan Bey* into her *Bint al-Nil* (Daughter of the Nile, 1929),⁸¹ producer-actor Bahija Hafidh in hiring journalist and magazine editor Fikri Abadha to write the screenplay to her *al-Dahaya* (The

⁷⁷ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 209-229, 279-283, 295-300, and 315-323.

⁷⁸ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 246-253.

⁷⁹ "Egypt's Film Houses," *Variety*, Feb 11, 1925, 26.

⁸⁰ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 257-263. Also see Edward Asswad "Film Reviews: Talking Shorts—Saada, the Gypsy," *Variety*, Aug 1, 1928, 12.

⁸¹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 302-314.

Victims, 1933),⁸² and producer-actor Assia Dagher in bringing journalist and magazine editor Ahmed Jalal as writer and director in her Lotus Film production company.⁸³ The most notable cinematic script of the era, however, may be credited to Youssef Wahby, owner of Ramses Film, for his eponymous adaptation in 1930 of *Zaynab* (1913), arguably the first published Egyptian modern novel, written by esteemed public intellectual and author Mohammed Hussein Haikal.⁸⁴ Indeed, disregard for the familiarity and locality of filmic scripts was the exception by 1934, as suggested by five of the six domestic productions in that year having either been written or translated by Egyptians, the exception being the Lama Brothers' *Shabah al-madi* (Ghost of the Past), adapted from a French novel by the Lamas themselves.⁸⁵

It is also the case that some of the leading filmmakers of this period, though non-native, were naturalized according to the 1929 Citizenship Law, such as Egyptian-born leading theatre and cinema practitioner Youssef Wahby and Levantine immigrant Assia Dagher. Both took on a multitude of functions in producing their films, including performing. Non-Egyptian Arabic speakers, Levantines in particular, performed regularly in the cinema of the era, including in the lead, but certain native Egyptians—not least Aziza Amir, Fatima Rushdi, and the faintly foreign Youssef Wahby—drew greater attention, having already realized stardom in the domestic theatre, fame that followed them from stage to screen, as examined in a latter chapter.⁸⁶

⁸² El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 60-66. The magazine in question is *al-Dunya al-musawara* (Picture World); see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 72-73.

⁸³ See Muhammad al-Sayyid Shusha, *Pioneers of the Egyptian Cinema*, 18-19. The magazine in question is *al-Hilal*, the magazine owned by Emile Zaydan, which Egyptianized its editorial board and contributions, as discussed earlier.

⁸⁴ See Muhammad al-Sayyid Shusha, *Pioneers of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: Rose al-Youssef Library, 1978), 13-17. Also see John Mohammed Grinstead, translator's introduction to *Zaynab*, by Mohammed Hussein Haikal (London: Darf, 2016), i-ii.

⁸⁵ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 149.

⁸⁶ Wahby's paternal grandfather had moved to Egypt from Tunisia. Moreover, his mother's last name was al-Baghdadi, which suggests Iraqi origin. See Rawiya Rashid's *Sanawat al-majd wa al-dumou`* [Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears] (Cairo: Shurouk Press, 2016), 19. Possibly because Youssef's father had attained the title of

Arguably, with the inauguration of Studio Misr in 1935 film production in Egypt had largely Egyptianized.

Egyptianizing of Distribution and Exhibition:

Coupling analysis of distribution and exhibition makes sense for two reasons. I had found relatively little on film distribution institutions and practices of the era. More importantly, distribution was closely linked to exhibition in that those who owned distribution companies also commonly owned cinemas that played films they distributed. I observed in the Egyptian cinema of the era under study anticompetitive practices associated with the Hollywood studio system: oligopoly, vertical integration, even block booking conditions that hindered native Egyptian penetration into competitive, let alone market leadership ranks in film distribution and exhibition.⁸⁷

Leadership in these practices required capital, connections, and international commercial knowhow factors that favored foreign entrepreneurs familiar with European languages and commercial practices—Europeans in the main, but Levantines as well. Yet, native Egyptians were also at a legal and financial disadvantage to citizens of eighteen states—most European, in addition to the United States and Brazil—who may have resided in Egypt, partly due to their

Pasha, the highest afforded non-nobility in khedival and monarchic Egypt, Youssef's non-Egyptian lineage was never discussed during this study's period of study, to my knowledge. If anything, Wahby pitted himself against foreigners in the script to his authored play, turned film, *Sons of the Aristocrats*, and in his Egyptian-owned Wahby Cinema, as later explored.

⁸⁷ I do not later discuss block booking, because this anticompetitive practice was limited to two cases I managed to identify, both claiming to be the first instance of block booking in Egypt. The first of these was reported in 1932, that "the Empire Cinema of Cairo has secured exclusive rights to all British International Pictures for three months. This is the first block booking in Egypt." See Edward Asswad, "Chatter: Egypt," *Variety*, Feb 23, 1932, 38. A year and a half later, the clerk to the commercial attaché in Alexandria reported about block booking that only Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer was "strong enough to follow this policy in Egypt, as enforced by the studio's representative in Egypt, empowered by MGM pictures having the greatest star appeal of any producer's in Egypt at the time. George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Press Entertained at Local Announcement of American Film Programs for 1933-1934," Sep 29, 1933, 8, box 193.

ability therein to take advantage of the Capitulations, a set of agreements between the noted eighteen nations and the Ottoman Empire that applied an overarching policy concerning Christian-European subjects in Ottoman ruled lands. The Capitulations actuated through agreements struck first between the Empire and the states of Genoa and Venice in 1453 and 1454 respectively and entailed a set of privileges afforded nationals of states signatory, privileges that were enhanced in the case of the Egyptian territory in the 19th century.⁸⁸

European residents of Egypt after 1882 could live in a country ruled primarily by a Christian European imperial power in Great Britain.⁸⁹ Those from any of the eighteen noted “Powers” could count on an “exemption from every ‘avarie,’ tax, impost, or tribute except duties as agreed upon on goods and merchandise,”⁹⁰ agreed upon as it were to augment existing agreements between the Egyptian state and the Capitulatory states that not only greatly depressed taxes payed by nationals of these latter states but that also privileged the Capitulatory Powers to each weigh in on changes to fiscal policy intricately, as I learned and will soon discuss related to the cinema under study as well.⁹¹ These European economic immigrants, along with their businesses, would not be subjected to Egyptian courts for criminal offenses of any sort, but to their countries’ consular courts, as they did when appearing for civil lawsuits involving disputants from Capitulatory states. Only in civil disputes between Egyptians and said nationals

⁸⁸ See Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From Its Origins to Aḥmad Lutfi al-Sayyid* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 10.

⁸⁹ It was known within Egypt and without that the effective ruler of Egypt was Lord Cromer, Proconsul-general for the British Occupation of Egypt. See Nadia Ramses Farah, *Egypt’s Political Economy: Power Relations in Development* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2009), 65. For a description of Cromer’s customary supercilious tone in communicating with the khedive see Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 166-173.

⁹⁰ Edward A. Van Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States at Cairo, *Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire since the Year 1150, Part 1*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881, 28.

⁹¹ Isma`il Ahmed Yaghi, *al-`Alam al-`arabi fi al-tarikh al-hadith [The Arab World in Modern History]* (Riyadh: Obekan Publishing, 1997), 181.

did the latter go to court, not Egyptian courts but so-called mixed courts, employing Egyptian, though mostly foreign judges, who largely conducted their affairs as if beholden to their state governments, not to the Egyptian.⁹²

Even in developing the Egyptian legal system, sovereign as to befit the newly formed and ostensibly independent constitutional monarchy, beginning in 1923, the Powers exerted an influence. As Nathan Brown offers, “Imperialism and European penetration certainly shaped the development of a legal system, and the Mixed Courts could not have existed without them.”⁹³ The Capitulations remained in effect in Egypt past the period of this study, it must be noted, until its unraveling was enacted in the Montreux Convention Regarding the Abolition of the Capitulations in Egypt, in 1937. The Capitulations was cause for native Egyptian resentment against foreign business owners, especially starting in the late 1920s when the domestic press covered efforts on the part of the Wafd Party led parliamentary government in Egypt to bring an end to the Capitulations, which represented one of the principle tools for the continued foreign domination over Egyptian economic, including legal-fiscal affairs. Three European states—Britain, France, and Belgium—had made massive investments in the Egyptian economy—but these were considered problematical as the agrarian economy faltered in the years leading up to the Great War.⁹⁴ These Powers’ presumed representatives in the European metropolitan elite also posed a problem in the eyes of critical Egyptian observers. As Robert Tignor finds: “European capital, which had been fueling the agricultural engine, had assumed an overweening presence. Egyptians felt as if they were alien in their own country, and the task of structural economic

⁹² See Edward A. Yan Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States at Cairo, *Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire since the Year 1150, Part 1*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881, 27-30. Also see Nathan J. Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 40-56.

⁹³ Nathan J. Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf*, 60.

⁹⁴ Robert Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952*, 19.

change was rendered especially difficult by this metropolitan presence.”⁹⁵ This metropolitan presence shown in ownership of cinemas especially in the metropolitan centers of Cairo and Alexandria, but also in the coastal cities of Port Said, Suez, and Ismailia.

Despite its regional centrality and its functioning as a growing re-export market, the market for the cinema within Egypt, itself continually expanding into the mid-1930s, the final years under study, remained restricted in several ways.⁹⁶ It was estimated that five hundred thousand among a population of 15 million Egyptians were linguistically, geographically and financially positioned to go to movie houses. In the years of the Great Depression, whose ruinous effects had reached Egypt, a minority of the country’s native urbanites, themselves a minority in a country largely rural, could afford the 1-piastre (approx. 0.5 US cent) to attend a third-run cinema.⁹⁷ Also restricting the target market for films in the 1930s was that talkies integrated titles more than did silent narrative films, because of the synchronized sound films’ increasing reliance on dialogue, which demanded greater literacy of cinema goers in a country whose native population was literate by a mere 10%.⁹⁸ By the end of the era under study, two-hundred thousand foreign residents, along with the noted five hundred thousand formed the target market for the eighty or so civilian cinemas in the country. This we may compare to Greece, whose population was less than half that of Egypt, but which had twenty more cinemas.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Robert Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952*, 15.

⁹⁶ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933,” April 23, 1934, 1, box 194.

⁹⁷ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933: Theaters,” April 23, 1934, 6, box 194.

⁹⁸ Special Report no. 4, “Report on Economic Development in Egypt During the Calendar Year 1934,” December 31, 1934, “Salient Commercial Features of Egypt,” under “Purchasing Power,” i, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁹⁹ “Greece,” *The Film Daily Year book, 1934* (Los Angeles: John Alicoate, 1934), 1034. For population information see the Committee for International Coordination of National Research in Demography (CICRED), *The Population of Greece* (Athens: CIRCED Series, 1974), 11, <http://www.cicred.org/Eng/Publications/pdf/c-c19.pdf>.

The first film screenings in Egypt were carried out not in designated houses, but in clubs, cafes, casinos, hotels, and especially in theatres, as explored later in this study. The first native to screen motion pictures (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika) was likely legendary singer turned actor Salama Hijazi, who, possibly to compete with Levantine Iskander Farah's Egyptian Theater's (al-Tiyatro al-misri) regular and predominant presentation of motion pictures, having parted ways with Farah, founded his Arab Acting House in Cairo (Dar al-tamthil al-`arabi) in 1906, a theater that concluded its opening ceremony with a presentation of color motion pictures. Coupling varied performances and motion pictures became common practice in Egyptian theaters, beginning in the late 1900s, particularly in the two metropolises.¹⁰⁰ Film historian Mahmoud `Ali has it that the `Abdalla `Ukasha and Brothers troupe was the last to take up cinematographic presentations in 1914, leaving George Abyad's as the lone troupe not to do so.¹⁰¹ Although cinemas were opened in native neighborhoods in Alexandria, Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt beginning in the 1910s, I have found reference to a single owner whose name sounds native, that is `Abd al-Rahman Hasanein, owner of the Peace Inn (Locanda al-salam), which housed the Patriotic Cinematograph (al-Sinimatograph al-watani), dating to 1910.¹⁰² Otherwise, Egyptian cinemas were predominantly owned and run by Greek and Italian residents.¹⁰³

Exhibition Egyptianized in terms of means of appeal rather than through ownership in the early 1910s. Entertainment venues had already been named to appeal to patriotism and nationalism, but when the Egyptian Cinema (al-Sinama al-misriya) in Alexandria first offered

¹⁰⁰ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 85-88. Also see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 65.

¹⁰¹ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 87-88.

¹⁰² This is identified by Mahmoud `Ali in a newspaper notice dating to that year. See *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 93.

¹⁰³ "Egypt A Coming Market," *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, May 23, 1918: 80.

Arabic titles to its exhibited films in 1912, it set a new standard of service, in accommodating for its literate native Egyptian customers who had mastered only Arabic.¹⁰⁴ Cinema Olympia followed suit in 1913.¹⁰⁵ Cairo's American Cosmograph offered the same the following year, in 1914; built to seat two thousand people in 1913, Egypt's then largest cinema offered domestic short films in the same year, and presented Arabic titles to its screenings, by way of a magic lantern projection onto the wall adjacent to the projection screen.¹⁰⁶ This exhibition practice was adopted by many but not all Egyptian cinemas in the years to come, to the chagrin of nationalist cinemagoers and cineastes alike, as related late in this chapter.¹⁰⁷ Offering Arabic titles adjacent to the projection screen persisted into the early synchronized sound era, until 1934 when a mechanism was developed to print single or dual language subtitles on film prints directly.¹⁰⁸

Cinemas beginning in the early 1910s offered not only subtitles in Arabic, but also program materials. The American Cosmograph offered its customers film programs in four languages, including Arabic.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Cinema Olympia printed its pamphlets in multiple languages before they were distributed in city streets.¹¹⁰ The practice of offering materials in multiple languages persisted past the foundation of the constitutional monarchy and instatement of the country's first elected parliament, as a program from the Alexandrian Cinema des

¹⁰⁴ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 115.

¹⁰⁵ See Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 95.

¹⁰⁶ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 121. Also see William Ferry, "Correspondence: EGYPT," *Variety*, Jun 05, 1914, 24, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1529295353?accountid=14512>.

¹⁰⁷ Hebrew along with Arabic and French was offered on a second screen as well. See Uncle Tim, "The Young Picturegoer," *Pictures and the Picturegoer*, Sep 1, 1917, 283.

¹⁰⁸ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 96.

¹⁰⁹ Epes Winthrop Sargent, "Advertising for Exhibitors," *Moving Picture World* 22, no. 13 (1914): 1831, <https://archive.org/stream/movingpicturewor22newy#page/1830/mode/2up>.

¹¹⁰ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Egyptian Cinema*, 77.

Ambassadeurs, dating to 1925, demonstrates, having been printed in four languages—Arabic, English, French, and Greek.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, native Egyptians hardly figured in their country's exhibition industry into the early 1920s. The Arabic language culture magazine *The Photographed World* (al-'Alam al-musawar) lamented this matter, although it wavered between declaring the cinemas of Egypt as being mostly run by foreigners to being entirely run by non-Egyptians. It first offered that "in our land few Egyptians are concerned with this branch of commercial entertainment venues, as most cinemas are in the hands of foreigners, even though many Egyptians are capable of establishing similar or better."¹¹² A few months later *The Photographed World* struck a more forceful note, when it opened with a continuation of a discussion into which it had entered over several issues devoted to encouraging and justifying establishing a cinema production industry in Egypt. In this issue, however, after opening with a rejoinder that those who care about Egypt should want to advance this fine art at home, the article turns to exhibition, finding it inexplicable that all cinemas are owned by foreigners, other than that foreigners are wont to invest in any business that promises a profit.¹¹³ Native Egyptian theater owners continued to integrate motion picture presentations into their programs, as they had starting in the late 1910s, as was the case with the most accomplished theatre troupe of the decade of the 1920s the Ramses Theater, which offered its patrons two programs a day, a theatrical then a filmic, starting in the year of its foundation in

¹¹¹ Richard A. May, "Movie Film Program," December 5, 1925, File no. 281, Letter from the Office of Trade Commissioner in Alexandria, Egypt. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.

¹¹² "al-Bab al-sinimatography: al-sinima tarikhuha wa ba'd al-ma'loumat `anha" (The Cinematographic Section: The Cinema, Its History and Some Information About It), June 26, 1922, 12, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

¹¹³ "The Cinematographic Section: The Cinema, Its History and Some Information About It," September 4, 1922, 1, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

1923.¹¹⁴ Ramses Theater went on to incorporate movie screening in ways inventive as is discussed later in this study.

Records of cinematograph licenses issued to native Egyptians have been located, dating back to the early 1910s, but these seem to have been for traveling or impermanent exhibition purposes.¹¹⁵ The earliest reported native Egyptian ownership of a cinema was, not surprisingly, one not in the metropolises but in then-town of Mansoura, no later than 1919, although the name of Anis Nasr is not known.¹¹⁶ In 1925 Muhammad `Uthman bought Cinema `Abbas then renamed it the Egyptian Cosmograph.¹¹⁷ This cinema was likely a third-run cinema, an open-air summer venues, as its mention is not made in any of the listings I had seen of the country's premier picture houses. Beside the Egyptian Cosmograph, I uncovered one other native owned third-run cinema named al-Ahli (best translated as *Native*), a venue owned by one Najib Maqar no later than 1934.¹¹⁸

Three cinemas held the status of first or second-run venues in Egypt during in the pre-Studio Misr era, all opened in the 1930s.¹¹⁹ The first to launch, in 1931, was Cinema Ramses, a second-run house not associated with the noted Ramses Theater, operated by the Cinematograph Corporation, founded by graduates of the Higher School of Commerce (Madrasat al-tijara al-`ulya).¹²⁰ The following year, the Cinematograph Corporation opened the Fouad Cinema cited at

¹¹⁴ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 176.

¹¹⁵ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 154-156.

¹¹⁶ The owner's name is remembered by a representative of Gaumont as reported in an article dating to 1950 cited in Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 62.

¹¹⁷ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 197-198.

¹¹⁸ This notice was offered under the regular feature of "Su'al wa Jawab" (Question and Answer), in a cinema magazine that figures centrally in this study, and soon discussed, *Fan al-Sinima [Screen Art]*, Jan 27, 1934, 11, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

¹¹⁹ Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: Cairo Winter Season Opens," October 1, 1934, 1, Box 194.

¹²⁰ See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 25, 153. Director Mohamed Karim identifies this group in his recorded recollections of the time, *Mohamed Karim's Memoirs*, 199.

the outset of this chapter.¹²¹ The third of the native-owned cinemas to open as mentioned was the Wahby. Launched in 1933, it was associated with the Ramses Theater in that both were owned and managed by Youssef Wahby,¹²² a cinema and owner that I came to suspect were involved in the agitation against foreign owned cinemas, to whose bottom I hoped to get. All three of these cinemas ceased operation within three years of their opening, the Ramses and the Fouad when Cinematograph Corporation folded in 1934, and the Wahby in the year following. As it turned out, barriers to native Egyptian penetration of the more profitable and powerful exhibition market had to do not only with competition from longer standing, posher, and better equipped non-native owned cinemas, but also with the latter's inability to secure the rights to fine American and European titles from Egypt's designated distributors.

Native Egyptians were conspicuously absent from film distribution activities throughout this study's period. In 1918, the British cinema trade newspaper *The Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* asked "Why not an Anglo-Egyptian Kinema Circuit?" in whose response the paper qualified that Greek and Italian "dealers" had "monopolized the business in the past."¹²³ The trade paper then published a letter in response, signed by E. Constantino and L. Birch, that offered to correct errors in the earlier published article, including regarding the national background of film distributors: "The business is by no means monopolized by Italian and Greek dealers. We, the largest traders, are a British firm, both partners being British. The next largest trader is Italian, and the majority of the others are Italian. Greek film traders are practically non-existent here." No mention therein of Egyptian "traders"—Constantino and Birch do state that

¹²¹ *Mohamed Karim's Memoirs*, 199.

¹²² George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," December 19, 1933, 2, Box 193.

¹²³ "Export Section Continued—Possibilities of After-the-War Development. Why Not an Anglo-Egyptian Kinema Circuit?" May 23, 1918, 80.

they have had “experience with running a kinema establishment in Egypt.”¹²⁴ Coupling distribution and exhibition had already been accomplished in the early 1900s by Pathé agents who successively ran local Pathé cinemas in Cairo and Alexandria and would persist as a practice of industrial integration well past the period examined in this study.¹²⁵

The Recipe to Success: Coupling Exclusive Distribution and Exhibition

Vertical integration of the cinema in Egypt was pursued and achieved by several parties, mostly local entrepreneurs who distributed foreign films including to cinemas they themselves owned. In a few cases, however, such integration was complete—in ownership of production, distribution, and exhibition—achieved by non-Egyptian companies. The first of these, noted early in this chapter, was Gaumont, which opened two “palaces” in Egypt, in Cairo, in 1923, then in Alexandria the following year.¹²⁶ These two cinemas the following year were part of an interest in eleven of Gaumont’s grander houses purchased by MGM, cinemas whose name was not altered but which came under MGM’s control then systematically screened the American studio’s pictures.¹²⁷ Paramount also moved into the Egyptian market by similarly striking an agreement with an established French cinema interest in the country. Famous Players Lasky (FPL, later Paramount) engaged Gaumont in 1918 to have the latter distribute its films in Egypt.¹²⁸ FPL then bought a controlling interest in Cairo’s large Cinema Empire, at least for the

¹²⁴ See “Editor’s Letter Bag: The Egyptian Film Market,” July 25, 1918, 88.

¹²⁵ See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 89, 94, 105, 114-115.

¹²⁶ See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 176, 188.

¹²⁷ Alexander Woollcott, “The Life of Marcus Loew,” *Variety*, October 19, 1927, 6.

¹²⁸ “Through Gaumont Abroad,” *Variety*, January 25, 1918, 49.

years 1924 and 1925, so that it showed only FPL pictures.¹²⁹ Thus, MGM and Paramount achieved full vertical integration by way of cinemas they controlled in Egypt, two cases that did not replicate in my study's period to my knowledge, as a mere few powerful domestic distributors rose to lead the country's cinema.

This domestic leadership was principally achieved by securing distribution from multiple prominent European and American film studios and by gaining ownership of domestic cinemas that initially or exclusively screened choice offerings from such studios. For example, concomitant to FPL's control of Cairo's Empire Cinema noted above was its contracting, as did Universal City Studios (later Universal Pictures), with then prominent domestic producer and distributor Pascal Prospero to distribute its films in Egypt and the Levant.¹³⁰ Beside producing and distributing, the Italian Egyptian Prospero controlled the Triumph Cinema, until he sold it to Alexandre Aptekman, a cinema entrepreneur discussed later in this chapter.¹³¹ Josy Film was founded in 1915 by Joseph Mosseri, member of a Sephardic Jewish family, one of the foremost in Egypt.¹³² Josy Film first operated several cinemas, six of them by 1922,¹³³ the first likely being Cairo's Cinema Kléber, opened no later than 1919.¹³⁴ The company then entered the distribution market by striking a deal with First National Pictures, to distribute its films in Egypt and the Levant in 1924.¹³⁵ Josy Film went on to purchase rights to a collection of synchronized

¹²⁹ Maurice Ventura, "Egypt," *Variety*, December 17, 1924, 2. Maurice Ventura, "Pictures: Egypt's Films 60% American," *Variety*, Nov 11, 1925, 40.

¹³⁰ "Iklil min al-ghar: rajulun ya'mal fi sabil fan kabir" (Wreath of Laurels: A Man Working for the Cause of a Major Artform), *Motion Pictures*, June 4, 1925, 10, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

¹³¹ Among the challenges to writing an industrial history of cinema exhibition in Egypt is that cinemas were frequently sold and renamed.

¹³² For more on the Egyptian experience of the Mosseris, see Dario Miccoli, *Histories of the Jews of Egypt: An Imagined Bourgeoisie, 1880s-1950s* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 81.

¹³³ "Short Stuff: Films in Egypt," *Kinematograph Weekly*, Jul 13, 1922, 39.

¹³⁴ See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 144.

¹³⁵ "America To-day," *Kinematograph Weekly*, Nov 20, 1924, 49.

sound films by MGM, in 1929, to screen in its Metropole Cinema¹³⁶ then did similar for United Artists' Chaplin smash hit *City Lights*, in 1931.¹³⁷

Thomas Shafto, described in 1929 by *Variety* magazine as “one of the biggest cinema proprietors and theater managers in Egypt,”¹³⁸ had consolidated a robust enterprise comprising distribution, exhibition, and equipment rental. Australian by origin, Shafto had begun his business venture in Egypt in 1918 and within a decade had built a business comprising a cinema equipment rental service, two playhouses and seven “civilian” cinemas.¹³⁹ Shafto, a member of the British Chamber of Commerce in Cairo had contracted with the British occupation authorities to build military cinemas in the service of British troupes stationed in the country, of which there were eight by the conclusion of this study's period, serving approximately 10,000 British troupes stationed in Egypt.¹⁴⁰ Shafto by the early 1930s also held exclusive distribution rights in Egypt, the Levant, and Iraq for Gaumont-British Pictures and Gainsborough Pictures.¹⁴¹

More dominant than Shafto, with his throughgoing connections to the British authorities, more commanding of the market during the years of the Great Depression than the mighty Mossiris, what with the family's highly capitalized banking interests, were the Raissis, Dimitri and Spiro. The Raissi Brothers first contracted with relatively small foreign producers in the late 1920s, including Film Booking Offices of America (FBO) in 1927,¹⁴² and the Weiss Brothers'

¹³⁶ “Sound Invades Ancient Lands,” *Variety*, Oct 2, 1929, 2. As soon discussed, the Metropole's ownership passed onto the Raissi Brothers around 1930.

¹³⁷ “Foreign Film News: ‘Lights’ in Egypt, etc.,” *Variety*, Apr 15, 1931, 13.

¹³⁸ “Foreign Film News: Egypt's Exhib Magnate on Tour of the World,” *Variety*, Jun 26, 1929, 2.

¹³⁹ “Long Shots and Close Ups,” *Kinematograph Weekly*, Apr 5, 1928, 20-21. The rental service is identified by Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 153.

¹⁴⁰ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933: Theatres,” April 23, 1934, 6, 9, box 194.

¹⁴¹ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: British Films for 1933-1934 Season,” Sep 29, 1933, 11, box 193.

¹⁴² “FBO Completes Plans in Foreign Fields: Has Made all Arrangements for Distribution in 15 Territories Abroad,” *Motion Picture News*, Sep 2, 1927, 703, <https://archive.org/stream/motion36moti#page/710/mode/2up>.

Artclass Pictures, an American “poverty row” producer, in 1928.¹⁴³ The Raissis then signed with RKO, one of the Hollywood Big Five studios, to distribute its films in 1930.¹⁴⁴ In 1933, the Raissis signed with United Artists (UA) studio to exclusively distribute its films in Egypt and the near East. Considering that UA was not a producer of films but itself a distributor for others, the Raissis in effect became designated distributors for 20th Century Pictures, London Film Productions, British and Dominions Film Corp., Reliance Pictures, Walt Disney’s Micky Mouse and Silly Symphonies, along with the individual pictures of Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks Sr., and the most popular star of the silent era in Egypt, according to my research, Charlie Chaplin. These they added to other powerhouse studios for which the Raissi Brothers held domestic and regional distribution rights: MGM, Fox, Paramount, and Pathé-Natan.¹⁴⁵ In the final year of this study, the Raissis “engaged” 22 of the most important production of the above studios in addition to Columbia Pictures and British Gaumont.¹⁴⁶

The Raissis did not own as many cinemas as Shafto or Mossiri: two first-run cinemas and two second-run houses in Cairo, as well as an interest in at least one third-run cinema. However, their first run cinemas, the Royal and the Metropole, were possibly the most successful in the capital city, especially the former, which despite being rather uncomfortable and out of the way,

¹⁴³ “Artclass Closes 9 Deals for Product Distribution,” *Motion Picture News*, Nov 24, 1928, 1587, <https://archive.org/stream/motionpicturenew38moti#page/1586/mode/2up>.

¹⁴⁴ “This Week: The Camera Reports,” *Motion Picture Herald*, Sep 6, 1947, 10. RKO was founded in 1928 through a merger of two companies, one of which was FBO. The Raissis established business relationship with FBO may have paved the way for the agreement between the brothers and FBO’s successor RKO in the noted year of 1930.

¹⁴⁵ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: British Films for 1933-1934 Season,” Sep 29, 1933, 11, box 193.

¹⁴⁶ Charles E. Dickens, commercial attaché in Alexandria reported that the Raissis contracted with British Gaumont, so as to introduce its films in Egypt for the first time. See “Motion Picture Notes: Plans for Next Season Under Preparation by Cinema Owners,” Aug 14, 1934, 5, box 194. However, this information contradicts industry paper reportage on Thomas Shafto having contracted with British Gaumont a few years earlier, as noted above. Even if Shafto had distributed for British Gaumont first, the Raissis’ contracting with this producer thereafter indicates that the Raissi Brothers had jostling Shafto out of some of his market share, as the Raissi Brothers seems to have done with the Mossiri cinema business.

led all cinemas in appeal, evidenced by consistently sold out evening showings.¹⁴⁷ The Raissis' business strategy observed by the United States commercial attaché office points to an anticompetitive practice that explains how the earlier discussed industrial vertical integration benefited its actuators: "By wide advertising and keeping the big features from themselves they can maintain without a doubt their stranglehold [sic] on the Cairo movie business."¹⁴⁸ To enhance the appeal of the Royal and Metropole, the Raissi Brothers contracted to have the Western Electric Wide Range sound reproduction system therein for the first time in Egypt with the proviso that such a system would not be installed in any other Egyptian cinema for one year.¹⁴⁹ Like Shafto's, the Raissis' cinema enterprise comprised, in addition to distribution and exhibition interests, an equipment rental business.¹⁵⁰

Of the thousands of nodes representing entities whose associations form the relational network that stands for the study I had undertaken, the Raissis had turned out as the mother-node. The Raissis signified four central facets of my analysis:

1) Inextricable connectivity of global cinema industry:

The Raissi Brothers was an exemplar of the inextricable connectivity of the global cinema industry as it interacted with non-Egyptian institutions of cinema, the press, and government. I have already demonstrated the enterprise's distribution contracts with producers American, British, and French. I elaborate on the Raissi's engagement with the non-Egyptian industry press below, in contrast to that with domestic periodicals and publications. Here, I wish to offer that

¹⁴⁷ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: American Feature Films Pack them in," Feb 24, 1933, 1, box 193.

¹⁴⁸ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 4, box 193.

¹⁴⁹ Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: Western Electric Wide Range Installed in Egypt," October 1, 1934, 7, box 194.

¹⁵⁰ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: British Films for 1933-1934 Season," Sep 29, 1933, 4, box 193.

the Raissi Brothers made arrangements with the Egyptian officers of large international corporations and “larger legations,” that is larger diplomatic missions of state governments, to have boxes reserved for them in its leading Royal for the cinema’s popular evening showings.¹⁵¹

The Raissis also assembled and offered, through the office of the commercial attaché in Alexandria, Egyptian cinema market research findings to the United States Department of Commerce’s Consul General, likely to curry favor with an arm of a state government that was methodically involved in the business of its national movie industry abroad.¹⁵²

2) The Raissis were selectively conspicuous Levantine capitalists in Egypt, post-Great War:

The second major element of this work signified by the Raissis had to do with their national origin, for this most powerful cinema enterprise in Egypt of the early 1930s was run not by Europeans or Americans, but by Levantines, Levantines whose public presence, or rather conspicuous absence from Egyptian public life illustrates the mode of circumspect exitance of the Levantine community in Egypt in the years following the Popular Revolution 1919, especially after the inscription of the project to Egyptianize the nation upon post-independence public life. Over the 1920s and beyond, as the Levantine voice diminished in the Egyptian press, a transition characterized earlier, the Raissi Brothers—scarcely in the public eye—prospered as it successfully jostled entrepreneurs of the cinema long established, highly capitalized, and holding passports to Capitulatory states. I discuss how they did this below, but here wish to consider a startling observation of my study relating to the Raissis, that they are identified and discussed in a single primary source contemporary to the period of study that I have encountered, one that I attend to thoroughly in discussing the fourth facet of the Raissi Brothers’ central to this study’s

¹⁵¹ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: American Feature Films Pack them in,” Feb 24, 1933, 1, box 193

¹⁵² George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Two New Motion Picture Houses in Egypt in 1933,” Nov 22, 1933, 1, box 193.

analysis. To this I add that I have found reference to the Raissi Brothers in merely two other Egyptian sources: a passing, single mention in a film history work from this century and a salient reference in a most relevant memoir soon discussed.¹⁵³

How is it that the most powerful cinema enterprise in Egypt is all but absent from the thousands of the Egyptian primary documents contemporary to the era I had poured over, I puzzled? Egyptian journalists certainly knew of them, because the Raissis promoted their own business by feting them.¹⁵⁴ The lone publication contemporary to the era to discuss the Raissi enterprise was the obstreperous *Screen Art* magazine soon discussed. The Raissis must not have wanted publicity for themselves in Egypt, because nothing could be gained from brandishing foreign credentials in the country's politically charged air of the first half of the 1930s. The Raissis did engage the foreign press including to discuss their business in prepared statements, which suggests that the brothers avoided publicity for themselves in Egypt specifically.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, I was not able to learn if they had held a European or American citizenship that would have positioned them to take advantage of Capitulations, nor could I determine if they had acquired Egyptian citizenship following the institution of the Citizenship Law of 1929, although they did run their cinema enterprise-cum-empire in Egypt at least to midcentury. Moreover, I

¹⁵³ The first is possibly the work to discuss exhibition in Egypt of the era under study most comprehensively; it is Mahmoud `Ali's *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 61. `Ali cites a representative of Gaumont who describes more than thirty years after the fact there being a second-run cinema run by the Raissis in Cairo titled the Ideal, which is confirmed by the American commercial attaché office papers examined. The memoir belongs to Muhammad Karim, director of the film *al-Warda al-baida'* (The White Rose, 1933), at the center of the "nationalist agitation" against foreign-owned cinemas mentioned earlier and soon referenced.

¹⁵⁴ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Press Entertained at Local Announcement of American Film Programs for 1933-1934," Sep 29, 1933, 8, box 193.

¹⁵⁵ Dimitri Raissi published a column in the American industry paper *Motion Picture Herald* in which he describes his enterprise in detail, including its business challenges, what with the censor and a multinational customer base. In the column, Dimitri also attends to the Raissi Brothers' promotional strategy and its customer traits and preferences. See "Egypt Responsive to Exploitation of Picture Dates," *Motion Picture Herald*, June 13, 1936, 128. I have otherwise located a handful or so references to the Raissis in American, British, and French cinema industry publications.

would not have learned of their origin as Levantine were it not for a passing mention in the single piece of correspondence discussing the state of British films in Egypt, during the operative era of study, found in the British National Archives.¹⁵⁶

The Raissis kept a deliberately low profile; moreover, their association with European and American institutions of government and commerce illustrates the entrepreneurial experience of Levantines in Egypt in the aftermath of the Great War. I had already discussed the Egyptianizing of the press. The Popular Revolution of 1919 had excluded Levantines from the ranks of leading nationalists, a revolution during which the offices of *al-Muqattam*, the Levantine-owned, British aligned newspaper assaulted by a group of nationalist students led by Mustapha Kamil a quarter-century earlier, were sacked. As Thomas Philipp has it: “Egyptian society continued to perceive all immigrants as one distinct group of common origin and did not let them forget that they were after all *Shawam*,” Levantines.¹⁵⁷ Unlike European residents, however, Levantines were not privileged to the benefits of the Capitulations or even merely the sense of security entailed by holding citizenship to a state dominant relative to Egypt. At a population of around 35,000 at its largest,¹⁵⁸ living in an Egypt of 15 million people, the Levantines were too small a group to command broad social authority or influence, as Philipp explains: “Although the sense of a shared Syrian community undoubtedly existed among the Syrians in Egypt, the search for capital or investment opportunities and for legal protection led the Syrian businessman after World War I without fail to cooperate with the local foreign

¹⁵⁶ G C Hatton, Department of Overseas Trade, Foreign Office, “British Films for Egypt,” no. 29993/33, Jan 6, 1934, British National Archives, Kew Gardens, London. Few information relevant to this study were found in the British National Archives, at least partly due to an observed, even admitted, disregard for the British film industry abroad. By their first names, the brothers were likely Greek Orthodox or Greek Catholic Syrians, two groups discussed in *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*.

¹⁵⁷ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 149.

¹⁵⁸ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, xi.

bourgeoisie. As a group on its own it had neither the numerical strength, nor the capital, nor the legal privileges which the local foreign bourgeoisie could offer.”¹⁵⁹ Indeed, the Raissis are referred to as if Europeans rather than Arabs in the literature reviewed that discusses them, Egyptian and otherwise.

3) The Raissis led a "stranglehold" economics of the cinema industry in Egypt:

The Raissi Brothers developed a strategy with which to generate considerable, consistent profits as its business interests grew according to the market conditions specific to Egypt. Their enterprise did not control the exhibition market by any stretch. It owned several, mainly in Cairo, out of approximately eighty civilian cinemas in the country. The Raissi Brothers did not produce a single film according to my findings, unlike distributors and exhibitors in the country that did venture into production, such as the earlier discussed Pascal Prospero and an enterprise named Behna Film, a distributor that merged with the production outfits Sphinx-Nahas.¹⁶⁰ The resulting Behna Films would become one of Egypt’s leading distributors in the decades following this study, but prior could not begin to crowd the Raissis in distribution of foreign fare.¹⁶¹

By the mid-1930s, the exhibition market in Egypt had become sluggish, especially in Alexandria. The implementation of an amusement tax in 1933 promised to cut into revenues. Houses were spottily attended, especially in Alexandria. The exhibition market in Egypt was not large enough to absorb anywhere near the totality of product churned out in Europe and North America. Furthermore, Cairo had developed a dedicated cinemagoing body of native Egyptians

¹⁵⁹ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 140.

¹⁶⁰ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 124.

¹⁶¹ Shuruq Isma'il, "'Muntakhabat Behna film': 80 `aman min al-sinema wa awwal `amal ghina'i da` ba`d `al-ta'mim'" ("Behna Film Selections": Eighty Years of the Cinema and the First Musical Lost After "Nationalization"), *al-Misri al-Youm* [Egypt Today], March 16, 2016, <https://lite.almasryalyoum.com/extra/88282/>.

that did not emerge in the more cosmopolitan Alexandria. These Cairene cinema regulars made their preferences for American and Egyptian films known. The latter did excellent business typically but were produced in far too few numbers to support individual cinemas' exhibition of Egyptian fare exclusively, let alone to entail competitive exhibition market leadership.¹⁶² As for American films, their share of the market had steadily risen over the years as to account for three quarters of the Egyptian exhibition market by 1934.¹⁶³ Whichever entity could secure the most celebrated and star appointed Hollywood titles stood to lead the market, as did the Raissis.

The Raissi Brothers held exclusive distribution contracts in Egypt and the Levant with four of the five Hollywood major studios—excepting Warner Bros, which had an arrangement with Cairo's Cinema Triumph, belonging to Pascal Prospero then to Alexandre Aptekman.¹⁶⁴ The Raissis also distributed for United Artists exclusively, and in the last year of this study had accessed choice output from Columbia Studios. As such, the only studio among the three Hollywood minors with which the Raissis did not deal was Universal.

In fact, all major American, British, and French film producers had agents and/or exclusive domestic distributors by the final years of this study.¹⁶⁵ By the mid-1930s there were scarcely foreign sellers from which to buy, that when Behna Films in 1933 sought the assistance from US government representatives in Egypt to connect with American film producers with an

¹⁶² The number of Egyptian films produced in a given year did not exceed 2% or so of those exhibited in Egyptian cinemas in any of the years under study, as mentioned earlier.

¹⁶³ George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933: Competition," Apr 23, 1934, 2, box 194.

¹⁶⁴ Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: List of Most Important Foreign Film Producers Represented in Egypt," Oct 1, 1934, 5, box 194. The Triumph also screened Vitaphone, a Warner Brothers shorts subjects division, exclusively as well.

¹⁶⁵ Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: List of Most Important Foreign Film Producers Represented in Egypt," Oct 1, 1934, 9, box 194. Glaringly absent from the list is any German producer, an effect of the boycott of German products discussed below.

interest in representing them, Behna asked for “independent American film producers.”¹⁶⁶ In response, four American producers expressed interest in directly contacting Behna: Monogram Pictures, Chesterfield Pictures, Majestic Pictures, and the American Anglo Corporation the first three members of Hollywood’s so called “poverty row” while the last was not a studio but a small British distributor founded in the same year of 1934.¹⁶⁷

The Raissis’ business strategy amounted to securing the most celebrated Hollywood titles for its first-run cinemas then passing such films down to its own second-run, then third-run cinemas thereby maximizing revenues possible for its rented titles while denying them to its competitors. The Raissi Brothers did not invent this strategy; they elaborated and sharpened it. Two expert contemporary observers noted this anticompetitive activity, including one who would co-found the markedly nationalistic film magazine *Screen Art* that figures centrally in the fourth facet of the Raissis’ business explored next.¹⁶⁸ Yet the industrial phenomenon in the 1920s seemed to have typically involved exclusive contracts between one or two cinemas and one or two producers. Whatever the details of financing and persuasion, the Raissis had managed as noted to transition from representing Poverty Row Hollywood producers in the late 1920s to exclusively exhibiting the cream output of Europe and America’s leading producers, in a handful of years. The Raissi Brothers by the end of 1934 was annually cherry picking the best films from

¹⁶⁶ James F. Hodgson, District Manager, New York District Office, “Request of Cairo Office,” Sep 5, 1933, File # 281, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

¹⁶⁷ I could find nothing on the American Anglo Corporation as named in the letter cited prior from an employee of the US Department of Commerce. I did find passing references to the Anglo-American Film Corporation, which according to IMDB engaged in distributing over eighty films, British in the main, for exhibition or re-exhibition in Britain, between 1934 and 1947. See “Anglo-American Film Corporation,” IMDB, <https://www.imdb.com/search/title/?companies=co0104675>.

¹⁶⁸ The expert in question is Sayid Hasan Jum`a, a cineaste of multiple vocations though mainly a film critic and activist. Jum`a was not the only practitioner to observe the practice of monopolizing film titles within distributor-exhibitor cartels. See Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 156-157.

the catalogues of a dozen or so of the world's leading film studios. They kept a low overhead and looked for opportunities to buy up cinemas that had gone out of business.¹⁶⁹

In Egypt of the operative era, being a first-run cinema meant screening films for the first time in the country, but such precedence did not translate into profitability in the case of films that did not appeal to Egyptian audiences. The Raissi Brothers' second-run cinemas likely sold more tickets in the 1930s than most first-run cinemas in the country, some of which were expected to shutter near mid-decade. Therefore, achieving first-run status as did two "native"-run Egyptian cinemas in the most important domestic exhibition market of Cairo did not entail a higher order of profitability than hitherto available to native exhibitors; rather, first-run status did not even guarantee profitability.

The Wahby Cinema, which opened in December of 1933, two months into the 1933-1934 season, screened lesser American titles, seemingly as a first-run cinema.¹⁷⁰ It inauspiciously launched as a handsome, well appointed, and well located venue during a miserable exhibition season.¹⁷¹ In November 1933, a month before the Wahby's opening, the office of the US commercial attach in Egypt reported that two "small houses" had proposed to reintroduce UFA films into Egypt.¹⁷² UFA along with other German producers had all but disappeared from the Egyptian exhibition market as a result of the Anti-Nazi boycott of 1933. German films suffered

¹⁶⁹ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 5, box 193.

¹⁷⁰ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 2-3, 193.

¹⁷¹ Youssef Wahby's occupational transition into cinema production then exhibition is examined in the discussion of the dramatic theater's contribution to the cinema in Egypt, related in a chapter to follow. As for first-run cinemas, they often remained open in summer and some even had their tops removed in summer, considering that air conditioning was yet to be installed in any of the country's cinemas. George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Summer Motion Pictures Theaters Opening in Egypt," May 18, 1934, 2, 194.

¹⁷² George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Briefs," Nov 22, 1933, 4, box 193.

more than any other German product in Egypt, despite there being few Jewish-owned cinemas in the two major cities then, but likely because an estimated 40% of patrons of first-run cinemas in Egypt were Jews.¹⁷³ The international boycott of German products was instated by “Jews and Jewish sympathizers” after the appointment of Hitler as chancellor of Germany in January of 1933, at whose end German films had accounted for 2% of those exhibited in Egypt, itself down from 6% in 1932 and 8.4% the year prior.¹⁷⁴ The report noted does not name the implicated two small houses. However, a report authored by the commercial attaché himself a year later names two “second-rate” (although, not necessarily second-run) cinemas that had just contracted with UFA for the 1934-1935 season to screen its films, according to a contract highly favorable to the local cinemas, one of which was the Wahby. The commercial attaché reported that the two cinemas in question would have likely remained closed during the current season were not for the UFA arrangement.¹⁷⁵ The Wahby screened films American and at least one Turkish, but was dealt an early blow when a few months after launching a fire suspended the cinema’s activity for two nights,¹⁷⁶ adding to the ill-will it engendered among Jewish Egyptians for screening German films dubbed in French, and closed in 1935.¹⁷⁷

In October of 1934, the month that typically inaugurated the first-run cinema season in Egypt, the US commercial attaché predicted that five of the capital city’s nine first-run cinemas would not reopen for the 1934-1935 season, including the two native-owned sometimes-first-run

¹⁷³ Charles E. Dickerson, commercial attaché, “Motion Picture Notes: U.F.A. and Anti-German Propaganda,” Aug 14, 1934, 4, 194. Also see George Lewis Jones, “German Films Suffer from Jewish Boycott Movement in Egypt,” May 3, 1933, 1-2, 193. It is likely the Mossiris had divested from their film interests by 1933.

¹⁷⁴ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933: Competition,” Apr 23, 1934, 2, 194.

¹⁷⁵ Charles E Dickerson, “Motion Picture Notes: U.F.A. and the Jewish Anti-German Propaganda,” Nov 6, 1934, 1-2, box 194.

¹⁷⁶ “al-sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Hariq..!” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Fire..!), *Screen Art*, Feb 17, 1934, 4, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

¹⁷⁷ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 190, 199-200.

cinemas the Fouad and the Wahby, supporting an earlier assessment from the same government office about the capital's exhibition market's over-extension, an over-expansion in its seating capacity as had already taken place in Alexandria.¹⁷⁸ Contrary to his prediction, the Wahby did operate for at least part of the 1934-35 season, but then did shutter within months. The knowing diplomat reporting must not have known that the Fouad had already closed at the end of the first-run season in May.¹⁷⁹ Its owner the Egyptian Cinematographic Corporation ceased operations no later than the same month of May, 1934, which necessarily means that the Ramses, the native-owned enterprise's first opened cinema, a second-run venue celebrated when launched in 1931 as an inauguration of Egyptian entry into the field of theatrical exhibition, had also closed.¹⁸⁰ The Egyptian Cinematographic Corp. tried to crack the market and failed, as would the Wahby the following year.

Like the Wahby, the Ramses and the Fouad screened German films. This was not reported by the US commercial attaché, nor by anybody else to my knowledge, but an examination of the short lived film magazine *Screen Art* (Fan al-sinema) offers plain proof that these two native-owned cinemas, like the Wahby and others it turns out, programmed German productions. The majority-Raissi Brothers-owned Olympia Cinema in Alexandria screened *F.P.I Doesn't Answer* (I.F.1 ne répond plus), a 1933 UFA production, in December of that year.¹⁸¹ Cinema Ramses advertised the screening of the 1932 UFA production *Tumultes* in October of

¹⁷⁸ See George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 4, box 193, as well as Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: Cairo Winter Film Season Opens," Oct 1, 1934, 1-2, box 194.

¹⁷⁹ Mohamed Karim, *Mohamed Karim's Memoirs* (Cairo: Radio and Television Books, 1972), 200.

¹⁸⁰ The Ramses was described as a "patriotic" by *al-Sabah* magazine, May 15, 1931, 27, as quoted in El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 25.

¹⁸¹ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 4, box 193. The Olympia was owned by Raissi Brothers to the tune of 60%, according to *Screen Art's* editor, "Su'al wa jawab" (Question and Answer), Jan 6, 1933, 26.

1933.¹⁸² Cinema Fouad, however, screened a German film that would have particularly offended the Anti-Nazi Boycott movement. The advert carried in January of 1934, four months before the cinema's closure, stood out for two reasons: immediately suspicious was that no names of persons associated with the film were printed—unusual. A description of the film offered in Arabic, “An effective war story, directed by UFA company, with help from the German fleet and its military submarines.”¹⁸³

I could not identify the presumed title of the film given in French as *L'Aube*, unusual for the Arabic near-only magazine. Its Arabic title as given, *Shafaq*, translates into *morning twilight* or roughly *dawn*, which is the North American title given to the UFA film *Morgenrot*, a film fictionalizing submarine warfare in the Great War. *Morgenrot* was unlike any German film before it, banned in several locations including Holland and Luxembourg,¹⁸⁴ but not in the US where it screened without reported incident before going on to be named as one of the top foreign films of 1933 by the National Board of Review.¹⁸⁵ A film made prior to the National Socialists' capture of power, evidence nevertheless suggests that the Nazi Party intervened in its making, and it went on to serve as a template for thematic and narrative tropes of German propaganda films.¹⁸⁶ *Morgenrot* may well have contributed to the demise of the Fouad, considering that screening German films would exacerbate the Wahby's financial woes leading to the latter's closure. The management of the Fouad had reason to publish an ambiguous title to

¹⁸² Advert fully in Arabic as all in this nationalist publication. *Screen Art*, Oct 15, 1933, 10, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

¹⁸³ *Screen Art*, Jan 6, 1934, 2.

¹⁸⁴ “Several spots” is the terminology used by Denis, “Film Reviews: ‘Morgenrot,’” *The Billboard*, Jun 03, 1933, 11. Paul Lesch, “Film and Politics in Luxembourg: Censorship and Controversy,” *Film History* 16, no. 4 (2004): 437-438. As for Holland, “Foreign Film News: ‘Morgenrot’ Ordered off Holland's Screen,” *Variety*, Apr 11, 1933, 12.

¹⁸⁵ National Board of Review, “1933 Award Winners: Top Foreign Films,” <http://www.nationalboardofreview.org/award-years/1933/>

¹⁸⁶ David Stewart Hull, *Film in the Third Reich* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 16-17.

Morgenrot and to withhold the names of its lead actors, but if the reason was to conceal the film's German provenance then it was a flimsy effort, possibly adding insult to injury and likely not mitigating the demise of the Fouad and its sister cinema the Ramses along with it.

Despite offering a few German titles, the Wahby, Fouad, and Ramses screened mostly American, British, and French fare, largely lower-budget productions from relatively small studios, the exception being Warner Brothers whose films the Fouad and Ramses screened according to an arrangement struck between the Egyptian Cinematographic Corp and the owner of the Triumph Cinema, Alexandre Aptekman whereby the latter, to no incurred recompense, passed on the films screened in the first-run Triumph down to the noted native-owned cinemas. None of these was a major Warner Bros. production, however. In fact, the only A-list film screened by any of the native-owned cinemas at any point in my study's era was the Fouad's of Columbia Pictures' *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), a Frank Capra prestige vehicle for the Hollywood minor studio which specialized in B-films,¹⁸⁷ a studio with which the Fouad had managed to contract for the 1933-1934 season, the season before Columbia contacted with the Raissis.¹⁸⁸ According to the weekly adverts over the course of *Art Screen's* eighteen-week run, films screened by native-owned cinemas on the whole were of a markedly lower production value than those screened in the capital's first-run cinemas. *Screen Art's* begrudging acknowledgment of Alexandre Aptekman for making an allowance to support the business of the

¹⁸⁷ The advert is on the entire inside cover, before the title page. *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933. The ad appeared again on Dec 9, 1933, 19.

¹⁸⁸ The Raissis not only bought failing cinemas to add to its empire, it also bought contracted with producers that had previously engaged its competitors, including the Mosiris and Shafto. "First Bomb! Your Egyptian House Enters the Fray Perfectly Ready," *Screen Art*, Oct 15, 1933, 20.

native owners of the Egyptian Cinematographic Corp indicates the challenge faced by those aiming to penetrate Egypt's exhibition market, including enterprising native Egyptians.¹⁸⁹

The US commercial attaché papers implicate the Fouad Cinema, like the Wahby, in a “campaign” of agitation, not the proscription of German films, imposing and highly impactful on Egypt's film exhibition business and well past 1933, but a campaign against foreign-owned cinemas in Egypt, the campaign that had sparked my investigation instrumental to this chapter's historical intervention. This campaign, though not characterized as a boycott by the US commercial attaché in fact involved two linked but distinct boycotts that added up to an agitation which emanates from the folds of history as a whimper but which to those involved represented a shrill cry against injustice.

4) The Raissis owned the Royal, focus of "nationalist agitation" against "foreign-owned" cinemas:

The Raissi Brothers' Cinema Royal, Cairo's sparkling movie house—at least on its exterior—was at the center of the noted agitation in that it was implicated in both nationalist cinema boycotts that emerged in the year 1933. The Royal was site of the first-run screening of the highly anticipated Egyptian production *The White Rose*, discussed at length later in this study. A boycott against *The White Rose* had been called on the grounds that its backers, including its musical superstar Mohamed Abdel Wahab, had signed to have the film screen in a foreign-owned cinema, the Royal, not in an “Egyptian”-owned cinema. The second boycott, one that coincided the former, informed it, subsumed it and long outlasted it was a general boycott of foreign owned cinemas, an exemplar of which was the Royal.

¹⁸⁹ The “honor board” appears in the fourth edition of the magazine, taking up the bottom half of the page, *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 27.

***Screen Art*, a Cinephilic, Ethnicist-Xenophobic Publication**

The US office of the commercial attaché in Egypt reported that the agitation against “foreign”-owned cinemas had been started by the owners of the Fouad Cinema and “hotheaded” nationalist publications. Although the American diplomat does not name any he would have likely classified as “hotheaded” a cinema magazine for the cinephile; this was *Screen Art*, a magazine whose pages distinguish between the two Egyptian nationalist boycotts mentioned and whose proclamations, debates and disclamations well define the features of the nationalist agitation against foreign cinemas noted. Founded and published by practitioners and experts who dubbed themselves the Cineaste Critics Group, this body was not “hotheaded”—denoting impetuosity and as such suggesting inconsideration—but impassioned, convicted and conflicted about how to deal with those who had been lumped as foreigners since before the Popular Revolution of 1919, “foreigners” who had remained perceptually a uniform foreign body even after some had naturalized following implementation of the Citizenship Law of 1929.

Ultimately, *Screen Art* in speaking for the Cineaste Critics Group adopted an ethnicity rather than citizenship-based xenophobic stance against non-Egyptian cinema industry leaders, thus espousing a fascistic position regarding expatriates and immigrants. *Screen Art* not only explains the puzzle of the agitation referred to and schematically described in the US Department of Commerce papers, but it also uniquely articulates at least three conceptions of the situation of the Egyptianized in modern Egyptian society: one based on equality in citizenship, another based on a systematic and pervasive preferencing of native-Egyptians and their interests in the country,

and a third that called for an “Egyptian renaissance” to regenerate the country’s greatness that was before “foreigners” had corrupted it.¹⁹⁰

The magazine was founded by four cineastes, mainly writers but practitioners of production as well, who were not fringe characters but writers for mainstream publications such as *al-Hilal* magazine, the Levantine owned behemoth discussed earlier, and its sister *al-Kawakib* fan magazine, *Kawkab-al-Sharq* daily newspaper, and *al-Sabah* culture magazine.¹⁹¹ The Group’s objectives included supporting native Egyptian practitioners and institutions of the cinema:

And ... Egyptian houses ... have begun to invade the field, the Fouad (the Cosmograph previously) and the Wahby in Cairo and the Cosmograph in Alexandria ... all of these houses will begin their seasons in a few days ... whose will victory be I wonder? The Egyptian who is proud of his Egyptianess and his nationalism, and believes in his strength and right answers that victory is the Egyptian’s ... and there is not among us one who is not proud of his Egyptianess and nationalism ... and there is not one among us who does not believe in his power and right ... victory is thus the Egyptian’s ... and Egypt is no doubt victorious.

Proceed then all, “Egypt above all.”¹⁹²

Pursuit of the above imperative in antagonistic, xenophobic and ethnicist terms likely proved the publication’s undoing. For the magazine editorial board consequentially supported calls for the boycott of foreign-owned cinemas. However, *Screen Art*’s editorial board did not support the

¹⁹⁰ `Ali Shalabi, *Misr al-Fata wa dawruha fi al-siyasa al-misriya, 1933-1941* [Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941, Part I] (Cairo: University Book Press, 1982), 220-223.

¹⁹¹ See Zakaria `Abd al-Hamid, “Majallat ‘Fan al-sinema’” (“Screen Art” Magazine), in *Sahafat al-sinema fi Misr: al-nisf al-awwal min al-qarn al-`ishrin* [Cinema Press in Egypt: The First Half of the Twentieth century], ed. Faridah Mar`i (Cairo: Egyptian Film Center, 1996), 225. Also see Cineaste Critics Group, “A Word” (Kalima) *Screen Art*, Oct 15, 1933, 37.

¹⁹² “Come on!” (Wa law), *Screen Art*, Oct 22, 1933, 3.

boycott of *The White Rose*'s screenings in the Royal Cinema, although it did criticize its backers, especially Abdel Wahab.¹⁹³ The magazine's repudiation of foreign-owned cinemas, on the other hand, led by its own admission to these cinemas' withdrawal of advertising, conspicuously absent in the final two issues of the short-lived *Screen Art* wherein prominent pages near the front and back of the magazine were printed fully blank.¹⁹⁴

To antagonistic nationalist readers, *Screen Art* did not go far enough in defying foreigners and it brazenly contradicted its trumpeted positions in editorial statements and in adverts printed. The magazine had criticized the backers of *The White Rose* for their reluctance and delay in signing a contract with the native-owned venue the Fouad for the anticipated film, but *Screen Art* ultimately supported the film's screening in the Fouad in its second run and did not protest its running first in the foreign-owned cinema, the Raissis' Royal.¹⁹⁵ In fact, *Screen Art* ran ads promoting *The White Rose*, at both the Royal and the Fouad.¹⁹⁶ *Screen Art* then went to boldly endorse the broader boycott of foreign-owned cinemas, even as it reviewed films screened in these cinemas, even as it invariably selected a foreign films as "best narrative film of the week," and even as it liberally ran adverts for the foreign cinemas it attacked. Such contradictions were justified on the pages of *Screen Art* by its editorial policy of distinguishing between advertising

¹⁹³ "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Abdulwahab marratan thaniya" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Abdel Wahab a Second Time), *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 4-5. In the same issue, *Screen Art* issued the lone "Lawha sawda" (Blackboard, as in board of shame) it would in Abdel Wahab's name along with those of the Bayda brothers. See *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 32. The rebuke sharpened in "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Abdulwahab bayn shaqa al-raha" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Abdel Wahab between the Misery of the Molar), *Screen Art*, Nov 26, 1933, 4-5.

¹⁹⁴ "Su'al wa jawab: al-anisa `Aziza Fahmi (Hilwan)" (Question and Answer: Miss `Aziza Fahmi, Helwan), *Screen Art*, Feb 17, 1934, 26.

¹⁹⁵ "Cinema in Egypt and Abroad," *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 4-5.

¹⁹⁶ *Screen Art* ran several of these, beginning with the inside front-cover advert for the film at the Royal, Feb 19, 1933.

and criticism, a purported policy of utter disregard for the interest of advertisers;¹⁹⁷ many readers were not convinced.

Screen Art equivocated on the matter of boycotting *The White Rose*, which did not serve its credibility, as expressed by readers. It first discussed the film in its third issue, to report that the Fouad Cinema had learned that it would be screening *The White Rose* in its second run. The magazine reported that it had initially supported the decision by the film's backers, including its star lead actor Mohamed Abdel Wahab, to screen the film in the Royal to protect Abdel Wahab's career. The magazine admitted that it did not think it wise for the Fouad, possibly because of its recent relocation and for the Fouad's record of technical woes, to take responsibility for potentially damaging Abdel Wahab's reputation.¹⁹⁸ Yet, the editors were not impressed by Abdel Wahab's silence on the matter of the ostensible deal with the Fouad, a silence which persisted as if Abdel Wahab were hedging his bets.¹⁹⁹ *Screen Art* published its sole "blackboard" (lawha sawda') to Mohamed Abdel Wahab and his coproducers the Bayda Brothers. The board (which is white in print) offers under the names of the recipients "We do not know who is the owner of the film" then, in the bottom left corner, "if they refuse to grant the second-run rights to the film *The White Rose* to Cinema Fouad."²⁰⁰

Screen Art published reader enquiries and opinions about *The White Rose* near weekly and its editor commented on the complicated affair of its exhibition. In its seventh issue the

¹⁹⁷ "Wa law" (Come on), *Screen Art*, Oct 22, 1933, 3.

¹⁹⁸ "al-Sinima fi misr wa al-kharij, Fi idarat Ramses," (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Under Ramses' Management), *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 4-5.

¹⁹⁹ "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Sharikat al-sinimatoghrafiya al-misriya" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Egyptian Cinematographic Company), *Screen Art*, Nov 5, 1933, 5. The story continued into the following issue: "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Abdulwahab marratan thaniya" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Abdel Wahab a Second Time), *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 4.

²⁰⁰ The "Blackboard" takes up the lower half of the page, *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 32.

Cineaste Critics Group published a lengthy statement of its position on the boycott: “The White Rose and what has become of it!! Do you boycott the film or do you not?” the statement began, before it continued: “A kin says that boycott is a necessity and a duty if Abdel Wahab does not screen the film for its second run in the Fouad. And others say that boycott is a duty and abstinence whether the film is screened in Cinema Fouad or not. While another kin says that boycott is neither a duty nor abstinence or necessary, or any of that.”²⁰¹ Although the statement offers that the screening in the Fouad has not been secured, it affirms that the Raissis and Abdel Wabah had agreed to the arrangement, and that the Group intervened between the parties to reach an agreement. The Group then confirms that the Fouad had won the right to a second-run screening of *The White Rose* starting a week after the operative statement’s issue.²⁰²

The Cineaste Critics Group in its statement on boycotting *The White Rose* conveys that it is not of the mind to encourage or discourage boycott, but that from a practical standpoint boycott made little sense for three reasons: 1) boycotting the film because it screens in a foreign owned cinema also entails boycotting Mohamed Abdel Wahab, an Egyptian; 2) agreement exists between the Raissis, Abdel Wahab, and the Group to screen the film in the Fouad for the second run, so there seems little reason for pursuing boycott; and 3) the Royal could not possibly absorb the droves of people who go to watch *The White Rose*; even the Fouad would not in its second-run. It would be in keeping with the Group’s philosophy on Egyptianizing the cinema to silently settle for a victory for a native-Egyptian enterprise. This came to mind upon learning from the memoirs of Mohamed Karim, director of *The White Rose*, divulged decades later, that the Raissis had wished to screen the film in a second-run cinema of their own, according to their standard

²⁰¹ “Cinema in Egypt and Abroad,” *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 4-5.

²⁰² “Barid al-qurra’: Ibrahim Hafidh, al-Qahira” (Reader’s Post: Ibrahim Hafidh, Cairo), *Screen Art*, Dec 9, 1933, 12-13.

practice, but had begrudgingly acquiesced to pass *The White Rose* down to the Fouad due to intervention from some “leaders” concerned about an escalation in the calls to “boycott foreigners.”²⁰³

The intervention to screen *The White Rose* in the Fouad was not merely governmental, or at least was not initiated by government, according to the film’s director, but by the movement to boycott foreign owned cinemas that did more than to disclaim in the press. The US commercial attaché office reports that the pamphleteers at the entrances of foreign-owned cinemas were urging patrons in Arabic to go to Egyptian houses instead, but that a planned protest in one of the foreign-owned houses did not take place.²⁰⁴ Students indeed had pamphleteered according to the Egyptian press, pamphlets that had then been confiscated by the police.²⁰⁵ Two students were arrested for pamphleteering against foreign-owned cinemas from the balcony of the Royal!²⁰⁶ Students participating in the boycott movement resorted to more than pamphleteering in the case of the Royal Cinema, site of *The White Rose*’s first-run screening, according to Mohamed Karim; they stink-bombed the cinema.²⁰⁷ Thus, Egyptian students had assaulted a Levantine-owned purveyor of cultural commodity in the Royal in animus not dissimilar to that of those who had four decades earlier assailed the quarters of Levantine owned *al-Muqattam* newspaper.

²⁰³ Mohamed Karim’s recounting of the White Rose affair are informed, vivid, and liberally dated. It is also the only primary text other than *Screen Art* to identify the Raissi Brothers. See *Mohamed Karim’s Memoirs*, 199. Beside the Cineaste Critics Group statement discussed above *Screen Art* identifies the Raissis as owners of the Royal in its first issue. See “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: mandoub al-fannanun al-muttahidun” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: ‘United Artists’ Representative), *Screen Art*, Dec 16, 1933, 4.

²⁰⁴ George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Nationalist Propaganda Against Foreign Owned Theatres Increasing,” January 30, 1934, 3, box 194.

²⁰⁵ “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Musadara!” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Confiscation!), *Screen Art*, Dec 30, 1933, 5.

²⁰⁶ “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Qabd!” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Arrest!), *Screen Art*, Jan 27, 1934, 4.

²⁰⁷ *Mohamed Karim’s Memoirs*, 198-199.

Mustafa Kamil had led the earlier protests, but who if any had led the latter, I had mulled at the outset of my investigative quest. This is a question I have not been able to answer, one left for future studies. I do suspect, however, that one of the leaders of the activist boycott was the Young Egypt Association, whose publication *The Scream* newspaper had called for a boycott of the foreign cinemas.²⁰⁸ Formed in October of 1933, coinciding the foreign-cinema boycott movement as it did, the Young Egypt Association (literally “young girl association,” Jam`iyat Misr al-Fata) according to modern Egyptian historian `Ali Shalabi represented “extreme nationalist currents blended with religious fanaticism and a hatred for foreigners.”²⁰⁹ This was Egypt’s first political movement to draw from European fascism, especially in its Italian and German incarnations.

Young Egypt repeatedly denied its fascism, affirming that it was wholly Egyptian, but the associations were abundant, some in plain sight. This was after all a political assembly that took on “Egypt above all” (Misr fawq al-jami`) as a slogan. More authoritative than the hitherto mantra of the Egyptian national movement, “Egypt for the Egyptians” (Misr lil-misriyin) and no wonder, for it refashioned the first stanza of the German national anthem under Nazi rule “Germany, Germany above all” (Deutschland, Deutschland über alles).²¹⁰ Inspired by pharaonism, underscored by Islamism, and dedicated to Arabism, Young Egypt’s founder and leader Ahmed Hussein moved first and forcefully to build the Association’s paramilitary cadre dubbed the Mujahidin, commonly referred to as Green Shirts by the press of the day and by

²⁰⁸ *Mohamed Karim’s Memoirs*, 198-199.

²⁰⁹ Shalabi’s study of the movement, turned association, turned political party is the most extensive and broadly researched work relating that I have encountered. *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941, Part I*, 39. Also see Jamal `Abd al-Hay and `Umar al-Najjar, *Sahafat al-ittijah al-Islami fi Misr fima bayn al-harbayn al-`alamiyatayn* [Islam Oriented Press in Egypt Between the Two World Wars] (Mansoura: Loyalty Press, 2000), 120-122.

²¹⁰ `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 216-217.

historians since, as they were clearly fashioned after Mousslini's black shirts. Saluting by raising the right hand, an allegedly old Egyptian greeting before its adoption by the Romans, the Mujahidin imposed in neighborhoods throughout the nation.²¹¹ It was after all a cadre that Young Egypt hoped, through the militarization of society, to grow into "a pharaonic militia," an "army of deliverance."²¹²

Egyptian young men granted membership in the ranks of the mujahidin were expected to follow orders without question and to abide a strict moral and behavioral code, including refraining from "houses of amusement," a call that was echoed on the pages of Young Egypt weekly magazine *The Scream*, which admonished its readers to boycott foreign businesses, foreign products, along with foreign houses of amusement.²¹³ *The Scream* railed against the youth's preoccupation with cinemas as it lambasted their "rushing toward vile goals," presumably instead of goals that may be accomplished by the youth's joining the ranks of Young Egypt.²¹⁴ Nevertheless, Young Egypt could not seem to grow its military corps appreciably. These were around fifty Green Shirts around Cairo at the time of the boycott on foreign-owned cinemas centered on the capital city's Royal,²¹⁵ a miniscule number, but not when considering that all that was needed to shake up foreign owners of Egyptian cinemas throughout the country was to trouble a handful of leading first-run cinemas, such as the Royal. Fifty disciplined, organized and trained young men would more than do.

²¹¹ `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 231.

²¹² About the Young Egypt's founder, see `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 47-68. To learn about the assembly of its militant wing the Green Shirts see 107-112 and 147-160.

²¹³ See `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 109.

²¹⁴ `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 120-122.

²¹⁵ `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 149.

Although Young Egypt remained a fringe group in terms of following, it exerted a lasting influence on Egyptian society through some of its members, adherents, and supporters' having occupied high government posts for decades to follow the closing of this study,²¹⁶ including one who would grow into arguably the most influential Arab leader of the century, Gamal Abdel Nasser. For after decades of disputable claims, Nasser's daughter has confirmed in a recently published biography drawing from personal papers that her father was a member of Young Egypt for two years, of which 1934 was one according to Shalabi.²¹⁷ Moreover, a photo exists that shows Abdel Nasser posing among a group of uniformed cadets.²¹⁸ Did Young Egypt organize action against foreign-owned cinemas in Egypt beginning in late 1933? I have not been able to learn. Nor could I answer the following question: Could fourteen-year-old Abdel Nasser have been among the students for boycott who assailed a cinema? I ask not to sensationalize but because I am convinced that the future paragon of socialist pan-Arabism Gamal Abdel Nasser would also become a bona fide cinephile.²¹⁹

As boycott was largely neutralized in the case of *The White Rose* when the owners of the Royal and those of the Fouad came to an agreement, from which both sought to capitalize. Mohamed Karim quoted the advert for *The White Rose* published by the Royal: "You are Egyptian and Egyptians have directed everything you are to watch, so vaunt of your Egyptianess

²¹⁶ Mohamed Karim's *Memoirs*, 199.

²¹⁷ Huda Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Jamal Abdulnasser: al-mujallad al-awal* [Gamal Abdel Nasser: The Private Papers, vol. 1] (Cairo: The Academic Library, 2013) 24.

²¹⁸ `Ali Shalabi, *Young Egypt and its Role in Egyptian Politics, 1933-1941*, 149.

²¹⁹ The evidence to support my assessment of Abdel Nasser post-dates this study and warrants its own. Abdel Nasser fervently frequented the cinema according to his spouse, who in her biography of her late spouse, written in 1973, recalled how Abdel Nasser's pastime of choice was going to the cinema. That he preferred it to meeting with friends and that he would buy tickets in advance for particular seats in particular cinemas. Tahiya Abdel Nasser, *Dhikrayat ma`ah* [Memories with Him] (Cairo: Shorouk Press, 2011), 11, 14, 17. See also `Abdulla `Azbawi, "Mashrou` Nassir al-thaqafi" (Nasser's Cultural Project) in *Jamal `Abdulnasser wa `asru* [Gamal Abdel Nasser and His Era], ed. `Adil Ghunaym (Cairo: Dar Al Maarif Press, 2012), 307-309.

and watch the film *The White Rose* in Cinema Royal, beginning on Dec 4, 1933.” To this the Fouad published “Your Egyptian house, Cinema Fouad” in its advert for the film’s screenings beginning on Jan 10, 1934.²²⁰ The Fouad’s screening of *The White Rose* took place a month after its reopening in the old American Cosmograph building. Its owners the Egyptian Cinematographic Corporation glowed in the success of having brought enough pressure to bear on the Raissi Brothers, the most powerful enterprise in the Egyptian film industry, to compel the Raissis’ relenting from its established anti-competitive, tiered exhibition practice, one that had denied native-Egyptians the opportunity to properly compete in the Egyptian film exhibition market.

The Fouad’s glee did not last long past its celebrated screening of *The White Rose*, but it did outlast the magazine which had so vociferously and variedly supported it, *Screen Art*. Beyond the stated objectives for the publication, the Cineaste Critics Group did use its pages as a forum to promote its incipient distribution company dubbed Cairo Film Exchange (Maktab al-Qahira litabadul al-aflam).²²¹ Clearly and credibly, the main unstated but implied reason for publishing *Screen Art* was to have its pages aid in exerting pressure where and when useful to the end of Egyptianizing the country’s cinema. It censured Abdel Wahab and his coproducers for stalling the announcement that their film was to screen in the Fouad, but relented to call for the

²²⁰ *Mohamed Karim’s Memoirs*, 199.

²²¹ The Cineaste Critics Group sent a letter of solicitation, on behalf of the Cairo Film Exchange, to multiple European and American film producers then published the letter under “Min jama’at al-nuqqad al-sinema’iyin... ila sharikat al-sinema al-urobiya wa al-amrikiya” (From the Film Critics Group... to European and American Cinema Companies), *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 7. In the same issue, the Group announced that it would publish the names of domestic film companies that agreed and disagreed to have the Cairo Film Exchange distribute for them, “so that the public may be made aware of the spirit of these companies,” in “al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij: Maktab al-tawzi” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Distribution Office), *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 5. The magazine followed through when published small adverts for this distribution outfit and updates in later issues, such as the notice of the Exchange not being selected as distributor for Assia Dagher’s Lotus Film in “al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij: Fi maktab al-tawzi” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: In the Distribution Office), *Screen Art*, Dec 16, 1933, 5.

film's boycott or a boycott of its screening in the Royal for its first run, because it was against the magazine's policy to attack the interests of Egyptians,²²² in this case co-producer and first-time lead Mohamed Abdel Wahab and second-time feature director Mohamed Karim. Abdel Wahab was already a national treasure in his early thirties when *The White Rose* was made, while Karim was considered the most talented of the Egyptian directors of the day, who happened to contribute to *Screen Art* and whose memoirs have well served the investigation herewith. Although not conveyed in their magazine *Screen Art*, the Cineaste Critics Group was certainly wise enough to realize the magnitude of the concession made by the Raissi Brothers, the precedent set by passing on (and down) a top-billed film from one of their first-run cinemas to a second-run house the Raissis did not own.

The circumspect tone set by the editors of *Screen Art* as far as *The White Rose* affair did not persist, however, past the point of securing the film's second-run screening in the Fouad, as the magazine came out clearly for a boycott of all foreign owned theatres.²²³ Perhaps The Group was emboldened by the success of the campaign to boycott *The White Rose* which it thought to parley. The editors boasted the affirmative response to its demand of foreign-owned cinemas to treat Arabic preferentially in all written materials, including in the Raissi-owned Royal.²²⁴

²²² See "Barid al-Qurra': al-Warda al-bayda'" (Readers' Post: The White Rose), *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 30.

²²³ See "Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Distribution Office," *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 5, wherein the editors expressed longing for the day when Egyptian families frequented (native) Egyptian-owned cinemas as they were permanently absent from "foreign" houses. Also see, 'Abd al-'Alim Mahdi al-Misri, "Rasa'il hurra: min ajli Misr al-mahdumat al-haq" (Free Letters: For Egypt Whose Rights are Grieved), *Screen Art*, Feb 3, 1934, 6-7.

²²⁴ A letter to foreign-owned cinemas was published in *Screen Art* with the editorial line "The Cineaste Critics Group sent this letter to owners of local cinemas as a final warning after which it begins the legitimate attack." See "Min jama`at al-nuqqad al-sinima'iyyin ila ashab dour al-sinima al-mahaliya" (From the Cineaste Critics Group to Owners of Local Cinemas), *Screen Art*, Jan 27, 1934, 31. The editors here warned cinema owners that they had a week to integrate Arabic into their materials predominantly before the launch of an antagonistic campaign. The Triumph was the first to respond affirmatively, within a week or so, by refashioning notices on screen and in printed programs to integrate Arabic in a leading position. See "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: al-lugha al-arabiya" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Arabic Language), *Screen Art*, Feb 3, 1934, 4. In the issue to follow, *Screen Art* announced that the Royal had followed suit. See "al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Royal aydan" (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Royal Also), *Screen Art*, Feb 10, 1934, 4.

However, the adverts *Screen Art* continued to display after the magazine's open endorsement of the boycott made it seem all the more hypocritical. For this it was criticized by readers some of whose letters were published in the "Reader's Post" weekly segment, before shutting down the segment following its ninth edition out of exasperation with letters that "abraded at the dignity of the Cineaste Critics Group."²²⁵

The magazine's editor-in-chief then vacated his post and withdrew from the Group, which may have related to *Screen Art's* taking a severer position on the boycott of foreign-owned cinemas. In place of the "Reader's Post" *Screen Art* published individual letters under an irregular feature dubbed "Free Letters," beginning with its twelfth issue. Three of the four letters published constitute some of the most scathing and inciting statements I have encountered from the post-independence era, letters put to print presumably with high selectivity. One of these letters best illustrates the ethnicist xenophobia that *Screen Art* willingly promulgated, as well as a fascistic brand of nationalism that recalled the lost glories of ancient Egyptians:

Oh youth, look around you and tell me what you see? And return to your old history and tell me what you find. What a difference between the past and the present, the past filled with dear national glory, and a present filled with abjectness and ignominy. The past with which you pride yourself, of which you forget that you own only a painful memory as you see what is around you of servitude and humiliation.

Your ancestors did not know the foreigner except as their servant, to expel if they cared or to drive with whips if they wanted. The foreigner was a slave to them with which to do as they wished. And today ... look around once again. What do you see? The foreigner has become a master among us. He orders and we submit. He judges and we execute. He talks and we fall silent. He speaks and we fall silent. He today is the absolute ruler of us. If he wants something, he is granted his wish as if we were cattle that do not disobey the master's

²²⁵ "Barid al-Qurra," (Reader's Post), *Screen Art*, Dec 16, 1933, 9.

order. Is this not abjectness and ignominy? Is this not shame itself? So what have we prepared to rid ourselves of this “master” infiltrator, the “master” who was a slave of our forefathers?²²⁶

Quarter of a century after the passing of legendary nationalist Mustafa Kamil who had propagated the term, here was *infiltrator* again, from a reader whose opinions about foreigners was, like many readers who wrote into *Screen Art*, more extreme than the magazine’s declared line.

The Cineaste Critics Group meant to assail powerful foreigners in Egypt with the aim of empowering native Egyptian interests relatively. To this end the Group weaponized extreme reader opinions—references to armed battle abounding in the editors rhetoric—toward intimidating dominant foreign-owned interests, but pushed back when readers accused *Screen Art* of complicity with such interests²²⁷ or when readers threatened Egyptian interests, such as that of the Egyptian producer and star of *The White Rose* Mohamed Abdel Wahab. The editors of *Screen Art* could not fathom the revenge against Abdel Wahab called for by the boycott camp, revenge against an Egyptian.²²⁸ It could not see how the national cause could be served by cutting the tongue to spite the face, and what a tongue, Mohammed Abdel Wahab, the Arab Caruso as was described by the American attaché office.

²²⁶ This letter was sent in under the pen name Candid, “Fi sabil karamatikum wa karamat watanikum” (Free Letters: For the Sake of Your Dignity and that of Your Country), *Screen Art*, Jan 6, 1934, 13-14.

²²⁷ The first statement in self-defense was by the Cineaste Critics Group, “Nahnu ansar lil-sharikat al-sinema’iya al-misriya: hadha mabda’una wa shi’aruna” (We Are Advocates for Egyptian Cinema: That is Our Principle and Slogan), *Screen Art*, Oct 29, 1933, 7. The last of these was in the issue before most of the foreign-owned cinema adverts were pulled, the sixteenth, in `Abd al-`Alim Mahdi al-Misri, “Free Letters: For Egypt Whose Rights are Grieved,” *Screen Art*, Feb 3, 1934, 6-7.

²²⁸ The editors disclaimed a reader’s call for revenge against Abdel Wahab, finding it beyond the pale. “Barid al-qurra’: al-Warda al-beida’, F Jaras, ghawi sinima” (Reader’s Post: The White Rose, F Jaras, cinephile), *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 30.

Whereas *Screen Art*'s politics evinced struck many of its readers as conciliatory, convenient, even perfidious, such politics was too severe for not only its principle advertiser the foreign-owned cinemas, but to at least one of its founders. The editor-in-chief abruptly and inexplicably left by the magazine's tenth issue. Another of its founders took a leave for medical reasons.²²⁹ While a third wrote an excoriating open letter to his co-founders in the Cineaste Critics Group, a letter whose response from the Group offers one of a few passages published in *Screen Art* to define its editors' assessment of the Egyptianized as a component of Egyptian society. Co-founder of the Cineaste Critics Group Ahmed Badrakhan wrote in from Paris where he was training to become a film director, to denounce a reference to the Gaumont distributor in Egypt in an earlier issue as "I can't remember if his name was Sham`oun... or Levy?"²³⁰ Responding in grieving terms of disappointment to the flippant doubling of a Jewish name noted, Badrakhan asks, "Do you think that the Jew, the Muslim, and the Christian differ if united by Egyptian citizenship?"²³¹ A response on behalf of the Cineaste Critics Group (presumably excluding Badrakhan himself) states: "We patently do not discriminate between religions, but we want the Egyptian to have privilege in his country at all times. ... We were hoping that the person who takes on distribution of *Yaqut* is a real Egyptian, not an Egyptianized. Certainly, there is a difference between an original Egyptian and an Egyptianized."²³² Considering that this exchange occurred in 1934, five years since the Citizenship Law was enacted, it is unclear if the

²²⁹ That was Kamil Mustafa, critic for the Islamist *Kawkab al-sharq* newspaper, who left for Europe to receive medical treatment. "Cinema in Egypt and Abroad," *Screen Art*, Dec 2, 1933, 4-5.

²³⁰ "al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij: Yaqout" (The Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Yaqout), *Screen Art*, January 13, 1934, 4-5.

²³¹ What is curious about Badrakhan's affirmation of equality in citizenship regardless of religious affiliation is that he had earlier published a piece in *Screen Art* titled "Hawl ijad fan misri samim: Hitler yakhdim al-fan al-faransi" (On Creating an Authentic Egyptian Art: Hitler Serves French Art!), Dec 16, 1933, 25.

²³² Ahmed Badrakhan, "Risala maftuha ila jama`at al-nuqqad al-sinema'iyyin" (An Open Letter to the Cineaste Critics Group), *Screen Art*, Feb 3, 1934, 26.

reference to “Egyptianized” is to a naturalized Egyptian subject or not, though the Group certainly distinguishes between the Egyptianized and “original Egyptians.”

Screen Art did elaborate on its position as far as non-original Egyptians. Beginning in its second issue and in every issue to follow, the magazine published a notice. “To Cinemas,” it was headed before offering three points: “1. The Arabic language must be in the lead, always ... in the program and in the films; 2. The Arabic translation must be correct and presented correctly; 3. The Egyptian is the owner of these lands, so respecting him is a must.” The notice concluded in relatively large and compressed typeface, as if to alarm: “Remember this well, oh cinema owners, for we will not forgive after this day.”²³³

More revealing was the editors’ apology to readers for having granted an “honor board” (lawhat shraf) accolade to Alexandre Aptekaman. The accolade had explained: “We salute him. Because he has taken Egyptian citizenship and because he was a mediator between the Egyptian Cinematographic Company and Warner Bros., so that the former may screen the latter’s films in Cinema Ramses. And he has performed this service without recompense.”²³⁴ Thus, the honor was granted for two reasons: Aptekaman’s naturalization and his extending a helping hand to a native-owned cinema in need of quality product. Next issue, *Screen Art*’s editors remarked on the honor/black board: “... and many have harshly criticized us for granting an honor board to a foreigner who is the owner of the Triumph Cinema then presented a blackboard to Abdel Wahab in the same issue ... We repeat that we did not grant Monsieur the honor board other than as a way to recognize his service to the Egyptian Cinema Ramses.”²³⁵ The editors’ clarification then

²³³ *Screen Art*, Oct 29, 1933, 18.

²³⁴ *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 27.

²³⁵ “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: lawhat al-sharaf” (The Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: Honor Boards), *Screen Art*, Nov 19, 1933, 5.

goes on to assert that they do not care about the motivation behind Aptekman's assistance, only that the deal has served an Egyptian cinema. The editors then announce their decision to grant readers their wish by near-consensus that only Egyptians be presented with honor boards. In an about face, the editors elided their recognition of Aptekman's naturalization then went on to apologetically agree to honor only Egyptians, that is native Egyptians. Aptekman was also an Egyptian, but not in the minds of *Screen Art* magazine's editors and many of its readers, even if Aptekman's decision to become an Egyptian legally was atypical for European expatriates and immigrants in Egypt.²³⁶ Their conception of an Egyptian foreclosed the Egyptianized.

The clerk to the commercial attaché in Egypt was accurate about the "extremely nationalistic spirit," in that the boycott's adherents were misguided in their efforts. Their modus for supporting Egyptian institutions was to harm businesses owned by those who did not qualify as "people of the land" (ahl al-balad). In doing so they enacted an ethnicist xenophobic agenda that painted all suspected non-native Egyptians with a sinister brush, regardless of their economic or cultural contributions to the country, in spite of such foreign cinemas' hiring of native Egyptians,²³⁷ even if such "foreigners" had not or could not take advantage of the capitulations directly, or even if such foreigner had acquired Egyptian citizenship, as most Levantines had, possibly including the Raissis. The fear and loathing of "foreigners" that

²³⁶ See Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 146.

²³⁷ Cinema Olympia, 60% of which was owned by the Raissis, was managed by an Egyptian named Hasan Husni al-Shabrawini. See "Sinima olimbia al-watani al-kabir" (The Large Patriotic Cinema Olympia), *al-Kashkoul*, Apr 29, 1932, 2, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo. I have encountered other cinema managers whose names seem native Egyptian, such as Ahmed `Askar, manager of the Trylon Cinema in Abbasia, Cairo, but could not confirm, despite its likelihood, that the owner of the cinemas in which these managers worked were non-native Egyptian. See Fayder, "Sinima trailon" (Trylon Cinema), *al-Kashkoul*, May 6, 1932, 22, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

occasioned the call to boycott their cinemas was not of those from countries other than Egypt, but of those whose lineage did not trace to the Nile Valley.

However, the US commercial attaché's clerk betrayed a colonial mindset in describing the "extremely nationalistic spirit" guiding the boycott efforts as "generally unthinking,"²³⁸ as if Egyptians had little rational reason for acting against an abiding injustice. The students the attaché himself identifies as having incited the agitation against the foreign-owned cinemas were in the years of the Great Depression beleaguered socioeconomically and highly attuned to the nationalist struggle that continued to rail against privileged and advantaged foreigners. As Ahmed Abdalla has it, "The spread of liberal education gave students a numerical strength while the country's low level of economic development frustrated their ambitions for future careers. The rocky course of the country's constitutional life led increasing numbers of them to doubt the adequacy of its political system. The regime's inability to achieve the complete independence for which the nation had revolted in 1919 was the concrete proof of its overall failure."²³⁹ Students had likely thought a great deal about their marginalization, their indignity, their disempowerment. Was the American diplomat not persuaded of the precepts of Wilsonian self-determination? Had he not learned, in preparing for his post in Alexandria, that Egyptians had been ruled by outsiders since around the time of the Ptolemaic Kingdom nearly two millennia prior.

More reflective than contemporary students by virtue of age, education, and acculturation were the editors of *Screen Art*. These were members of the effendiyya, an educated, urban class

²³⁸ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," Dec 19, 1933, 2, box 193.

²³⁹ Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt, 1923-1973* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 39.

that had been initially employed by the government and which had increasingly lent voices in the public sphere. *Screen Art's* politics were markedly to the right of center, its journalistic practices radical as far as discourses of nativity and foreignness were concerned, but they were not fringe, as evidenced by its founders' work in mainstream publications, including ones owned by non-native Egyptians. Rather, *Screen Art's* persona stood for a "counterpublic," that was "[a group] that produced and disseminated 'counterdiscourses'" that challenged the hegemonic discourse of the day and forced it to take into consideration the views of subaltern publics."²⁴⁰ These men were older than the students of the boycott movement, old enough to remember the Popular Revolution of 1919 and how it led to a British unilateral declaration of independence in 1922 then the founding of the new state enshrined in its constitution. They recalled the hope and promise from a decade ago as they sought to assuage resentments compiled since. The founders of *Screen Art*, the Cineaste Critics Group, were not inflamed by their ethnicist xenophobia as were the boycotting students; they were embittered by it, hardened over years during which they saw their generation gain little, not merely for themselves but also for their country. The glories of ancient Egyptians strengthened their resolve to return to self-rule, which was nowhere in sight, despite more than a decade having passed since so-called independence.

The Cineaste Critics Group's grievances could be classified as three: economic injustice, Egyptian self-indetermination, and institutional discrimination. The Group among others recognized that anticompetitive practices in distribution and exhibition limited access to the sorts of films that could draw audiences into native-Egyptian owned cinemas. Selling too few tickets ultimately did in the Wahby, the Ramses, and the Fouad. Selling too few ads was behind their *Screen Art's* discontinuation; "foreigners" were behind that as well. Such practices seemed

²⁴⁰ See Gershoni and Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt*, 52-53.

effectively in line with foreigners' anti-competitive legal status as advantaged Capitulatory state citizens. The dominance of foreign capital in Egypt's economy instrumentally advantaged "foreign" capital investments. These conditions have already been elaborated over the pages of this chapter.

As for Egyptian self-indetermination, discerning members of the Cineaste Critics Group would have clearly realized by 1933, year of *Screen Art's* founding, that they were all but disenfranchised. The body of government that represented themselves and which they could directly influence through elections that is parliament was, as modern Egyptian historian Yunan Labib Rizk elaborates, effectively third in power to the king and the British.²⁴¹ To make matters worse, the constitution had been rewritten in 1930 to restrict parliamentary authority and had since been dissolved for the third time by King Fouad, who had exercised his constitutional right to dissolve parliament three times in a decade according to royal coups, intended to thwart power moves by the country's leading party of the constitutional monarchy era, the Wafd.²⁴² This was a king of Turko-Albanian origin, not a native Egyptian, who did not speak Arabic, favored Italian culture, and thought of Egyptians as "cretins."²⁴³ What characterized Egyptian independence as a sham, however, was that the British government remained the most powerful actor in Egypt even after it had unilaterally declared it. The British government effectively maintained its occupation

²⁴¹ See Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-khamis `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 15] (Cairo: Ahrām History Center, 2006), 239-242. Also see Rizk's *Qissat al-barlaman al-misri* [Story of the Egyptian Parliament] (Cairo: Al Hilal Group, 1991), 124.

²⁴² Read the segment titled "Ahd Allah wa al-watan" (The Era of God and Country) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Register of Modern Life, vol. 15*, 73-84. Also see Sami Abu al-Nour, "Ahd al-malakiya: Fouad wa bidayat al-`asr al-malaki" (The Monarchy's Epoch: Fouad and the Beginning of the Monarchist Era), in *al-Marji` fi tarikh Misr al-hadith wa al-mu`asir* [The Reference on the Modern and Contemporary Histories of Egypt], ed. Yunan Labib Rizk (Cairo: Supreme Council of Culture, 2009), 401.

²⁴³ See Roger Hardy, *The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 2018), 131. Also see Yunan Labib Rizk, *al-Malik Fouad: al-ma`loum wa al-majhoul* [King Fouad: The Known and the Unknown] (Cairo: Shurouk Press, 2005), 110.

by reasserting control over Egyptian foreign affairs, by overseeing protection of the Suez Canal, and by running a European department in the Egyptian Ministry of Interior.²⁴⁴

What the Group's members would scarcely have known, what was well known to the office of the US commercial attaché was that there was a fourth governmental power operating in Egypt, the Capitulary state governments, individually and collectively. The US Department of Commerce papers I have examined describe instances of these Powers intervening in the implementation of two taxes relating to the cinema—an amusement tax on cinema tickets and a customs tax on imported goods, including positive film, films slated for screening.²⁴⁵ Capitulary state governments more than weighed in on the new tax provisions; rather, they negotiated with the Egyptian government according to the interests of their own businesses and successfully altered the taxation scheme in the case of the amusement tax.²⁴⁶ The United States government behaved as a leader among Capitulary states in this regard,²⁴⁷ but what caught my eye was the commercial attaché's mention that approval of a suggested modification to the newly enacted

²⁴⁴ Cable and Associated Press, "British Send Ultimatum, Ready to Move in Egypt: Demand Reply to Stern Note on Stack Murder in Twenty-Four Hours; Sidar is Buried," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 23, 1924. For a review of the British position over the years since Egypt's independence, see Vernon A. O'Rourke, "The British Position in Egypt," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1936, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-kingdom/1936-07-01/british-position-egypt>

²⁴⁵ The former tax is referenced next, but here I cite the US Department of Commerce memo that also asserts that Capitulary state approval was necessary before the Egyptian government could raise existing customs tax, because such a matter as tariffs fell under the Capitulary purview. Henry Chalmers, Chief, Division of Foreign Tariffs, "Egyptian Tariff Situation on Films," Sep 19, 1925, box 1307. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

²⁴⁶ Initially, the Powers "grant[ed] their consent" to the amusement tax's institution. See George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Motion Pictures Excellent in 1933: Theaters," Apr 23, 1934, 9, box 194. Soon after the implementation of the new tax, ticket receipts in second-run cinemas dropped considerably. This development led cinema owners to protest with legations of their own countries and film producing countries. In turn, the governments of these countries, which also happened to be Capitulary states pressured the Egyptian government until nearly a year later, the US commercial attaché confirmed reports "that the government has practically decided to lower the tax in the lower categories as soon as Parliament meets in December next." Charles E Dickerson, "Motion Picture Notes: Modification of the Egyptian Amusement Tax likely," Nov 6, 1934, box 194.

²⁴⁷ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Cairo Amusement Tax--Confidential," May 18, 1934, 10, box 194.

Egyptian amusement tax was awaited from Norway.²⁴⁸ Norway? I stopped in my tracks. Norway had not even been a Capitulary state before the 20th century. How many Norwegians had set foot in Egypt, let alone into one of its cinemas, I wondered? Not a mentionable thing about the cinema in Egypt was Norwegian, not the films, not the entrepreneurs, not the equipment, not the practitioners, not even Greta Garbo. Yet, well past Egypt's nominal independence, the Norwegian government had been endowed the authority under international law to approve or disprove matters presumably as sovereign as relating to fiscal policy.²⁴⁹

Institutional discrimination would have impacted the Group abundantly in a society in which native Egyptians remained largely economically disadvantaged, even in these film critics' attendance of sites of their work, shrines for their fascination, that were their country's cinemas. They not only contended with the absence of titles in their native Arabic in the Royal, the Metropole, the Triumph, and the Gaumont palace. They would have been segregated to the left in Cinema Olympia, where Europeans were seated to the right, relegated to "secondo" seats in the Rialto and Alexandria's Kursaal where only Europeans were seated in "primo."²⁵⁰ Could members of the Cineaste Critics Group have imagined that such would be their state a decade ago when the occupier had been driven to unilaterally declare Egypt's independence, following the blessed People's Revolution, when following the rebirth of their beloved nation a millennia-old tomb unveiled alerted the entire world as to whose was the greatest civilization to have

²⁴⁸ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: New Entertainment Tax Virtually Agreed Upon by Capitulary Powers," Sep 29, 1933, 9, box 193.

²⁴⁹ This interference by the Capitulary states was such that the commercial attaché in Egypt Charles E. Dickerson Jr. offered in the year concluding this study that "the Egyptian government under the Capitulary regime is forced to lean heavily on customs for its revenue." See "Confidential Report of Financial Developments in Egypt During the Week Ending May 5, 1934," May 7, 1934, Box 194.

²⁵⁰ See under "Mistreatment of Egyptians in Exhibition Houses," El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 25. *Screen Art's* editors and readers identified cinemas that fell short in this regard, as elaborated earlier in note no. 209.

inhabited this earth.²⁵¹ Their moment ought to have been then and it was desperately and definitively theirs now, as was this land of the pharaohs, theirs to rule, theirs to run, theirs to own, an Egypt for the Egyptians, Egyptians like themselves.

²⁵¹ This was Tutankhamun's of course.

Chapter 2

Defining National Cinema, Theorizing Nationalist Cinema, and Examining the Egyptianizing Cinema, 1896-1934

At the turn of the century Andrew Higson penned an essay titled “The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema,” in which he pointed out that the concept of national cinema had, despite repeated theorizing by scholars, still proved inadequate in accounting for a variety of cultural and economic activities, particularly as they relate to movement of people, objects, and ideas across state borders.²⁵² I find the concept of national cinema useful and generative.

I would contend that national cinema has been theorized with inadequate imagination, which has prevented it from conceptually supporting the range of activities and discourses of the cinemas of particular lands and their peoples. Further, I dispute the claim that intensified and multifaceted global exchange, noted to begin in the 1980s then accelerated by the demise of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, has increasingly limited the value of *national cinema*, for two reasons.²⁵³ First is that the cinema has been global from the outset,²⁵⁴ in the case of Egypt since the country’s very first screening, that of Lumiere films in Alexandria, in 1896.²⁵⁵

²⁵² See in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Matte Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 63-74. Higson published this essay a decade after his more generative and more influential “The Concept of National Cinema” referenced later.

²⁵³ Stephen Crofts marks political economic developments that contributed to global exchange in his “Concepts of National Cinema,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 385-386.

²⁵⁴ Tom Gunning begins his essay “Early Cinema as Global Cinema: the encyclopedic ambition,” with remarks he encloses in quotes, as if epigrammatic: “‘Early cinema is a global cinema.’ ‘National cinema only appears later in film history. I would enclose these statements as important historical principles,” in *Early Cinema and the National*,” ed. Richard Abel, Giorgio Bertellini, and Rob King (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 11. Egypt’s cinema was certainly less robust than leading European cinemas during and beyond the era of this study, but exchange on material and discursive levels between Egypt and other countries was instrumental to the cinema of Egypt.

²⁵⁵ See Jacques Aumont and Ben Brewster, “Lumière Revisited,” *Film History* 8, no. 4 (1996): 421. This article notes that after screenings in France, England, and Belgium Lumière screenings took place all over the world. Ahmed El Hadary has located two press notices of such a screening in Alexandria that took place on November 5, 1896,

Moreover, Egypt's cinema has been regional since the founding of Hollywood film distribution centers for the Middle East in Egypt in the 1920s, the decade that also saw the first screening of an Egyptian film outside of Egypt.²⁵⁶ Second, intensified and varied exchange, decentralized commerce, and regional, extra-national political economic bodies of government, such as the European Union, may have weakened the control that national states exercise on what and who passes through their borders, but modern nation-states have largely persisted as legally inviolable, constituent pieces to the global map, even when highly infiltrated politically, economically, and culturally. In this chapter, rather than dispense with a framework suitable and useful in analyzing a cinema emanating from, occurring in, or moving into particular parts of the world, I instrumentalize historical particularities to circumscribe national cinema and to imagine a definition of it, one I argue is applicable in the present as it was in the era of this essay's focus, the first third of the 20th century or so. I approach this task theoretically principally by disambiguating *national cinema* from *nationalist cinema*, a term I introduce and reify.

The particularities of the cinema in Egypt that I adduce charge a restricted conception with opening up for reasons particular to the country, reasons other than those given by critics of the concept of national cinema in the 1990s and 2000s. First, most of the silent cinema actuated in Egypt during its silent era took place under a system of governance predating the establishment of Egypt's modern nation-state in 1922. Second, many of the practitioners of the cinema in Egypt well into the 1930s, including some of the most powerful, were legally or perceptually non-Egyptian. Third, *Egyptian* as a legal description of a person's nationality was not codified until the issue of the 1929 Citizenship Law.

Tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz' al-awwal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930 [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930] (Cairo: The Cinema Club, 1987), 18-21.

²⁵⁶ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 264.

I have learned of these historical conditions and of the impact they have had on Egypt's cinema by pouring over current (to the era) popular and cinema literature and by examining government documents in the national archives of Egypt, its occupier Britain, and its primary cinema business partner the United States. Aided by relevant and varied literature, such conditions specific to Egypt and dating to around a century ago have nevertheless guided me to a definition of national cinema that I would argue is applicable in our day. Formulating this definition required that I disambiguate *nationalist cinema* from *national cinema*, so that by circumscribing the former I could define the latter, as I explain in the segment to follow. I then turn to a discussion of Egypt's silent and early sound cinema history that supports and illustrates the distinction I will have made. To understand what credentials a cinematic work or act as nationalist it is necessary to understand what it means to be Egyptian in the turbulent years of this essay's study, 1896-1934. This chapter then moves on to examine two case studies of cinema practitioners Egyptianizing: the Lama brothers—writer-director Ibrahim (presumably originally Abrahán) and actor Badr (originally Pedro),²⁵⁷ principles of Condor Films production company—and Assia Dagher, in light of the contested identity of Egyptianess, complicated by the institution of the noted Citizenship Law. Having provided some contemporary examples of national and nationalist cinema first, to distinguish the operative terms, I then dwell on the question of modern individual Egyptianess up to the mid-1930s, positing that evaluating nationalist credentials of people and the work they do must be grounded in the unavoidably complex task of determining who the people *are* in a given case or another.

²⁵⁷ Edward Asswad, "Times Square: Chatter—Egypt," *Variety*, Dec 11, 1934, 61.

Review of Theories of National Cinema

Before turning to a review of literature that theorizes and exemplifies nationalism and the cinema I wish to explain my choice of periodization. Why couple Egypt's silent and sound cinema histories and not delimit to one, considering significant distinctions between the two periods, historical and otherwise? Three reasons explain my decision: first is that the transition from one form to the other was not by way of a decisive disruption, but a gradual transformation. The first synchronized sound feature films screened in Egypt in 1928.²⁵⁸ The first domestic talkies screened in 1932, by whose time synchronized sound films had proliferated, but silent films would continue to be made and screened at least into the mid-1930s.²⁵⁹ The second reason for pairing silent and sound is that silent cinema was regularly not silent. Indeed, scholars have "too willingly and liberally, dichotomized silent and sound narrative," film exhibition.²⁶⁰ In Egypt, music, including vocal music, accompanied silent film screenings.²⁶¹ The third reason is one of

²⁵⁸ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 285.

²⁵⁹ El Hadary in the second volume of his expansive, rigorous historical review finds that 1933 was the last year in which feature narrative Egyptian silent films were produced. However, many cinemas were still not equipped to project synchronized sound films, around forty of the eighty or so operating in Egypt in 1934, according to an industry review titled "Hal taqoum fi Misr sina`a lil-sinima," (Will a Cinema Industry Rise in Egypt), *Fan al-sinima* [Screen Art], December 30, 1933, 14, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo. The US commercial attaché office in Cairo, however, had already identified seventy-one cinemas wired for sound by the end of 1933. George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Questionnaire—Egypt, 1932," special report # 20, January 13, 1933, 2, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. While the total number of cinemas operating in Egypt would reach eighty-nine by the end of the following year. That would mean that fifteen or so cinemas could only screen silent films in Egypt at the end of 1933. George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Two new motion picture houses in Egypt in 1933," special report # 162, November 22, 1933, 1, Box 193.

²⁶⁰ Sheila J. Nayar, "Seeing voices: Oral pragmatics and the silent cinema," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 7, no. 2 (2009): 145.

²⁶¹ As a writer for the Egyptian cinema magazine *Fan al-sinima* (Screen Art) recalls in 1934, in an erudite, formal-textual analysis of music in film from silent into the synchronized sound era, music was first played without much forethought, such as to play recordings of Beethoven to police films, before silent films screened in Egypt with musical soundtracks commissioned by their producers. As with most pieces published in Egyptian magazines of the era, the piece is unattributed. It appears under the heading "Mousiqā al-film" (Film Music), under the title "al-film al-mousiqi lam youlad ba`d" (The Musical Film Has yet to be Born), *Screen Art*, November 26, 1933, 15, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo. Music was recorded to accompany scenes in Egyptian films as well, including vocal music. See "Fi usbou" (In a Week), *al-Musawar*, May 8, 1931, 16, Main Library, American University in Cairo. Also see El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 381.

practicality. Much of the history relied upon to guide this study's analysis dates to the silent cinema era. However, most of the useful primary documents pertinent that I have gathered date to the early synchronized sound era. Some of this early sound era content discusses silent films. The two eras were entangled in discourse and in practice.

Although I do not aim to disentangle silent and synchronized sound cinema in Egypt, I do wish to distinguish the terms *national* and *nationalist*. I wish to explain my reasoning for such a theoretic distinction and review some relevant literature in the measure. Nationalism is discursively unavoidable for anybody studying regional cinemas, especially those of the Middle East, a region in which anticolonial nationalism has proven persistent and pervasive, with autocratic state government regimes in Syria, Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere. Yet, as John Breuilly observes, it was nationalist movements that first opposed colonialism.²⁶² Such liberation movements have commonly been termed *nationalist* movements, rather than national movements, suggesting that the term *national* could not describe that which precedes the founding of the nation state.

I find that such a nomenclatural distinction is in keeping with the modernist conceptions of nationalism developed by Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson all of whom observed that nationalism was a modern project associated with the creation of nation states. In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, published in 1990, year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Eric Hobsbawm adopts Gellner's definition of nationalism: "A principle which holds that the political and national unit should be

²⁶² In *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1993) 156. Breuilly's important work has been the most useful among theoretical works from disciplines other than media studies referenced herein. Like Gellner, Kedourie, and his contemporary Anthony Smith Breuilly has taught at the London School of Economics. This institutional link to much of the most influential scholarship on nationalism is notable.

congruent.”²⁶³ In the same work, Hobsbawm qualifies that “in spite of its evident prominence, nationalism is historically less important. It is no longer ... a global political program.”²⁶⁴ It is the nation-state that is increasingly incapable of containing or harnessing new currents of political organization; Hobsbawm also believes that nationalism may wane as does the state. That historians have progressed in their analyses of nations and nationalism is indicative of the phenomenon being “past its peak,” Hobsbawm offers.²⁶⁵

Cinema scholars have not progressed as far as their colleagues in sociology, political science, and anthropology in theorizing nationalism, with an idea to relate it to the cinema. Moreover, the burst of output on the concept of national cinema that lasted a decade or so at the end of the last century has been followed by a near absence of such efforts since, so that when Ian Christie responded with a qualified “yes” to the parenthetical question in his own 2013 essay title “Where Is National Cinema Today (and Do We Still Need It)?” nary a scholar was persuaded to reply. Not only passé, according to an expected propagation of post-nation state governmentality and a preoccupation with transnational governmentality, that latter current is acknowledged by Christie, who adds that national cinema theory has been “stigmatized as an equivalent of the national literatures promoted by nineteenth-century bourgeois elites.”²⁶⁶

Cinema scholars may have been dissuaded by the troubling terrain of the subject, because of “the sheer complexity, the protean elusiveness, of the phenomena that were gathered together under the rubric of ‘nationalism.’”²⁶⁷ Although taking on nationalism should prove “fruitful,” its terrain

²⁶³ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 9. A similar definition was also offered by Breuille, whereby *nationalism* “is used to refer to “political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments,” in *Nationalism and the State*, 2.

²⁶⁴ 191.

²⁶⁵ 192.

²⁶⁶ *Film History* 25, no. 1-2 (2013), 19.

²⁶⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “Memory and Modernity: Reflections on Ernest Gellner’s Theory of Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 2, no. 3 (1996): 372.

is thorny.²⁶⁸ Perhaps scholars were persuaded to the expiry of the concept of national cinema upon the publication of Andrew Higson's "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," referenced at the outset of this chapter. Not least because he had initiated the analytical turn in assessing national cinema with his 1989 essay "The Concept of National Cinema," by critically calling for a broader conceptual framework than that centered on film production commonly applied by scholars hitherto. Higson called for a framework categorically attending to sites of film consumption.²⁶⁹ Several critical essays followed by scholars such as Stephen Crofts, John Hill, Susan Hayward, and by Higson himself, among others, seeking to delineate, demarcate, describe and define Nationalism conceptually, all within the noted decade of theoretical proliferation.

Much of this output was reviewed following the end of the noted period of intensive publication on the operative subject by Jerry White in his article "National Belonging." White proposes that the nationalism of films has to do with what they are, not what they do, in so rebuffing the emphasis scholars had previously lent to filmic texts. He calls for a descriptive historical approach to the study of national cinema, rather than an evaluative-critical approach, and for a "functional definition" of it, which his article moves toward but does not offer.²⁷⁰ His article does not draw from nationalism theory outside of media studies, which may explain why his proposed definition does not address nation-state governmentality. White seems to have missed what may be the single outright definition of national cinema to have been formulated, not surprisingly in the 1990s, by French film scholar Pierre Sorlin: "A national cinema is not a

²⁶⁸ See Susan Hayward, "Framing National Cinemas," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (New York: Routledge, 2000), 91.

²⁶⁹ *Screen* 30, no. 4: 36.

²⁷⁰ See *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 2, no. 2 (2004): 212.

set of films which help distinguish a nation from other nations, it is a chain of relations and exchanges which develop in connection with films, in a territory delineated by its economic and juridical policy.”²⁷¹ Polity, as Sorlin finds, must be accounted for in formulating a definition of national cinema.

Films may be made, distributed and exhibited across multiple countries and by principles holding multiple nationalities, but that does not mean that policies, economic and otherwise, of nation states are insignificant. Such policies in fact often explain why filmmakers migrate, why films are produced in one or more country and post-produced elsewhere, and why films are shot so as not to be rejected by censors in large exhibition markets. Susan Hayward regards nation-state duality the most, reminding us that by no longer paying attention to the national we allow the power of the state, as the entity with “legitimate,” certainly legal, agency on behalf of the nation, to go unchecked.²⁷² The state’s role in cinema ought to be central to any definition of national cinema.

The agency of the state is of course exercised on behalf of its people. I believe that one reason for undervaluing the state in writings on the national cinema, as has been the case in recent decades, has to do not only with accelerated globalization and its attendant digital revolution, but also with western scholars basing their theories on national cinemas of nation-states that have not systematically abused their privilege of agency as representatives of their citizens as overtly or to the degree that state governments in other regions of the world have. State governments in the west uncommonly intervene in cinema production, distribution, or exhibition to ostensibly protect their citizens from the culture of cinema that may “nefariously”

²⁷¹ See *Italian National Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

²⁷² See “Framing National Cinemas,” 88

undermine the nation, as espoused and managed by its legal agent, the state. Yet, Middle East state governments often intervene far more forcefully than those of the west to control the cinema economically and culturally. This interference should be monitored and analyzed.

Furthermore, cultural identities of given nations often predate, indeed inform, the formations of state governments that achieve agency over the people who had actuated such an identity. This is the subset of cultural identity dubbed *national identity* that may be experienced by non-citizens of a given state, such as is the case with members of immigrant communities who engage in cinemas of their ancestral nations and is the case for members of nations that have not achieve statehood, but whose members substantially seek it—Catalan, Kurds, Native Americans, Palestinians, Sahrawis, Scots, Québécois, and others.

Recognizing and attending to such alternative nationalisms is arguably the greatest contribution of Jerry White's noted article. However, White insists on a critical mass of production that insures a diversity of film forms he finds requisite for the label of *national cinema*, a label he confers on the Scottish and the Québécois, but not on the Kurdish, whose films he would have us file under the nation-state in whose territories such films are produced. Not only does White privilege production in his conceptualization of national cinema, but he also limits his conception to established cinema production locales.²⁷³ A useful theory of national cinema should apply to practices within and across borders; practices at any point along cinema's industrial chain—production, distribution, then exhibition—and not only production; and I argue to practices singular as well as collective. The theory should qualify a single film as

²⁷³ "National Belonging: Renewing the Concept of National Cinema for a Global Culture," 224-225.

it does a cinema of many films. It ought to help understand a single case of exhibition as it does a given country's robust exhibition industry.

Thus, I see two principle constituents to what has long been addressed as the national cinema—the state and its legal and governmental apparatus, long central to discourses relating but less so in recent decades, is the first. The people who constitute the nation and whose culture, before and since the emergence of modern statehood, have engendered what may be described as *national identity* is the second. So as to keep a watchful eye on what state governments do to and for the cinema and in order to acknowledge the work done by cineastes in the service of their people, I propose to distinguish a national cinema that concerns the state from a nationalist cinema that concerns the people. Such bifurcated conceptualization is neither limiting nor clumsy, but useful, particularly in the case of three cinemas: those in their early stages, those in states restrictive or repressive of cultural critique, and those in states that have recently been or have yet to be founded. All three of these factors apply in the case of Egypt's cinema through its early synchronized sound era of the mid-1930s, the cinema explored in this study.

National Cinema Theoretically Distinguished from Nationalist Cinema

The definition of national cinema that I propose regards government involvement strictly but is not a territorial definition nor a binary one. I offer that the national cinema refers to engagement by one or more government in any number of cinematic activities. Such engagement may be as minimal and passive as a longstanding constitutional protection of expression, which applies even in the case of home movies and home screenings. Government involvement may be as pronounced as state run cinematic activity, such as that which took place in Egypt between 1963

and 1971, by which production, distribution and exhibition of films was overseen, if not strictly run, by state government.²⁷⁴ Further, multiple national governments may be involved in a cinematic activity.

The definition I have offered warrants illustration with an example that challenges traditional thinking on government involvement. The documentary feature film *Last Men in Aleppo* (2017) chronicles the perilous and enervating efforts of the Syria Civil Defense, better known as the White Helmets, in performing their search, rescue, and medical services in response to military attacks upon the city of Aleppo. The film was made in an area outside the control of the Syrian state government, one controlled by the Free Syrian Army. The White Helmets claimed political neutrality, but were sanctioned to operate within Aleppo at the time that the film production took place.²⁷⁵ Since the film's main characters are members of the White Helmets the film may be considered a Syrian national film, even though its production was not engaged by the Syrian state, since the Free Syria Army claimed national representation and made international humanitarian aid available to Syrians living under its control, thereby conveying welfare services to people in a manner typically associated with state governments.²⁷⁶ Yet, since the White Helmets were funded at the time of the film's production by multiple national governments, *Last Men in Aleppo* arguably qualifies as a national film in all of their cases:

²⁷⁴ Such a national cinema could rightly be dubbed *state cinema*. See Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 21. Also see Sara Abdul'aziz Kamal, *Surat al-sahafi fi al-sinema* [Image of the Journalist in the Cinema] (Cairo: al-Arabi Press, 2017), 47-48.

²⁷⁵ The neutrality claim has been disputed but is central to the organization's self-promotion. See "To the UN Security Council," www.whitehelmets.org.

²⁷⁶ The Free Syrian Army's "proclamation of principles" directly speaks to nationhood. "The Free Syrian Army's Proclamation of Principles published with the establishment of the FSA in 2012," <http://fsaplatform.org/fsa-principles>. As for facilitating social services, see Matt Broomfield, "Aleppo Evacuation: Here are 16 Syrian aid organisations that need your help," *The Independent*, December 19, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/aleppo-evacuation-syria-war-crisis-help-aid-organisations-donations-red-cross-white-helmets-pro-a7484181.html>.

Denmark, Germany, Japan, Qatar, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.²⁷⁷ It is also the case that the film received post-production funds from the Nordisk Film Fond, based in Norway and itself supported financially by national film institutes/funds of the five Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.²⁷⁸ As such, *Last Men in Aleppo* may count as a national film on behalf of these countries as well.

A decade ago or so, I was asked to curate an Italian film festival in the United States. The festival was not funded by any US government agencies, nor engaged by any of its institutions. The festival was supported, however, by the Consulate General of Italy in Chicago with in-kind donations of films. The films that I programmed into the festival were selected from a slate made available to the festival by the consulate, so that no fee was required for rental, unlike when renting from distribution companies. According to my decided definition, this edition of the festival qualifies as an Italian national exhibition event.

Proposing national government involvement in the cinema as the criterion and the measure of national cinema sets aside the matter of a nation's people, their culture and the imagined identity thereof. Since I am proposing to link a people's culture to a conceptualization of *nationalist cinema*, a term perhaps unprecedented, I should take some time to justify then explain it. First, I wish to argue that there is theoretical-historical justification for such a term. The operative bifurcation between *national* and *nationalist* moreover adheres to ideas generated by Gellner and especially by Breuilly concerning nationalism, both of whom rejected the nationalist argument for nationalism, i.e. that a longstanding desire for self-determination by

²⁷⁷ Hosam al-Jablawi, "The White Helmets Struggle Without US Funding," Atlantic Council, June 11, 2018, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/the-white-helmets-struggle-without-us-funding>.

²⁷⁸ For details about Nordisk Film and TV Fond funding, see "About us," <http://www.nordiskfilmogtvfond.com/about-us>

people living in a contiguous territory has delivered a political body in modernity as an expression of such desire.²⁷⁹ Further, both scholars identified nationalist movements' appeal to sentiments of society.²⁸⁰ Breuille found such sentiment embedded in cultural artifacts of such societies: language, religion, and art.²⁸¹ This mode of appeal is one I have detected in letters sent to the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works in the late 19th century by prominent representatives of theatrical troupes seeking permission to perform in the Khedival Opera in Cairo, an institution whose seasonal performances were typically delivered by European troupes. These letters justified their request on nationalist grounds and in the service of nation building, a quarter-century or so *before* Egypt gained its nominal independence from Great Britain.²⁸²

Similar sentiments are expressed in several early issues of the first Arabic language cinema magazine, one that was published in Egypt. Before the activation of Egypt's post-independence parliament, readers of *Motion Pictures* (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika) called on its pages for the establishment of an Egyptian film production company. Between the promulgation of Egypt's post-independence constitution and holding of Egypt's very first parliamentary elections, in September of 1923, readers began to write in to voice their support for the

²⁷⁹ Gellner rejects the nationalist theory for nationalism among four he characterizes as "false." *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 124. Breuille attends more deliberately and rigorously to refuting the nationalist argument for nationalism in *Nationalism and the State*, 2, 405-406.

²⁸⁰ *Society* being identical to *nation* as nationalists would have it. See Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism*, 1. Breuille in *Nationalism and the State*, 113, 274.

²⁸¹ Breuille, *Nationalism and the State*, 404.

²⁸² Two such letters I have located invoke nationalism in their appeals. One of the two is by renowned Egyptian theatrical performer Mahmoud Hijazi, who had applied once and been rejected. In the follow-up to the Ministry of Public Works, dated March 25, 1897, he appeals for a single night in the Khedive Opera, to present an Arabic play as part of Iskandar Farah's troupe. The letter's final point of appeal is "since my request is benignant and people minded in the service of the nation. File # 4003-016320, Abdeen Documents, Central Administration to the National Documents Center, National Book and Documents Center, Cairo. The other letter, similar in its appeal, from April 4, 1899, describes the proposed play as a "literary Arabic" staging to be presented by the Literary Knowledge Charitable Association. The organization's president, who had penned the letter, describes his organization as a "literary, nationalist project." File # 4003-01781, Abdeen Documents, Central Administration to the National Documents Center, National Book and Documents Center, Cairo.

establishment of such a company, not only on nationalist grounds, but on a number of occasions in terms oppositional to the cinema of the west that had misrepresented Egypt in their produced films: “Why don’t we fight them by producing films that show them our modernization and civilization, by which they would know the extent of our advancement.”²⁸³ Breuilly’s characterization of nationalist movements as oppositional²⁸⁴ certainly applied to efforts to establish an Egyptian cinematic industry.

Such opposition, directed against occupational powers and their domestic operatives in occupational times, has in recent decades taken up a new adversary—the apparatus of the nation-state itself. This shift certainly is a consequence of the demise of the national project as undertaken by state governments. This is why disentangling the national from the nationalist in the case of cinemas of the Middle East is a generative conceptual act. Nationalist cinema concerns the nation’s people as distinct from the authoritative mechanisms of the nation-state. The cinema’s opposition to such a repressive body adopts varied strategies, from obliquely critical to outright condemnatory. Yet, considering that the oppressive arm of state governments may reach the nationalist cinema itself, most cinema practices tend to crouch their critique or direct it at practices of specific state institutions and not the structure of the governing body, commonly referred to as a *regime*. Moreover, nationalist cinema practitioners—filmmakers, distributors, and exhibitors—often offer that their work’s principle intent is to empower their people, not to assault the state, its systems, or its intuitions. Mahmoud Sabbagh, writer-director-producer of the second feature film to come out of Saudi Arabia *Barakah Meets Barakah* (2016)

²⁸³ The reader’s letter appears in the regular feature “Barlaman al-Suwar al-mutaharrika” (Motion Pictures Parliament), *al-Suwar al-mutaharrika* [Motion Pictures], September 13, 1923, 21, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

²⁸⁴ *Nationalism and the State*, 9, 199.

had this to say about the film's value: "Let's not think too much of nationalism or nationalities, but let's think about this ... my community is almost never represented. Their stories are not told in a systematic manner. The only news you get is from media culture and the politics and I always thought this is not balanced coverage of this place."²⁸⁵ Sabbagh astutely shifts the discussion about the motivation for his film from criticism of government, in its structures of city and state, to concern for their inhabitants, his people.

During an interview about the film with Saudi owned satellite television outlet Alarabiya, Sabbagh defended his film against accusations that it did not represent Saudi Arabia, what with its socially transgressive content and its focus on a single city, Jeddah, the country's cultural capital and most liberal city: "In the end this is a Saudi film, in its card, in its identity, in the identity of its director, in its personnel, in everything ... The film that preceded us *Wadjda*, was Saudi-German. This [film] is patently Saudi and in the end the story that emanates from Jizan, or from `Ar`ar or from Jeddah are all Saudi films." Sabbagh, having already asserted that the film was entirely shot in Jeddah here refers to what I propose as the nationalist credentials of cinema.²⁸⁶ Framing nationalist cinema in terms of credentials is useful in that it allows for a complex assessment of whether a film produced, and by extension distributed and exhibited, is representative of a given people. These credentials are four:

1. Content: a film's subject and theme, its manner of addressing such subject and theme formally, structurally, and generically. Does the film attend to social problems or cultural

²⁸⁵ See Stephen Saito, "TIFF '16 Interview: Fatima Al-Banawi, Hisham Fageeh & Mahmoud Sabbagh on Introducing Saudi Arabia Cinematically in 'Barakah Meets Barakah,'" *The Moveable Fest*, September 20, 2016, <http://moveablefest.com/barakah-meets-barakah/>.

²⁸⁶ See *Sabah Alarabiya*, "Muqabalat mukhrij film Barakah yuqabil Barakah Mahmoud Sabbagh" [Interview with director of *Barakah Meets Barakah* Mahmoud Sabbagh], YouTube video, July 9, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7_f7FJftFY.

challenges? In which language is its dialogue? Does the film offer links to specific cultural or artistic traditions of the people on whom it centers?

2. Cast and crew: particularly “above-the-line” principles of the film, but also crew and cast members not front-and-center in representing a film to the public. Are they living or did they once live among the people the film is meant to represent? Are they descendants of such people but were born away from the land to which they historically belonged?
3. Funding: the location and nationality(ies) of individuals and institutions that finance a film. Did the funding entail influencing screenplay, casting, or other impactful decisions?
4. Location: particularly of production, but also of post-production, which in the case of many multinational Arab productions takes place outside of the region.

Such credentials would also apply in the case of distribution. A distributor’s nationalism may be assessed based on the record of, or on individual instances of, the types of films to which it chooses to buy distribution rights. A distributor’s nationalist credentials may also be determined according to the nationality and background of its principle owner(s). An exhibitor’s nationalist credentials may be considered based on the films it chooses to screen, as well as on the décor, its foreignness or nativity, and especially in terms of filmic paratexts displayed or disseminated on its premises—posters, programs, pamphlets, cards, promotional screens and the like. And, of course, the national background of an exhibitor’s owner may also be accounted for in determining how nationalist a cinema (chain) or a festival or a film program is.

I wish to offer a single example of the distinction between national and nationalist cinemas as I have conceived them away from the Middle East before coming back to it. Jerry White, as mentioned, does well to elaborate on the nationalism of Québécois cinema. White refers to Susan Barrowclough’s ascription of a “use value” to such cinema, to mean the

politicization of its texts. White adroitly points out that prior to the 1970s most Québécois films were not politicized, nor “national allegories” as Fredrick Jameson would have it.²⁸⁷ Their nationalist credentials were weak, as I would put it. Yet, because of Quebec’s systematic support of filmmaking within its province, such as by way of its Institut québécois du cinéma, founded in 1975 to fund filmmaking,²⁸⁸ and considering the longstanding pursuit of national independence as manifest in the Quebec sovereignty movement that emerged in the 1960s,²⁸⁹ films emanating from Quebec whose nationalist credentials are weak are nevertheless often considered Québécois national films.

Yet what of a Québécois film such as *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) whose nationalist credentials vis-à-vis French-Canadian self-determination are virtually nil? The film is highly nationalist to be sure, concerning First Nation rights in general and the Mohawk people in particular. It is to a degree a Mohawk national film, because although it was not funded by Mohawk government bodies, it does depict the involvement of two Mohawk elders in the standoff with the Canadian military at the Oka reservation in Quebec. Furthermore, the film is very much a Canadian national film, since its director Alanis Obomsawin received funding from the National Film Board of Canada, a central government institution, and shot the film with the aid of other members of that institution.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 212-213.

²⁸⁸ See Jerry White’s “Introduction” to *The Cinema of Canada*, ed. Jerry White (New York: Wallflower Press, 2006), 5-6.

²⁸⁹ For more on Quebec’s sovereignty movement, see Pascal Dufour and Christophe Traisnel, “Nationalism and Protest: The Sovereignty Movement in Quebec,” in *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada*, ed. Miriam Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 255-280.

²⁹⁰ See Guiseppe Valiante, “Documentary Filmmaker Reflects on 25 Years since Oka Crisis,” *The Canadian Press*, July 7, 2015, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/documentary-filmmaker-reflects-on-25-years-since-oka-crisis-1.2457090>. Also see Bruno Cornellier, “The Thing About Obomsawin’s Indianness: Indigenous Reality and the Burden of Education at the National Film Board of Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 2-26.

Before moving onto the next segment, which centers on Egyptianess and nationalist cinema in Egypt during the era of focus for this essay, 1896-1934, I wish to discuss two topical examples from the Middle East. *Black Gold* (aka *Day of the Falcon*, 2011) was supposed to usher in an era of international big budget filmmaking in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf, specifically in Qatar, whose state funded Doha Film Institute co-produced the film and defrayed its regionally unprecedented \$55 million budget. Thus, the film is a national Qatari film to a high degree. Its nationalist credentials are controversially meager, however. The film's principles are all non-Qatari. Only two are Arab, producer Tarak Ben Ammar and one of its leads, French Algerian Tahar Rahim. Its script was penned by non-Arabs and was adapted from the novel *The Arab*, by Swiss Hans Ruesch, a clichéd story of oil and tribal ambition in a fictitious Gulf state. The English dialogue film was partly shot in Qatar, though references nothing of the country's history. Alaa Karkouti, cofounder of Cairo based marketing and distribution company MAD Solutions, did not even consider the film Arab.²⁹¹

In stark contrast to *Black Gold* is Jafar Panahi's *This Is not a Film* (2011), a film he made with co-director Mojtaba Mirtahmasb under house arrest and while serving a twenty-year ban on filmmaking—including directing, shooting, and editing—and on giving interviews. The unclassifiable documentary film's nationalist credentials are exceedingly strong, for it was made by a renowned Iranian filmmaker and activist, in his Tehran apartment, as a cheeky but unmistakable critique of state repression of its citizens' expression. *This Is not a Film* was made available to a world audience after it was smuggled out of Iran on flash drive, hidden inside a

²⁹¹ Alex Ritman, "Whatever happened to the Qatari film industry?" *The Guardian*, March 6, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/06/qatari-film-industry-doha-festival-black-gold>.

birthday cake. The film was obviously not engaged in any way by the Iranian government.²⁹² However, since it received its world premiere and overwhelming media coverage, including critical attention, in the Cannes film festival, an event funded by the French government by half, should not *This Is not a Film* count as a French national film to some degree, despite not being a French production?²⁹³

Nationalist films concern themselves with people, people of particular nations. As I have attempted to rehabilitate the term *nationalist* from its ethnocentric associations to a term that permits for diversity, ethnic and otherwise. Such inclusive nationalism, as in the depicted Saudi society in *Barakah Meets Barakah*, discussed earlier, turns me to an era of reactionary nationalism. I now turn to a more thoroughgoing historical analysis of national identity in a nation state barely formed, and still not entirely independent of its occupier Great Britain. I turn to a discussion of the Egyptianess of cinema practitioners in Egypt leading up to the mid-1930s.

Egyptianess: an ambiguous divide between Egyptian and Egyptianized

Certainly, all domestic film productions in the era of examination herein were nationalist in that they at minimum signified and participated in the modernization effort that the nation was undertaking, so as to catch up to the industrialized nations of the world. However, with the backgrounds—ethnic, religious, geographic—of cinema practitioners under scrutiny, particularly

²⁹² See Xan Brooks, “Jafar Panahi: Arrested, banned and defying Iran with his new film,” *The Guardian*, March 22, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/mar/22/jafar-panahi-arrested-banned-iran>, as well as John Patterson, “Jafar Panahi Was Banned from Directing or Editing ... and Still Got a Movie Out,” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/mar/24/jafar-panahi-this-is-not-a-film>.

²⁹³ “Cannes by the numbers: Facts and figures on the film festival,” MSN Entertainment, May 15, 2017, <https://www.msn.com/en-za/entertainment/cannes/cannes-by-the-numbers-facts-and-figures-on-the-film-festival/ss-BBAjtkQ>.

the powerful among them, Egyptianess of such practitioners itself was assessed for the sake of credentialing their cinematic work. This segment considers Egyptianess conceptually, legally, and socially, up to the mid-1930s.

Elie Kedouri, Earnest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson's disquisitions on nationalism have been criticized for a variety of reasons, three of which apply in the case of Egypt and its cinema of the conclusion of 19th and the first third of the 20th centuries. Proposing these three problems of the reification of nationalism in modernity aids in gleaning a keener, clearer understanding of the political economic and cultural conditions in the specific case of Egypt during the span of forty years or so noted. The first problem, discussed by Sarah Barrow concerning early Latin American cinema, applies in the case of Egypt: there had not manifested any manner of sweeping modernization efforts in Egypt by the time the cinema emerged in the country.²⁹⁴ Industrialization was restricted on the one hand to the operations of the Suez Canal controlled by the British government even after independence in 1922, so that the Canal did not generate any revenue for the country.²⁹⁵ Industrialization of agricultural production was restricted to cotton, the crop upon which the Egyptian economy was wholly dependent, the crop that accounted for the top three exports of the country by the early 1930s. Nor did industrialization extend into manufacturing or other economic sectors.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ In *Contemporary Peruvian Cinema: History, Identity and Violence on Screen* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 24.

²⁹⁵ Cable and Associated Press, "British Send Ultimatum, Ready to Move in Egypt: Demand Reply to Stern Note on Stack Murder in Twenty-Four Hours; Sidar is Buried," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 23, 1924, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/161580301/fulltextPDF/85703BB591C24EB9PQ/1?accountid=14512>.

²⁹⁶ These were raw cotton, cottonseed, and cotton cake. A distant forth export product was onions. Agricultural products accounted for nearly all of the country's revenue. Special Report no. 4, "Report on Economic Development in Egypt During the Calendar Year 1934," December 31, 1934, "Salient Commercial Features of Egypt," iv, "General Summary," Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

The second problem with the nationalism-as-a facet-of-modernity theory is that the Egyptian population was predominantly illiterate during the era under study. In 1897, the literacy rate was 5% of the population.²⁹⁷ By 1934, it had reached around 10%.²⁹⁸ This condition renders Anderson's postulate about print communication constituting the medium for the codification and dissemination of the of the state's determined "imagination" of the nation²⁹⁹ inapplicable in the case of Egypt. Printed discourse would have principally influenced city dwellers, at a time when two thirds or so of the population lived in rural areas.³⁰⁰

Third, Egyptian nationalists, including those who remarked on the cinema, looked at modernity with an ambivalent, even suspicious eye, as it was deemed an imported phenomenon. Their suspicions concerned its ideas and products, to be sure, but also its purveyors and disseminators, especially the "foreign" among them.³⁰¹ Islamist intellectuals, following nominal independence and in the height of public debates about the direction of the Egyptian nation, remarked on the phenomenon of modernization (*tajdid*) critically, opining that modernization ought to be tailored to the traditions of Egyptians, that borrowing from the West must be in keeping with their religious traditions. Most theoretically rigorous among disquisitions on modernization was offered by Rashid Rida who qualified modernization called for by "westernized" Egyptians

²⁹⁷ According to British government census, the literacy rate was about 11% for men and a trifling 0.3% for women. Douglas Dunlop, "Statistics of Illiteracy among the Sedentary Egyptian Population in Egypt," no. 29006, August 17, 1906, British National Archives, Kew Gardens, London.

²⁹⁸ Special Report no. 4, "Report on Economic Development in Egypt During the Calendar Year 1934," December 31, 1934, "Salient Commercial Features of Egypt," under "Purchasing Power," i, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

²⁹⁹ *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 1991), 1-8, 47-66.

³⁰⁰ Special Report no. 4, "Report on Economic Development in Egypt During the Calendar Year 1934," December 31, 1934, "Salient Commercial Features of Egypt," under "Purchasing Power," i, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

³⁰¹ Ian Jarvie points out the same. See "National Cinema: A theoretical assessment," in *Cinema and Nation*, 83. Islamist nationalists whose influence grew over the period of study repudiated

(mustaghribun) as objectively distinct from that which Islamists conceived: whereas the former entailed an assault on the people's (umma) heritage and traditions the latter aimed to modernize Islam so that it may appear in its true form to their brethren of the day. Rida's own newspaper *al-Manar* joined other Islamist publications, including those of the Muslim Brotherhood and of the fascist-Islamist party Young Egypt (Misr al-fata, discussed in the opening chapter), in responding to the secularist, nationalist calls for westernization current in the 1920s and 1930s, including those fashioned by articles published in *al-Hilal* magazine, earlier discussed as well.³⁰² Suspicion of modernization targeted not only the foreign, but also those who championed the foreign.

Notable is the shift in nationalist discourse printed on the pages of *Motion Pictures (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika, 1923-1925)*, compared to popular culture magazines of the late 1920s and early 1930s, especially on the pages of the staunchly nationalist *Screen Art (Fan al-sinema, 1933-1934)* and particularly in the case of cinematic exhibition. The earlier magazine criticized the censor's failure to prevent the screening in Egypt of films whose content was thought unsuitable for the Egyptian public,³⁰³ considering the country's relative social conservatism compared to the west. By the early 1930s, attacks were leveled against the censor *and* the cinemas that did not prioritize Egyptian customs and traditions (*`adat wa taqalid*), such as in screening films depicting material perverse or heretical or the like, in treating Egyptian patrons discriminatorily, and in

³⁰² Acting, the theatre, and the cinema were the target of directed censure by several groups and institutions within Egypt, not only Islamist or Islamic, a history taken up in this study's latter chapter "Theater to Cinema." For more on the discussion of westernization and modernity in the Egyptian press between the Great Wars see Jamal al-Najjar's tendentious but well-researched and documented *Sahafat al-ittijah al-islami fi Misr fima bayn al-harbayn al-`alamiyatayn* [Press of Islamist Orientation in the Period between the Two World Wars], (al-Mansoura: al-Wafa' Publishing, 2000), 125-162.

³⁰³ See "Raqib al-sinema fi Misr" (Film Censor in Egypt), *Motion Pictures*, May 22, 1924, 14, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

first-run cinemas' failure to honor the primacy of the Arabic language in the country. A notice in *Screen Art* magazine dating to late 1933 reads,

To cinemas:

1. The Arabic language must always lead... in the program and in the films
2. The Arabic subtitles must be correct and in the correct form
3. The Egyptian is owner of these lands, so he must be respected

Remember this well, owners of cinemas, for we shall not forgive you after today.³⁰⁴

Whereas the Egyptianess of ownership and management of cinemas was noted only in exhibitor adverts in the earlier *Motion Pictures* magazine,³⁰⁵ the matter became a central concern of the editors of *Screen Art*, a magazine that on a near-weekly basis inveighed against the deleterious effects on the nation of the cinema industry, especially in its distribution and exhibition being controlled near wholly by “foreigners.”³⁰⁶ The Egyptian nationalist slogan of “Egypt for the Egyptians,” seems a lofty ideal on the pages of the early publication, but is an actionable imperative according to the writers of the latter, a decade later.

³⁰⁴ This appears as a boxed notice in the third issue of *Screen Art*, November 5, 1933, 27, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁰⁵ An advert in *Motion Pictures* for Cinema Idial names its manager Ibrahim Munir, May 28, 1925, 15. Another advert for Cinema Radium includes the byline “The first Egyptian cinema,” May 7, 1925, 23. Both advertisements appear toward the end of the magazine’s run, suggesting that nationalist appeal of exhibitors was thought to attract literate Arabic readers of a cinema magazine by 1925, three years after independence.

³⁰⁶ “Hal taqum fi Misr sina`atun lil-sinema” (Will a Cinema Industry Rise in Egypt?) December 30, 1933, 14. The unattributed article’s author responds to the title’s question in the negative, in part because he (most likely a man) finds that exhibitors, mostly owned by “foreigners” do not care to screen Egyptian films to their “foreign” patrons, who constitute the majority of their audiences. This last assessment is contradicted by the clerk to the Commercial Attaché of the United States embassy in Cairo, though he agrees with the former: “The majority of motion pictures houses in Cairo are owned by Greeks and other foreigners but since 70-80% of their receipts come from Egyptians they have always been careful for their native public.” George Lewis Jones, “Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theatres,” “Motion Picture Notes,” December 19, 1933, 2, # 203, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

The slogan itself was the cardinal call of the first oppositional movement, led by military general Ahmed `Urabi, whose revolt against Khedive Ismail³⁰⁷ and standoff against British forces had failed, thereby ushering in the era of British occupation known as the veiled protectorate, in 1882. `Urabi, having founded the Patriotic Party (al-Hizb al-Watani), had in effect politicized Egyptian nationalism unprecedentedly. The slogan was taken up by parties other than the Patriotic, namely the Umma Party,³⁰⁸ whose leader Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayid, beginning in the early 20th century and into the decade to follow, insisted on the independence of the Egyptian identity and an Egyptian character. However, he did include in his conception of *Egyptian* those who had immigrated to the country if they claimed only Egypt as their home.³⁰⁹ The slogan was then reified as policy across various institutions after the establishment of parliamentary government in 1923.³¹⁰ The slogan would seem conceived by “native” Egyptians, considering its entreaty. Yet, `Urabi himself admits in his memoir that the “cornerstone of the policy of Egypt for the Egyptians” was established by the Khedive Sa`id, a member of the ruling dynasty which was Albanian and Turko-Circassian, not indigenous Egyptian.³¹¹ Furthermore, `Urabi’s own memoir, written a quarter-century after his ill-fated revolt, extensively referenced a chronicle of the revolt written by Salim al-Naqqash, himself a Levantine immigrant, an account

³⁰⁷ The khedive was the governor of Egypt, a vassal state in the Ottoman Empire, to which it paid tribute but whose internal affairs were off limits to Istanbul. The khedive regime (khedivate) had been established by Albanian Muhammad `Ali in 1805. See Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 163-166.

³⁰⁸ *Umma* is best translated as *people* in the sense of a body collective.

³⁰⁹ Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From Its Origins to Aḥmad Lutfi al-Sayyid* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 9-10.

³¹⁰ T. H. Fraser, Letter to the First Secretary, no. 16940/10, 392/9, February 12, 1926, British National Archives, Kew Gardens, London.

³¹¹ Ahmed `Urabi, *Mudhakkirat `Urabi* [‘Urabi’s Memoir] (Cairo: General Authority for Cultural Palaces, 2011), 9.

titled *Misr lil-misriyin* (Egypt for Egyptians).³¹² Thus we see that the slogan and its attendant political philosophy was itself not codified by “native” Egyptians exclusively.

Then there was the important matter of the makeup of Egyptians. Who were they? For any claim to ethnic purity was belied by its operative society’s multiethnicity since antiquity. After all, Greeks had inhabited the land of Egypt for seven hundred years or so and had in all likelihood intermarried with the indigenous people of the Nile Valley.³¹³ Further, immigration to Egypt intensified in the nineteenth century, particularly by Lebatine Christians who sought greater rights and privileges available to non-Muslims under the khedive regime.³¹⁴ The wave of Arab Christian immigration was followed by European immigration, which itself increased after the British occupied Egypt in 1882 and became effective rulers of the country.³¹⁵ By the year of the study’s conclusion, in 1934, 200,000 of Egypt’s 15 million population were “foreign,”³¹⁶ though this figure may not have counted the Levantines mentioned, including those who had been born in Egypt. The figure of 200,000 may also have not counted Levantines, Armenians, Maghribis, Iraqis, Europeans, or others who had acquired Egyptian citizenship.

Europeans born in Egypt or even those living there long may have been eligible for Egyptian citizenship, instated and offered in 1900, but were not motivated to acquire it, because doing so would have entailed forgoing the benefits of Capitulations, a policy instated centuries

³¹² `Abd al-Mun`im al-Jumai`l, *Mudhakkirat al-za`im Ahmed `Urabi* [Memoir of the Leader Ahmed `Urabi] (Cairo: Egyptian National Library and Archives, 2005), 8.

³¹³ Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt After the Pharaohs, 332 BC-AD 642: From Alexander to the Arab Conquest*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 16.

³¹⁴ Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image: From Its Origins to Aḥmad Lutfi al-Sayyid*, 10.

³¹⁵ Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 113.

³¹⁶ Special Report no. 4, “Report on Economic Development in Egypt During the Calendar Year 1934,” December 31, 1934, “Salient Commercial Features of Egypt,” i, “General Summary,” Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

earlier by the Ottoman Empire, a policy whose privileges were enhanced in the case of the Egyptian territory.³¹⁷ European residents of Egypt after 1882 could live in a country ruled primarily by a Christian European imperial power.³¹⁸ They could count on highly depressed customs fees on their imports and exports. These European economic immigrants, along with their businesses, would not be subjected to Egyptian courts, but to their countries' consular courts, and in cases involving such Europeans (later Americans as well) and Egyptian disputants, the adjudication would be carried out in mixed courts, employing Egyptian, though mostly foreign judges.³¹⁹ Most European nationals as such did not apply for Egyptian citizenship; they were better off living in Egypt as foreigners they must have determined.

It so happens that film production in Egypt was near exclusively undertaken by Europeans until the early 1920s, including films of high nationalist credentials. The first domestically produced film was by `Aziz Bandarli and Umberto Dorés (likely Italian) titled *The Khedive's Visit to Sidi Abul`abbas Scientific Institute in Alexandria* (Ziyarat al-janab al-a`la lil-ma`had al-`ilmi fi masjid Sidi Abil`abbas, 1907).³²⁰ `Aziz and Dorés continued to make films as did other European residents into the next two decades or so. The first domestic feature film *In the Land of Tutankhamun* (Fi bilad tut`ankh amun, 1923) was produced and directed by Italian

³¹⁷ See Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Image*, 10.

³¹⁸ It was known within Egypt and without that the effective ruler of Egypt was Lord Cromer, Proconsul-general for the British Occupation of Egypt. See Nadia Ramsis Farah, *Egypt's Political Economy: Power Relations in Development* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 2009), 65. For a description of Cromer's customary supercilious tone in communicating with the khedive see Robert L. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 166-173.

³¹⁹ Isma`il Ahmed Yaghi, *al-`Alam al-`arabi fi al-tarikh al-hadith* [The Arab World in Modern History] (Riyadh: Obekan Publishing, 1997) 181.

³²⁰ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 81-83.

Victor Rossetto.³²¹ The titles of these films reveal icons of nationalist discourse—khedival rulers and pharaonic kings.

Even the first government commissioned domestic film *The Sultanic Guard* (al-Haras al-sultani, 1916), was made by a European—Pascal Prosperi. Beside producing, Prosperi distributed films in Egypt, Syria and Palestine for Universal and Paramount.³²² As discussed in the chapter prior, not much is known about the number and origin of Egypt’s distributors in the 1920s, though it may be safe to assume that all were European. Up to the mid-1930s, owners of most cinemas, including nearly all first-run houses were European, the Raissi cinemas excluded.³²³ Many European residents working in cinema would likely not have applied for Egyptian citizenship, because doing so would, as mentioned, have caused them to lose their residential privileges associated with the Capitulations policies.

Levantine immigrants were protected as members of a religious minority group but were not beneficiaries of Capitulations, nor were any from lands under the administrative or effective control of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, upon the issue of the citizenship law in 1929, those of Egyptian, European, and Ottoman backgrounds could all apply under varied conditions. A glance at citizenship application materials in the Egyptian National Archives reveals names European and Ottoman and from elsewhere, along with people of unknown origin, either born in Egypt or whose parent was born in Egypt.³²⁴ Capitulations likely profited merchants and

³²¹ See “Fi bilad Tutankhamun: Awwal sharit `an Misr” (In the Land of Tutankhamin: First Film about Egypt), *Motion Pictures*, July 26, 1923, 21.

³²² See “Ikilil min al-ghar: rajul `amil fi sabil fan Kabir” (Wreath of Laurels: A Man Working for the Sake of a Big Art), June 4, 1925, 10, *Motion Pictures*, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³²³ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theatres,” Dec 19, 1933, 2, # 203, box 193. Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

³²⁴ File # 0069-000477, Abdeen Palace documents, Central Administration to the National Documents Center, National Book and Documents Center, Cairo.

business owners, but not all European residents should be assumed to have been of the merchant class; many worked as artisans and factory workers.³²⁵

Irrespective of their reasons for applying, the first wave of successful applicants for Egyptian citizenship, were dubbed *mutamassirun* (*Egyptianized*). Legally, Egyptian citizenship conferred equal rights upon its possessors, regardless of their geographic background or history of movement. In practice, however, nationalist credentials of the Egyptianized had to be affirmed over time before they would be invited into the class of those signified by “Egypt for the Egyptians.”³²⁶ In response to the publication of the 1929 citizenship law, Syrian co-owner of the Hilal publishing group Emile Zaydan wrote to the daily Arabic newspaper *al-Ahram* a piece titled “Legal Egyptianizing and Actual Egyptianizing—the Egyptian character is not gained by virtue of the law alone.” As if to channel Lutfi al-Sayid, Zaydan prods his fellow Egyptianized to assimilate into their chosen home of Egypt so as to combine their legal Egyptianizing with a “moral and social Egyptianizing.” Zaydan also brings up in his open letter the matter of time, that national allegiance cannot be proven through a legal identity acquired overnight, but through sustained integration over years. Zaydan follows his entreaty to fellow Egyptianized with a reprimand of Egyptians who treat the Egyptianized with suspicion and discrimination.³²⁷

Suspicion undergirds the single mention of the Egyptianized in the cinema materials of the era that I have examined. The instance is telling of trenchant, latent distrust of the Egyptianized as outsiders-turned-nominal-insiders. Addressing a general interest question about the release date of French produced *Yaqut*, starring Egyptian performer Naguib el-Rihani, the

³²⁵ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1985), 108.

³²⁶ See to Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-thalith `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 13] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2005), 110.

³²⁷ Emile Zaydan, “al-Tamassur al-qanuni wa al-tamassur al-fi’li” (Legal Egyptianizing and Effective Egyptianizing), *al-Hilal*, April 1, 1929, 716-718.

unnamed respondent points out that the matter would not be decided by Rihani, but by Gaumont's distributor in Egypt. "I can't remember if his name was Sham`oun... or Levy?"³²⁸ A fortnight later, the nationalist magazine published a letter addressed to the Cineaste Critics Group, the organization that had founded *Screen Art* magazine. The letter was written by Ahmed Badrakhan, one of the members of the group, co-founder of *Screen Art*, and director of the film *Yaqut* in question. Responding in grieving terms of disappointment to the flippant doubling of a Jewish name noted, Badrakhan asks, "Do you think that the Jew, the Muslim, and the Christian differ if united by Egyptian citizenship?" A response on behalf of the Cineaste Critics Group states:

We patently do not discriminate between religions, but we want the Egyptian to have privilege in his country at all times. We also want you to be totally assured that we thank Gaumont Company for the valuable assistance it has offered you, even though we could well offer better assistance to the foreigners who live among us. And I think dear colleague that you will not anger to know that we were hoping that the person who takes on distribution of *Yaqut* is a real Egyptian, not an Egyptianized. Certainly, there is a difference between an original Egyptian and an Egyptianized...³²⁹

Legal Egyptianess was one thing but "real" Egyptianess was another. It is worth noting that *Screen Art's* nationalism was stauncher than that of other Egyptian publications. Nor were the Egyptianized condemned to lives in Egypt in which they could never be treated as their native countryfolk. I wish to illustrate the experience of Egyptianized cineastes by offering accounts of successfully Egyptianized filmmakers the Lama Brothers and Assia Dagher.

³²⁸ Under "al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij" (The Cinema in Egypt and Abroad), *Screen Art*, January 13, 1934, 4-5, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³²⁹ Letter and responses appear under the title "Khitab maftouh ila jama`at al-nuqqad al-sinema'iyin" (Open Letter to the Film Critics Group), *Screen Art*, February 3, 1934, 26.

The Curious Case of the Lama Brothers

In 1924, Pedro and Abrahán Lamas, having traveled from Santiago, Chile disembarked in Alexandria, Egypt, likely their last stop before reaching their ancestral homeland of Palestine, to which they had planned to re-immigrate. The brothers' own family, named al-A'ma, had immigrated to Chile years earlier and had adopted the Latinized last name of Lamas. When in Alexandria, the brothers' plans changed, however, and they decided to settle in the coastal city. Having brought photography equipment with them, they rented a villa and, both having worked for Andes Films, would soon embark on collaborative careers in film production that would last until their deaths in Egypt, in 1947 and 1953 respectively.³³⁰

The brothers' first film *Kiss in the Desert* (Qubla fi al-sahra', 1927), written and directed by Ibrahim and starring Pedro in the lead, was only the third Egyptian narrative feature and was released at the time that marks the beginning of most Egyptian film histories. The brothers' debut suffered much excoriation in the press over its cultural misrepresentation of Egypt, specifically of Bedouin culture. This seems hardly surprising given its source material, for *Kiss in the Desert* was a wholesale copy of *The Son of the Sheik* (1926), a fascinating case of filmmakers from the "new world" with origins in the "old world" who moved to the "old world" and made a film about it plagiarized from a "new world" film that distorts the "old world"! A letter to culture magazine *Rose el-Yusif* thought that the only depiction that could be deemed Egyptian without a

³³⁰ Early in his Egyptian film career, Ibrahim Lama claimed that his family was originally from Egypt but had then moved to Palestine. This account is likely apocryphal. "Hadith ma` sharikat Condor film" (Talk with Condor Film Company), unknown publication, likely dated to 1928, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo. Further see Muhammad `Abdalla, "al-Sinama'iyoun al-misriyoun, al-mukhrjoun: 1. Ibrahim Lama" (Egyptian Cineastes, Directors: 1. Ibrahim Lama), *Artists Voice* [Sout al-fannanin], December 1984, 53, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo. Also see under "Badr Lama" in Muhammad Qasim, *Dalil al-mumathil al-`arabi fi al-qarn al-`ishrin* [Directory of Arab Actors of the 20th Century] (Cairo: Arab Nile Group, 1999), 24.

doubt is that of the sphinx and pyramids—the costumes were fake, the customs foreign, and the representation negative in terms of depicted traits of indolence and prurience.³³¹ “They have mistreated us more than foreigners,” titles a reader’s enraged invective against the series of three Egyptian films recently released. In the letter, the reader asks what Egypt has done to the principles behind *Kiss in the Desert*, *Laila* (1927), and *Su`ad the Gipsy* (*Su`ad al-ghajariya*, 1928) so that they may treat it in such a despicable way.³³²

The Lamas’ second film invited renewed criticism. A review of *Catastrophe atop the Pyramids* (*Faji`a fawq al-haram*, 1928) asks in its title “Which has succeeded, Fatima in her role or the company with its ‘Catastrophe’?” Fatima here refers to the film’s female lead actor Fatima Rushdi. The review assails the film on a number of fronts, including its narrative holes, its silliness, and its lapses of judgement. Running through these criticisms is a disdain for the Lama brothers’ incompetence as filmmakers and ignorance of Egyptian life: “The film shows a scene of an Alexandrian beach, another of the pyramids, one of a citadel’s shadow, a scene of the desert, and another of the Nile to which they added around a thousand kisses of its lovers.” The review goes on to suggest that the film should be called *Catastrophe to the Pockets of Egyptians*, not *Catastrophe atop the Pyramids*.³³³

The Lama brothers background may have been complicated by the suspicious reception they received in the Egyptian press early in their Egyptian cinematic career, in the late 1920s. As recently as 2008, scholar and historian Iman Amir marked them as Jews in an article that cited a

³³¹ El-Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 253-257.

³³² M. D., “Innahum asa’u ilayna akthar min al-ajanib” (They Have Mistreated Us More than Foreigners), *al-Sabah*, May 21, 2018, 8, private collection, Cairo.

³³³ “Fatima Rushdi wa sharikat Condor film: Ayuhuma najah Fatima fi dawriha aw al-sharika fi ‘karithatha’?” (Fatima Rushdi and Condor Films Company: Which has succeeded, Fatima in her role or the company in its ‘catastrophe’?) *al-Sabah*, December 16, 1928, 12-13, private collection, Cairo.

note to an Egyptian daily from someone who had seen their contrived *Catastrophe atop the Pyramids* (1928): “I advise the messieurs and foreigners Ibrahim and Badr Lama to entrust authoring their tales to Egyptians, because they are Jews and know nothing about the customs and religion of Muslims.” What is curious about Amir’s claim is that it is excerpted from Ahmed El Hadari’s *History of Cinema in Egypt, 1931-1940*, even though El Hadari, arguably the most authoritative historian of the Egyptian silent cinema, does not himself think that the brothers were Jewish, nor does he even think they were of Arab origin for that matter. El Hadari, elsewhere posits that the brothers’ original last name was not al-A’ma, as had been assumed, but Lamas. El Hadari learned this from a relative of Ibrahim’s, who had reportedly clarified the matter upon meeting international film star Fernando Lamas, who had told this relative that the Lamas brothers were from Fernando’s same family in Argentina. Speculation understandable, it is most likely that the brothers were of Christian Palestinian origin.³³⁴

Within several years past enforcement of the 1929 Citizenship Law, the brothers’ Egyptianess was surprisingly endorsed in the press. In response to a letter from a Lama films fan, who had enquired about their upcoming release *Ghost of the Past* (Shabah al-Madi, 1934), the magazine’s respondent compliments the reader for his enthusiasm for Egyptian films, then confers Egyptianess on the film *Ghost of the Past*: “Because [Ghost of the Past] is Egyptian, directed by Egyptians, produced by Egyptians, and performed by Egyptians.”³³⁵ Were the brothers Egyptian because their film was Egyptian and in 1934 Egyptian films were necessarily

³³⁴ In an encyclopedia published by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in 2007, in celebration of a century since the production of the first Egyptian motion picture (and a year before the piece by Amir), the entry on Badr Lama showcases an obituary notice that contains a Christian cross and names family members whose names strike me as Christian. See *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria*, ed. Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda, 165.

³³⁵ See “Ibrahim Lama-Badr Lama-Abdalla Lama... wa al-film al-jadid “shabah min al-madi,” [... And the New Film “Ghost of the Past,” *Kawakib al-sinema* [Cinema Planets], October 1, 1934, 19, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

made by Egyptians? Or were their films Egyptian because by 1934 the brothers were bona fide Egyptians? How did the brothers, over the course of seven years or so, become Egyptian—not Egyptianized, but Egyptian? The answer has to do with two domains of evaluation, their persons and their films.

The Lama brothers' films, as produced by their own Condor Films, were continually censured in the press, including for their inauthentic Egyptianess. This negative press for their films did not seem to extend to their persons, possibly because other Egyptian films were subjected to even more resistance, including from the censorship office itself. Compared to *Makhzan al-`ushaq* (Lovers Depot, 1933) or *Magical Eyes* (*`Uyoun sahira*, 1934) the Lama films current were scoffed at mildly.³³⁶

What the brothers had done to Egyptianize themselves is what likely promoted their Egyptian credentials. It is near certain that the brothers had applied for and acquired Egyptian citizenship. This is for two theoretical reasons. First, the Lama brothers would not have gained from the Capitulations policy, since neither their original homeland of Palestine nor their family's adopted country of Chile were Capitulations signatories.³³⁷ Therefore, the Lamas would have been motivated to acquire citizenship for its privileges. The second historical circumstance that points to the brothers' having acquired Egyptians citizenship is that they both lived in Egypt until death many years after the issue of the Citizenship Law of 1929.

³³⁶ Ahmed El Hadary, *Tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz' al-thani min bidayat 1931 ila akhir 1940* [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II from the beginning of 1931 to the end of 1940] (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 2007), 101-102, 132-133.

³³⁷ The only South American country signatory to the Capitulations agreement was Brazil. For the full list of countries signatory, see Edward A. Van Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States at Cairo, *Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire since the Year 1150, PART 1*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881. 10-24, <https://archive.org/stream/capitulatonsot00statgoog/#page/n12>.

Another attribute of the brothers that likely conferred legitimacy upon their Egyptianizing is that they spoke Arabic upon arrival in Egypt in the mid-1920s, according to Ibrahim.³³⁸ They would have likely spoken in a Palestinian, not an Egyptian dialect. By the mid-thirties, however, they would have possibly become conversant in dialectal Egyptian, as evidenced by Badr's performed Arabic in the earliest of their survived films *Ibn al-sahra'* (Son of the Desert, 1942). The Lamas would have probably sounded Egyptian by the mid-1930s.

The final explanation I have for the recasting of the immigrant filmmakers as Egyptian has to do with their names. Ibrahim had been the name used in the Egyptian press from the outset of his career. Ibrahim is a common name among Muslims. As is Badr, the other Lama's adopted name, a name that deserves theoretical analysis. As mentioned, this brother's name as printed in the press into the late 1920s was Pedro,³³⁹ but by the final year of this study, 1934, he was referred to exclusively as Badr. What is curious about this adopted name is that Badr is not the Arabized form of Pedro. Rather, Butrus is, and is a name common among Egyptian Christians. Pedro did not change his name to Butrus, however, but to Badr, which means *full moon*. The full moon figures centrally in the Islamic Hijri calendar, a lunar calendar. Perhaps more notable is that Badr is the name of the first battle that the Prophet Muhammad and his followers waged, a battle that they won decisively, and which impacted the rise of Islam markedly. Badr is a name far more associated with Islam than with Christianity. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Ibrahim began to employ his son in their films in the early 1930s, a son named Abdalla. The three names mentioned together—Ibrahim, Badr, and Abdalla—would have a casual observer

³³⁸ "Hadith ma` sharikat Condor film" (Talk with Condor Film Company), unknown publication, likely dated to 1928, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

³³⁹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 228-229, 245.

assume that the Lama family is Muslim, which itself would have lessened the difference between themselves and the majority of indigenous Egyptian society.

The Lamas had over the course of the decade spent in Egypt likely sounded increasingly Egyptian and could have been mistaken for Muslim. As their Egyptianess integrated, their works' nationalist credentials heightened. For Egyptianess, in degree and in form, in a highly nationalist political atmosphere of an Egypt still not fully independent, was central to valuing and evaluating practices in the name of Egypt, such as those of the cinema.

A Woman Flagrantly Scorned

Egyptian citizenship disclosed Egyptianess nominally and officially, but its disclosure in social life, in manner and extent, warrants its own examination. Beginning with the promulgation of the Citizenship Law in March of 1929³⁴⁰, residents of non-Egyptian origin qualified for citizenship forthwith, by virtue of Egyptian provenance or duration of uninterrupted residence, or by applying according to certain conditions. As Thomas Philipp has demonstrated, acquiring Egyptian citizenship was facile for former Ottoman subjects,³⁴¹ those of whom proximate to Egypt would have spoken Arabic, including those of Levantine origin, even if they were not Muslim, such as the Lama brothers or Assia Dagher. Fluency in Arabic certainly elevated Egyptian cultural competency, which aided such practitioners in Egyptianizing.

My speculation on this score is supported by the accounts of the three Europeans who *did* manage to Egyptianize alongside their Middle Eastern counterparts: Alvis Orfanelli, Staphan

³⁴⁰ The Law was published in the leading daily newspaper *al-Ahram*. "Qanun al-jinsiya" (Citizenship Law), February 28, 1929, 1, 5, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁴¹ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 146.

Rosti, and Togo Mizrahi. The three were fluent enough to perform in speaking parts, once synchronized sound films came on in the early 1930s. All three were raised in Egypt, Alexandria specifically, and at least two were born therein. Orfanelli, whose birthplace is unknown, was ten or so when he joined Aziz and Dorés Cinematograph in Alexandria, in the early 1910s. Orfanelli continued to live and work actively in Egypt as a cinematographer up to 1961, year of his death. Similarly, Rosti died in 1964 while shooting the last scenes in an Egyptian film. Mizrahi left Egypt in 1948, two years after producing his last Egyptian film. All three would have qualified for Egyptian citizenship after the Law of 1929, although only Rosti is known to have acquired it.³⁴²

Egyptian citizenship likely mattered more to non-western foreign residents of Egypt than it did to Europeans in most cases. Such immigrants did not benefit from Capitulations policies as noted, but they also likely had left regions less economically prosperous and developed than Egypt, unlike their European counterparts. Such Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Tunisians, Moroccans, Armenians, and others residing in Egypt may not have held travel documents to take them anywhere worth leaving for, including their homelands, even after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, year that Britain granted Egypt a unilateral (and nominal)

³⁴² Orfanelli, assuming he had maintained “normal residency” in Egypt for over ten years would have qualified for Egyptian citizenship, under the proviso that he present proof of three requirements: “good behavior,” gainful employment, and knowledge of Arabic. See Article Eight in “Citizenship Law,” *al-Ahram*, 1, 5. For more on Orfanelli, see his entry in *The Birth of the Seventh art in Alexandria*, 47-55. Rosti and Mizrahi, born in Egypt to fathers who were not principles of the Ottoman Empire, qualified for Egyptian citizenship at puberty, assuming that they had maintained normal residence in Egypt then and on the condition that they forfeit whatever other citizenship they may have. See Article Seven in “Citizenship Law,” *al-Ahram*, 1. Rosti, whose father abandoned him and his mother in Egypt, grew up poor, and as such may not have had much to gain from holding a European citizenship, which may explain why he took Egyptian citizenship. For more on Rosti, see his entry in *The Birth of the Seventh art in Alexandria*, 125-137. Mizrahi, who was born into an affluent Italian family may have found it detrimental to his business interests to forsake his Italian citizenship for Egyptian and never did so, even after the Montreux Convention Regarding the Abolition of the Capitulations in Egypt, in 1937. For more on Mizrahi, see his entry in *The Birth of the Seventh art in Alexandria*, 33-45.

independence. What I have gathered and have already offered concerning the Lama brothers is that the introduction of the Citizenship Law in 1929 to an Egyptian public divided on the terms of Egyptianess impacted the terms of reference and of description that the Egyptian press used in publishing about Arabic speaking residents of Egypt.

An account of actor George Abyad's aptness to lead the Cairo Opera in the Egyptian press after publication of the Citizenship Law illustrates this discursive turn. In late 1931, *al-Musawar* reported that the government, on the passing of its Italian director of the Cairo Opera, was intending to appoint of Geroge Abyad to the post, considering his longstanding struggle and sacrifice for the sake of his art. The celebratory column goes on to recount Abyad's lifework, mentioning that his family had sold possessions of theirs in Syria to support George's education in the theatre in Paris (to which he had moved from Alexandria). Nevertheless, the piece concluded with, "After this struggle, is Mr. Abyad not deserving of this post that has been occupied by foreigners?"³⁴³ The following week, *al-Musawar* dispelled the previous issue's news above in reporting that the Ministry of Knowledge (*ma`arif*—later renamed Ministry of Education) had prepared a memo naming the opera's new director as one Cantoni. This blurb concludes with "Is not the man who has served acting for twenty-eight years deserving of this post? More so, is Mr. George Abyad the Egyptian national who worked in the Royal Opera for twenty successive years suitable for this artistic post?" Thus, according to *al-Musawar* a person could be of foreign origin and an Egyptian national at once, certainly somebody who had contributed to Egypt as Abyad had.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Al-Bulqasi, "Ustadh George Abyad wa al-obira al-malakiya" (Mr. George Abyad and the Royal Opera), September 11, 1931, 14, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁴⁴ Al-Bulqasi, "Mudir al-obera al-jadid" (The Opera's New Director), September 18, 1931, 20, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

Egyptianizing depended an array of factors noted above—national origin, religion, fluency in Arabic, and contribution to Egyptian society—but what of gender? It so happens that one of the leading cineastes of the late silent and early synchronized sound eras in Egypt was an immigrant named Assia Dagher. My examination of press and archival materials of the day have led me to believe that Dagher was denied the inductive embrace some prominent male Arab cineastes enjoyed after the promulgation of the Citizenship Law of 1929, because of her independent womanhood. Dagher had moved to Egypt from Lebanon (not yet independent, but part of French-occupied Syria at the time) in 1923 and appeared as an extra in *Layla* (1927), the second narrative feature length film domestically produced and the first financed by an Arab Egyptian (theater leading woman `Aziza Amir's spouse Ahmed al-Shiri'i). Dagher then took an occupational leap by producing and playing lead in her next film *Delicate Young Woman of the Desert* (Ghadat al-Sahra', 1929). Dagher did the same in her third film *A Guilty Conscience* (Wakhz al-Dhamir, 1931)³⁴⁵ and it was during my review of this film's materials that I encountered a peculiar remark by Dagher. When interviewed about the film following its release and to the first question put to Dagher about how she came to adore the cinema, not the theatre, Dagher responded that she had fallen for the cinema at first sight and had fantasized about appearing on the silver screen one day. She had then realized her fantasy and now strived with her "money and her very being" to accomplish her dream. Why would Dagher assert that she endeavored with *her money*, ahead of her "being" no less? Talking about money in this way struck me as unusually indelicate for the period, especially considering Dagher's politesse

³⁴⁵ `Atif al-Nimr, "Assia wa Na`ima `Akif: raidatan bihudur baq" (Assia and Naima Akif: Two Pioneers with a Lingering Presence), *Jaridat al-funun [Arts Paper]* 3, no. 24 (2003): 6-9.
<https://archive.alsharekh.org/Articles/260/18850/426382>

otherwise.³⁴⁶ I suspect that Dagher was speaking defensively, in light of what had flagrantly been rumored about her money.

A disturbing letter is what I encountered fortuitously when looking in a file I had come upon in the Egyptian national archive, a file dating to the early 1930s, curiously titled “Citizenship Contestations.” Among other documents, the file contained a traducement upon the reputation of Assia Dagher and her family in the form of an anonymous letter sent to the court of King Fouad of Egypt. The letter concerns Assia’s sister Miriam and niece Mary (who had appeared in Assia’s films), though Assia seems its real target. The letter’s author announces himself as an Egyptianized Syrian driven to write for the sake of protecting the reputation of the Syrian immigrant contingent in Egypt. The author claims to have decided to write to the court upon hearing that Miriam and Mary had applied for Egyptian citizenship, for his grave concern that such women should be permitted to join the ranks of Syrian Egyptians. The character assassin offers that Assia’s sister Miriam has no source of “honorable” income known, neither in Egypt nor in her home country, that she has resided in Egypt for some time with her two daughters without an evident “honorable” profession with which to support themselves.

The author next asserts that the case of mother and daughter is much the same with Assia who had regrettably already been granted Egyptian citizenship, the author laments, Assia “who also lives in luxury and opulence though she has no official, known husband, though she owns not an estate nor an orchard.” The author proceeds to describe an incident of which he had learned, that had Assia Dagher cajoling former Prime Minister Sa`id Dhu al-Faqqar, to arrange to have a film of hers screened in the royal palaces. The author concludes by affirming that granting

³⁴⁶ The interviewer closed the piece with a note to the reader about how impressed he was with Dagher’s fine manners. `Abd al-Qadir al-Masiri, “al-Sinema fi Misr: Wakhz al-dhamir” (Cinema in Egypt: A Guilty Conscience), *al-Musawar*, August 21, 1931, 14, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

citizenship to the persons mentioned does not affect himself, only that his Egyptianized Syrian community has enough to suffer, what with “odium directed against it in the papers, magazines, and theatres and persecution in some of the [government] departments ... to add cases that affect morals and mores.” The author seems informed on cultural production in Egypt and keen not only on denying Assia Dagher’s sister and niece Egyptian citizenship, but also on inciting the royal palaces against Assia from the position of patriarchal moral guardianship.³⁴⁷ More telling is that somebody with knowledge of intimate details of the Dagher family background and lifestyle would malignly present Miriam, Mary, and Assia as “women adrift,” to borrow Joanne Meyerowitz’s term, when the letter’s author would have well known that upon emigrating from Lebanon the three were hosted by their relative, journalist for Egypt’s leading daily *al-Ahram* and a renowned one at that, As`ad Dagher.³⁴⁸

I would have written off this letter as an attempt at professional sabotage undertaken by a single person, were it not for a discernable link between it and press coverage that assailed her in two ways I found particular. I have noted in the interview with Dagher discussed earlier her defensive valorization of her money. I surmise that Dagher had caught wind of gossip, exemplified by the letter’s imputation, about a single, recent, young woman immigrant who funded the production of a motion picture. I also offer that its sexist calumny was conveyed in

³⁴⁷ Anonymous letter sent to the royal palaces, filed under “Tu`un fi al-jinsiya” (Citizenship Contestations), *Abdeen Documents*, no. 0069-011718, July 11, 1933, Egyptian National Library and Archives, Cairo.

³⁴⁸ Karen Ward Mahar discusses the history of women’s disempowerment in the American film industry following its mass migration to Hollywood through the end of the silent era in *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 179-203. Similarly, the women pioneers of the late silent and early sound cinemas of Egypt with the exception of Dagher hardly produced or directed past the 1940s. For more on this history of women in the cinema of Egypt see Rebecca Hillauer, *Encyclopedia of Arab Women Filmmakers* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 14, 27-32. Also see Samir Farid’s “Mukhrijat al-sinema fi Misr: min `Aziza Amir ila Inas El-Degheidy” (Women Directors of the Cinema in Egypt: From `Aziza Amir to Inas El-Degheidy), in his *Aflam al-mukhrijat fi al-sinema al-`Arabiya* [The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema] (Cairo: al-Hilal Publishing, 2016), 49-69.

the guise of an inclusive nationalism, an imperative to protect not only “Egyptianized Syrians,” but also Egypt itself. Protecting Egypt is of course a principal concern of nationalists, but the latent chauvinism in the letter above recalls the blatant chauvinism of the nationalist magazine *Screen Art* (1933-34) much referenced and discussed in this study, a magazine that seemed to pointedly and repeatedly denigrate Assia Dagher.

Coverage of Dagher’s work in the Egyptian press had actually been approving, encouraging, even celebratory as conveyed by the interview with her discussed above, and quite concretely in the case of *Screen Art*. The magazine’s founding council of the Cineaste Critics Group ran a survey-contest, in its very first issue, of readers’ opinion of the best Egyptian film of the 1932-33 season (autumn-spring).³⁴⁹ The survey offered five films from which to select, among which was Dagher’s 1933 film *When a Woman Loves* (*ʿInd ma tuhib al-mar`a*), which went on to win by 44% of the vote.³⁵⁰ Here, *Screen Art* dubbed Dagher’s work “Egyptian,” though the magazine never characterized Dagher herself as Egyptian.

The magazine’s coverage of Dagher soured when she opted not to do business with the editor-founders of *Screen Art*. The magazine had reported the founding of a sister Egyptian distribution company Cairo Film Exchange and had forewarned that it would publish the names of local producers contacted who agreed and disagreed to have Cairo Film Exchange distribute for them.³⁵¹ *Screen Art* then acted on its promise by announcing that its sister company had

³⁴⁹ “Ma huwa ahsan sharit misri `urid fi al-mawsim al-sabiq?” (What Is the Best Egyptian Film Screened Last Season?), *Screen Art*, Oct 15, 1933, 26.

³⁵⁰ “Natijat musabaqat al-aflam al-misriya: Sharit `Indama tuhib al-mar`a yafouz bimidaliat jama`at al-nuqqad al-sinema`iyin” (Result of the Egyptian film contest: When You Love a Woman wins the Cineaste Critics Group medal), *Screen Art*, November 12, 1933, 21-22, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁵¹ “al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij: Maktab al-tawzi” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Distribution Office), *Screen Art*, Nov 12, 1933, 5.

reached out to Assia Dagher to offer its services³⁵² and then again to relate that she had opted to contract with a competitor to Cairo Film Exchange: “It appear that Mrs. Assia preferred to support one of her old countryfolk instead of young Egyptians with whom she is grouped only in her recently acquired Egyptianess, so she granted the right to manage her film to the Syrian Behna Brothers.”³⁵³ The Behna family had indeed moved to Egypt from Syria, but was of Assyrian Iraqi origin, not that such distinctions would have mattered to the editors of *Screen Art* which upon Dagher’s rejection of its sister company dispensed with the flattering terms it had used employed earlier to question her loyalty to the country whose citizenship she had recently acquired. Suggesting a foreigner’s disloyalty plainly recalls notions of the foreign infiltrator propagated by Mustafa Kamil, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Screen Art persisted with its imputation of Dagher’s character for the remainder of its short life. It reported that her business partner Ahmed Jalal had married Dagher’s earlier mentioned niece and other business partner Mary Queeny, as if to suggest treachery in lubricity, recalling the earlier discussed anonymous letter sent to King Fouad’s court. Beginning with this notice, *Screen Art* turned to referring to Dagher by her birthname of Almadh (actually Almadha).³⁵⁴ What of *Almadh* then? The “reveal” would seem loaded with subtext, but none that I can discern. Adopting stage names may not have been common in the Egyptian cinema, but it was not unheard of, as was the case with both Lamas. Nor would Dagher’s birthname have exposed or embarrassed her, other than in its rarity. One of modern Egypt’s pioneer film singers was named Almadh. Further, Almadh is standard Arabic, unlike the non-Arabic names of many

³⁵² “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Maktab al-tawzi” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The Distribution Office), *Screen Art*, Dec 9, 1933, 5.

³⁵³ “al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij: Fi maktab al-tawzi” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: In the Distribution Office), *Screen Art*, Dec 16, 1933, 5.

³⁵⁴ “Ahmad Jalal,” *Screen Art*, January 20, 1934, 5, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

Christian Syrian/Lebanese public figures living in Egypt, so the name's "reveal" could not have aimed to disclose her foreignness. Yet exclusively referring to Dagher by her birthname *could* have aimed to suggest Dagher's misrepresentation, to hint that this cineaste was a foreign fraud, like so many who had taken leadership roles in Egypt's cinema industry.³⁵⁵ According to *Screen Art* itself, Dagher reportedly thought the magazine's coverage of her "prejudicial."³⁵⁶ It was prejudicial; *Screen Art* referred to no other Arab Egyptian cineaste in such terms insidious and scandalous, though it did, as earlier discussed, inveigh against "foreign" owners of the cinema industry in Egypt.

Moreover, *Screen Art*'s coverage was also sexist in its body shaming. Whereas the suggestion of fraudulence above was something I encountered only in *Screen Art*, among the Egyptian press, her physique was mentioned in multiple publications, including for its own sake. References to Dagher's body began with her first starring role in *Delicate Young Woman of the Desert* (1929): "What has become apparent to us from this film is that Mrs. Asia possesses a reserve of preparation for silent film ... which supports that natural beauty of her appearance and fine physique, not available among our actresses..."³⁵⁷ This critic's review others Dagher doubly, by marking her as non-Egyptian and by qualifying her body as non-Egyptian. Calling out foreignness, including of those Muslim or Arab, may have been common, but the rhapsodizing about an actress in Egyptian films was reserved for the lone "foreign" woman filmmaker Asia Dagher.

³⁵⁵ In a later issue, *Screen Art* referred to the company that Jalal worked for parenthetically as Almadh Dagher Film, when its actual name was Lotus Film. See "Hadith mo'lim" (Painful Accident), February 10, 1934, 4.

³⁵⁶ "Ighma'" (Fainting), February 17, 1934, 4.

³⁵⁷ This review appeared in *al-'Arousa* [Bride] magazine, May 15, 1929, 15-16 and is quoted in *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 320-322.

Whereas male Arab practitioners from abroad such as of the Lamas and George Abyad benefitted from their efforts at Egyptianizing following the publication of the Citizenship Law of 1929, by earning ascriptions of *Egyptian* for their persons, Dagher to my knowledge did not. Nor to my knowledge were other lead female actors of the Egyptian cinema subjected in the press to the salacious terms used to describe Dagher's body. Instead, in the years following the Citizenship Law, the Egyptian press continued to go out of its way to remark on it. In reviewing her 1931 film: "I am amazed that Mrs. Assia appeared in the film fatter than she is in the real world."³⁵⁸ In reviewing her 1934 film *Magical Eyes*, critic for the satirical paper *al-Kashkoul* wondered, "Oh, but what do we do with those who wanted Assia, with her magical eyes and teeming full body to be the Eastern Frankenstein who terrorizes and frightens..."³⁵⁹

No publication denigrated Dagher in the way *Screen Art* did, however. Itself a publication of the Cineaste Critics Group, who wrote for other publications, such as the nightly *Star of the East* (Kawkab al-Sharq) and the weekly current affairs magazine *al-Sabah*, *Screen Art* nevertheless represented a broad swipe of cinema critics in the Egyptian press corps, as argued in the previous chapter.³⁶⁰ In the earlier mentioned report of Ahmad Jalal's having married Assia Dagher's niece and collaborator Mary Queeny, *Screen Art* introduced Lotus Films as "the company that is funded and whose leading roles are performed by owner of those hot eyes and

³⁵⁸ This review was written by Fikri Abadha in *al-Dunya al-Muswara* [The Photographed World], January 30, 1932, 2, and appears in Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 20.

³⁵⁹ This review was signed by M on February 26, 1934, 18, and appears in Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 133.

³⁶⁰ *Screen Art's* secretary editor, Muhammad Kamil Mustafa, served as film critic for *Star of the East* magazine, as denoted on the cover page of the first five of the magazine's eighteen issues, and as offered in a notice of Mustafa's absence from the pages of the magazine due to illness, as announced in "al-Zamil Kamil Mustafa" (Colleague Kamil Mustafa), December 2, 1933, 4. Moreover, Director Ahmed Badrakhan wrote for *al-Sabah*. See Zakaria Abd al-Hamid, "Majallat 'Fan al-sinema'" ("Screen Art" Magazine), in *Sahafat al-sinema fi Misr: al-nisf al-awwal min al-qarn al-'ishrin* [Cinema Press in Egypt: The First Half of the Twentieth century], ed. Faridah Mar'i (Cairo: Egyptian Film Center, 1996), 225.

that jiggly, packed, full body.”³⁶¹ Reporting two weeks later on Cinema Fouad’s postponement of screening of Dagher’s *Magical Eyes* (‘Uyoun sahira, 1934) the magazine’s correspondent thought that the cinema did so out of “pity for the thick actress ... so that the audience would not be shocked all at once by her body as it fills the screen no matter how far she goes...”³⁶² This blurb was the nadir of the Egyptian press’s commentary on Asia Dagher’s body in the early 1930s.

Tellingly, *Screen Art*, the most staunchly nationalist of the magazines that I have reviewed for this study, a chauvinistic nationalism evidenced variously, produced such invective against a Dagher who in these early years of her career (as throughout it) continually demonstrated her devotion to Egypt. The magazine had itself illustrated this in acknowledging Dagher’s nationalist feat of producing the first Egyptian narrative feature to have its sound recorded domestically, compared to previously produced Egyptian talkies whose sound segments had been recorded abroad.³⁶³ In her film, *A Guilty Conscience* (Wakhz al-dhamir, 1931), she tackled the hotly debated phenomenon of eligible young Egyptian men marrying foreign women to their own and their families’ detriment.³⁶⁴ In her film *Delicate Young Woman of the Desert* (Ghadat al-sahra’, 1929), she “corrected many of the errors that filled American and European narrative films about the customs of Bedouin and their morals.”³⁶⁵ Dagher even changed the title of her company from the original Arab Film Company to Lotus Film, as if, having asserted her

³⁶¹ “Ahmad Jalal,” *Screen Art*, January 20, 1934, 5, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁶² “Film al-sayida Almadh” (Mrs. Almadh’s Film), *Screen Art*, Feb 3, 1934, 5.

³⁶³ “Lotus film fi khams sanawat” (Lotus Film in Five years), Oct 15, 1933, 22-23.

³⁶⁴ See “Wakhz al-dhammir” (A Guilty Conscience), *al-Musawar*, June 12, 1931, 20, Main Library, American University in Cairo. This subject was still hotly in vogue, several years after the Egyptian prince Ali Kamel Fahmy had been murdered by his French spouse Marguerite Alibert, a crime for which she was then acquitted by a jury sympathetic to Alibert’s defense that she had been subjected to verbal abuse by the “Oriental.” Egyptian film pioneer Mohamed Bayoumi covered Fahmey’s funeral in one of his newsfilms, as discussed later in this study.

³⁶⁵ “Ghadat al-sahra” (Delicate Young Woman of the Desert), unknown publication, likely dating to 1929, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

Arabness, to boldly declare her Egyptianess, the lotus figuring prominently in ancient Egyptian iconography.

In addition to Dagher's efforts to enhance her nationalist credentials, she shortly managed to connect with established institutions and persons of the Egyptian state, so as to curry favor with them, all before applying for and gaining Egyptian citizenship. The assaultive letter examined earlier mentioned her connection to former Prime Minister Sa'id Dhu al-Faqqar. For *A Guilty Conscience* (1931) her second film as producer, Dagher hired the Egyptian Company for Acting and Cinema, founded by Bank Misr, the signature nationalist private corporation of post-independence Egypt, a conglomerate examined later in the next chapter. Notably, *Conscience* was shot in estates of Cairo's wealthy and powerful, including those of its governor Mahmoud Sidqi³⁶⁶ and of the minister of education Bahey al-Din Barkat. Further, the Egyptian government allowed her production to set a precedent in shooting in the Egyptian Museum and offered her and her crew first class train passes to the various cities in which production then took place. In fact, officials must have been so impressed by the film's nationalist credentials that the Egyptian government went on to buy distribution rights to her film, for its promise to serve as potent propaganda in promoting Egypt, what with its fetching imagery and for its not containing any depictive offense.³⁶⁷ The Egyptian government then awarded Dagher a financial sum to add to the fee paid to distribute *A Guilty Conscience*. Finally, and significantly, the Egyptian government's Council of Ministers, as constitutionally required, approved granting Dagher Egyptian citizenship.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁶ `Abd al-Qadir al-Masiri, "al-Sinima fi Misr: wakhz al-dhamir" (Cinema in Egypt: A Guilty Conscience), *al-Musawar*, August 21, 1931, 14, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

³⁶⁷ This I have surmised from the reviews in the press of the day, not from having watched the film, which is, like all others of Dagher's discussed here, lost to my knowledge.

³⁶⁸ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 16-17,21.

As noted earlier, *Screen Art* did describe Dagher's film *When You Love a Woman* (1933) as "Egyptian," although this was before the magazine had turned on her. Not once did *Screen Art* magazine qualify Dagher as an Egyptian, despite her having become a naturalized Egyptian before the magazine had come into being. *Screen Art* over three early issues published an "honor board" that recognized a cinema practitioner or institution, four in all, one of whom was Egyptianized, owner and manager of Cinema Triumph Alexander Apteckman. The "honor" was presented in a framed half-page with name and justification, in this case for his having gained Egyptian citizenship and for having mediated, without a fee, between Cinema Fouad and Warner Bros, to have the Fouad serve as WB's second run venue in Egypt (first run being in Apteckman's Cinema Triumph). Here was perhaps the only case of *Screen Art* recognizing an Egyptianized non-Arab.³⁶⁹

What did Apteckman do that Dagher did not, it must be asked? She had gained Egyptian citizenship, just like he. She had contributed to the reputation and to the industrial output of Egypt in a way that arguably benefitted the nation more than Apteckman's ownership and management of an exhibition house. The council of ministers itself made a point, doubly, of expressing the Egyptian government's gratitude for her contribution. Nor do I believe that the short-lived weekly's abusive coverage of Dagher had to do with her cutthroat ways, publicized in relation to her financial battles and the like.³⁷⁰ Nothing that Dagher could have done in her career

³⁶⁹ November 12, 1933, 27. However, as discussed in the previous chapter *Screen Art*'s editors apologized to its readers, who wrote in significant numbers to complain, for honoring a non-Egyptian as Apteckman, as if his having earned Egyptian citizenship had meant nothing.

³⁷⁰ She reportedly refused to pay to of the actors on her film *A Guilty Conscience*, from which a legal dispute sensationalized in the press ensued. See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 20-21. Also see *Screen Art*'s response to a reader's letter in the regular feature "Su'al wa jawab" (Question and Answer), under "Hilmi Zaydan, Shobra," December 2, 1933, 29.

up to 1934 would have competed with the unpredictable, treacherous, explosive assaults that Youssef Wahby leveled against friend and foe.³⁷¹

Judging from the intensity and frequency of tirades against foreign entrepreneurs, owners, and investors a reader may infer the slight of pride, the flagrancy, the injury that these men had suffered over the years, added to which was rejection of their business proposal by a “foreign” woman. Indeed, all of *Screen Art*’s writers were men, men who must have felt emasculated, being denied ownership of property and entry into an industry that dealt in the product that had animated their imaginations, the cinema. To be denied economic access by a foreign man was something that the nationalist writers of *Screen Art* had suffered and had resolved to fight, but to be rejected by a foreign woman, a manless woman no less, was more than such men could endure. Judging from how the magazine’s editors turned on Dagher I gather that they had suffered her and placated her for the sake of self-promotion and when she shattered their aspirations to do business with her they could not help but let their pent-up loathing rip.

Screen Art persisted for two months after it had turned on Dagher, having been ultimately published in eighteen weekly issues. Assia Dagher’s career lasted until 1971, one in which she worked as lead actor or producer in forty-nine films, a run during which she would launch or

³⁷¹ Any review of current events and culture publications beginning with the foundation of Wahby’s legendary Rameses Theatre in 1923 would produce a plethora of reporting on Wahby’s quarrels, disputes, and lawsuits. Diana Karim reported that Wahby even cheated her father, his boyhood friend and oftentimes collaborator, including on the first Egyptian talkie *Awlad al-dhawāt* (Sons of the Aristocrats, 1932). See Tariq Dhahir and Mufrih Hijab, “Rasa’il al-mashahir 16: rasa’il muktashif al-nujūm and mukhrij awal film misri natiq, 2 min 4” (Letters of the Discoverer of Stars and Director of the First Egyptian Talking Film, 2 of 4), *al-Ra’i*, May 1, 2013, <http://www.alraimedia.com/Home/Details?id=a9e478a2-d410-4071-bd43-d0372ce976f9>. The most rigorous biography of Wahby—for his autobiography in three parts yields little—is by Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: sanawat al-majd wa al-dumou`* [Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears] (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 2016).

boost the careers of such luminary directors as Henry Barakat, `Iz al-Din Dhu al-Faqar, Youssef Shahin, and Kamal al-Sheikh.³⁷² Dagher ripped last; she ripped long last.

A Concept Still Useful

National Cinema is a concept with a great deal of use to it yet. Its utility depends on the concept's applicability, however, so it is not surprising that as the concept has expanded referentially it has lost utility. The term and its attendant scholarship may be of greatest value as a means of keeping a watchful eye on the engagement by nation-state governments in the cinema. As for the peoples that nation-states are expected to represent, I propose the concept of nationalist cinema as a productive discursive ground for research and analysis of how people are represented by the cinema, how it speaks to their national identities and for them. Considering the novelty of *nationalist cinema*, I have proposed a scheme to credential film production, distribution, and exhibition. Only that, assessing nationalist credentials of cinematic activity itself requires credentials! Assessing nationalist credibility requires from the assessor a familiarity with the people ostensibly represented by a film's making, its territorial selling, or its public screening. Despite its vitality for over 125 years, the cinema has yet to speak about or for certain peoples, for good or for bad. If *national cinema* serves to keep a watchful eye on government in power, the *nationalist cinema* is ultimately a conceptual instrument for focusing the other eye on the people who make up nations, even if they have yet to make up nation-states.

³⁷² `Atif al-Nimr, "Assia and Naima Akif: Two Pioneers with a Lingering Presence," 6-9.

Chapter 3

News of the Nation: Mohamed Bayoumi's Newsfilms and the Emergence of National Cinema in the Newly Independent Egypt, 1923-1935

Of the sixteen Egyptian silent films extant and institutionally held at present, all but one were made by Egyptian film pioneer Mohamed Bayoumi (1894-1963).³⁷³ Fifteen of Bayoumi's films have survived in full or fragment, made between 1923 and 1933, of which fourteen are silent, including the filmmaker's eleven surviving newsfilms.³⁷⁴ In this chapter, I examine Bayoumi's newsfilms topically and structurally, contextualizing them within nationalist discourses and national developments in an Egypt that had gained its nominal independence from Great Britain in 1922. Egypt's first national government then came into power the following year, the year that saw the release of Bayoumi's first film as director/producer—*The Nation Welcomes Sa`d Zaghlul* (1923). I also aim to correlate Bayoumi's newsfilms to the interests of Egypt's first national bank—Bank Misr, founded in 1920—and to a subsidiary of its holding company Misr Group, namely the Company for Acting and Cinema, established in 1925. This humble production house, renamed Studio Misr a decade later, would become a cornerstone of the

³⁷³ The other is the silent narrative feature *al-Sahir al-saghir* (The Little Magician, 1932), according to Egyptian film critic and scholar Samir Farid. See his "Safahat majhoulah min tarikh al-sinema al-misriya" (Unknown Pages in the History of Egyptian Cinema) (Cairo: The Egyptian Committee for Celebration of the Cinema's Centennial, 1995-1996, Supreme Council of Culture), 43. In 1987, scholar and filmmaker Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi connected with Bayoumi's family, who had held onto his films. He then made a documentary about Bayoumi in 1987. Al-Qalyoubi, in 2009, published a book about the director titled *Mohammad Bayoumi: al-ra'id al-awal lil-sinema al-misriya* [Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema], which has regrettably gone out of print. About the find, see the above noted essay by Farid, as well as in Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda, *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria* (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandria, 2007), 22-28, and in Sa'id Shimi, *Tarikh al-taswir al-sinema'i fi Misr, 1897-1996* [History of Cinematography in Egypt, 1897-1996] (Cairo: The National Cinema Center, 1996), 74.

³⁷⁴ Bayoumi made fifteen newsfilms in total, most of which were made under the moniker *Amon* between 1923 and 1925. See Ali Abu Shadi, *Waqqa'i al-sinema al-misriya* [Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema] (Damascus: Ministry of Cultural Press, 2004), 24-49.

Egyptian film industry, boosted by the state and operating in film production, distribution and exhibition.

I begin by examining newsfilms theoretically and historically beyond Egypt, before examining the history of newsfilms in Egypt predating Bayoumi's first in 1923. In doing so I document how Egypt's *nationalist* cinema predates by decades the emergence of Egypt's *national* cinema industry in the 1930s, and as such warrants distinction. Following this foundational delineation of historical distinction and owing to my viewing of Bayoumi's films, I wish to then examine the nationalism of his newsfilms in thematic and structural terms that speak to their maker's own nationalist predilection. In addition, I relate relevant historical aspects of politics, culture and industrialization, roughly between 1923 and 1935; specifically, I correlate Bayoumi's films to potent cultural discourses about pharaonism, Islam, and sport. For the sake of organizing my analysis, I place Bayoumi's newsfilms into three groupings:

1) Newsfilms whose titles do name personages: *The Nation Welcomes Sa`d Zaghlul* (1923), *Scenes from the funeral of Ali Bey Fahmy (Shot by his Wife and Acquitted by an English Court* (1924), *Sports Events Commemorating the Coronation of His Majesty King Fouad in the Barracks of Abdeen* (1924), *The Funeral of Sir Lee Stack* (1924), *Al Wafd Committee Celebration in Alexandria on the Occasion of Welcoming and Bidding Farewell to the Official Negotiating Delegation Headed by Al Nahass Pasha* (1930), and *Great Jubilation in Celebrating the Coronation of King Fouad of Egypt* (1932).

2) Newsfilms whose titles do not name personages: about national events prioritized in identification over government representatives who may have attended—*The opening of Tutankhamun's Tomb* (1924), *The Caravan Carrying the Cover for the Holy Kaaba Returning without Fulfilment of Pilgrimage Due to Differences between the Egyptian Government and the*

King of Hejaz (1924), *The Transportation of al-Morsy Abu al-Abbass Mosque's Pillars* (1932), and *Football match between Egyptian National and Austrian Alhakou Team* (1925). Considering these four films' non-reliance on personage for appeal, I wish to expound on three cultural vectors of Egyptian national identity in modernity that they address—pharaonism, religion (particularly Islam), and sport.

3) Long newsfilms: In the third category I place a single film, Bayoumi's final newsfilm and likely his last of all—*The Inauguration of Al-Said Club in Alexandria* (1933). Although this film fits into the framework of the second category thematically, it does not formally, being by far the longest and most complex of his newsfilms. Moreover, bookending Bayoumi's oeuvre examined, setting this film apart and alone, serves an apt transition into a closing discussion of the origins of the national cinema in Egypt, beginning with the act of commissioning the film *The Sultanic Guard*, in 1916, leading to the historical nexus between the cinema related career paths of Bayoumi's and Tal'at Harb's, in 1925, unto salient developments of the decade to follow, one that saw the Egyptian government's increased and varied interest in and support of a domestic film industry, particularly of production, leading up to the founding of the proto-national Studio Misr, in 1935, the first bona fide film studio in the Middle East.

In the final segment of this chapter, I attend to the noted early history of the Misr Group, especially its Company for Acting and Cinema, asserting the Group's government connections and interrogating its ostensible nationalist credentials. In linking Misr Group's cinema related practices in its first decade, leading up to the rise of a successful and robust domestic cinema,³⁷⁵ to Mohamed Bayoumi's newsfilms, discussed in the middle segment of this chapter, I hope to

³⁷⁵ *Domestic* though not *national*, according to my conception of the latter that I lay out later.

explore the origins of the intersection between nationalist, cultural, including artistic, expression and national cultural industry, centrally the cinema industry in Egypt.

Nationalist Newsfilms, Not a National Newsreel—a theoretical and historical Distinction

National and *nationalist* may both nominalize as *nationalism*, but I draw a distinction between nationalist and national cinema so as to acknowledge the three major approaches to reifying nationalism in the Egyptian experience of modernity, during what scholars have labeled Egypt's "liberal age": political, economic and cultural.³⁷⁶ Despite the fluidity of the term, the conception of national cinema I employ in this chapter describes the political economy subtending practices of the cinema, as supported by the state, in the domains of activity typically identified as those of production, distribution and exhibition. Hence, my application of *national cinema* is not territorial; it does not privilege production, nor does it preclude a transnational dimension. Rather, it acknowledges that export and import and the movement of people across borders were instrumental to the fiscal health of the cinema in Egypt, aiding in its growth over the decades.³⁷⁷ Egyptian films were exported to the Arabic speaking region beginning in 1928,

³⁷⁶ These three approaches have been identified by Modern Middle East historian Ziad Fahmy in *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 11. As for the label *liberal*, it has been used to describe the political experience of the newly independent nation by Afaf Lutfi Sayyid-Marsot in *Egypt's Liberal Experiment, 1922-1936* (Los Angeles: University of Cairo Press, 1977); to brand industrial policy beginning at independence and ending in 1952, year of the Free Officers Revolution, by Robert Vitalis in *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); and to characterize Egyptian society's experience between the 1860s and the 1920s, by Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski in *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900-1930* (London: Oxford University Press, 1986).

³⁷⁷ Andrew Higson complicated the conceptualization of national cinema in his influential essay "The Concept of National Cinema" in *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 52-67. Higson's essay was published at the end of the 1980s. About the 1990s and 2000s Dudley Andrew observed that scholars were increasingly jettisoning and repudiating the "territorial model" that is national cinema, in favor of the extra-territorial term *transnational cinema*. Yet, Andrew's own reference to national cinema strikes me as reductive, despite the utility of his "in-between" regionalism in the case of Egyptian cinema's export market. See

during the silent era, paving the way for a region-leading production to join the region leading distribution and exhibition activity in Egypt and for decades to come.³⁷⁸ Film export also whet the appetite of the Egyptian government to intensify its own involvement in and backing of cinematic practices.

The Egyptian government first engaged and expended on cinema in 1916, as I detail later, around a decade sooner than suggested in pervasive film histories. The beginnings of film practice, at least in distribution and exhibition, may be traced to the earliest screenings in Alexandria and Cairo, the first of which, in 1896, were carried out by Henri Dello Strologo, who as Lumière agent could be considered Egypt's first distributor.³⁷⁹ A Lumière Cinématographe exhibitor would open in each of Alexandria and Cairo by the end of that century. As for production, it began domestically in the first decade of the twentieth century and would take on an industrial guise with the founding of the production company SITCIA in Alexandria in 1917.³⁸⁰ National cinema in Egypt predates the robust industrialization of its production, which would take place after the emergence of the "uttering cinema" as it was most often referred to in

"Islands in the Sea of Cinema" in *National Cinemas and World Cinemas: Studies in Irish Film 3*, eds. Kevin Rockett and John Hill (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006) 15. Notable is that Viola Shafik's prevailing survey *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* employs *national* in the territorial fashion, such as in "national film industries," (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007) 1, 11, 12.

³⁷⁸ Mohamed Awad and Sahar Hamouda, in their historicizing of Alexandria's pre-industrial cinema culture and survey of its practitioners, observe that the sketch comedy *Why Does the Sea Laugh? (1928)* was the first Egyptian film to screen abroad, in Lebanon precisely. *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria*, 24.

³⁷⁹ For the most rigorous account of the details of the first motion picture screenings in Egypt see Mahmoud `Ali, *Fajr al-sinima fi Misr* [Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt] (Cairo: Egypt Ministry of Culture, Cultural Development Fund, 2008), 23-29. Samir Farid describes Strologo as the Arab World's first film distributor in "Periodization of Egyptian Cinema." In *Critical Film Writing from the Arab World*, ed. Alia Arasoughly (St-Hyacinthe, Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1996), 3.

³⁸⁰ This outfit made a total of four narrative shorts, two in each of 1917 and 1918, then folded. See Awad and Hamouda, *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria*, 9, as well as Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 15.

Egyptian press. The argument, however, could be made that exhibition and distribution had taken on industrial proportions earlier.³⁸¹

Whereas the origins of Egypt's national cinema date to the mid-1910s, I suspect that the earliest domestic productions, which began in 1905, were nationalist, judging by what little is known about them today. In theorizing a nationalist cinema, I resort to the earlier mentioned historicism of Egypt's experience of modernity, according to which nationalist cinema tenders film practices in the evident service of the nation. Egyptian nationalist cinema plainly regards Egypt's landscape, its people(s) and personages, its institutions and monuments, its culture and its history. In the case of production, a film project's nationalist credentials may be assessed by examining the politics of its principals, expressed or inferred, by subjecting the eventuating text to a rigorous reading, and by looking into its marketing campaign.³⁸² In historicizing Bayoumi's newsfilms within a tradition of nationalist news cinema, nearly as old as the cinema itself, I find the operative distinction between *national* and *nationalist* useful, considering that many film histories that purport to examine early Egyptian cinema begin with Egypt's narrative films of the

³⁸¹ Mahmoud `Ali, having scoured a business directory by city printed in 1917 identifies thirty-six cinemas, to which he adds fifteen mentioned in press of the year. See *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 23-24. Moreover, Universal had established a distribution office in Alexandria to serve Egypt and the Middle East in 1923. See *The Birth of the Seventh Art in Alexandria*, 9.

³⁸² Thus, according to my formulation, *Black Orpheus* (1959), by co-writer/director Marcel Camus, as well as Josh Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Looks of Silence* (2014) could be considered nationalist films. This is despite none having been written, produced or directed by nationals nor their having been backed by Brazil or Indonesia respectively, although, the degree to which these films have served their nations of interest has already been widely argued. Conversely, my formulation would also not ascribe the epithet *nationalist* to non-Egyptian newsfilms, by Lumière, Pathé, Gaumont, or Kalem, made prior to World War I, which were shot in Egypt and which showcased its landscape, monuments and people. On the Lumière films shot as early as 1897, see Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 15. On the most renowned and controversial films among over a dozen the Kalem's shot in Egypt was the narrative feature *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), from the outfit's year spent in Egypt in 1912, see "William Lord Wright's Page," *Moving Picture News*, November 16, 1912, 14, <http://archive.org/stream/movingpicturenew06unse#page/n945/mode/2up>. Additionally, Vitagraph shot a narrative short in Egypt in 1913—*On Their Wedding Eve*. See the Goat Man, "On the Outside Looking in," *Motograph*, October 4, 1913, 237. Edison had a number of films shot in Egypt, including *Quaint Sports in Cairo, Egypt* (1913). See "Complete Record of Currents Films," *Motograph*, September 6, 1913, 189. Pathé-Frères was perhaps the earliest to shoot newsfilms regularly as later discussed.

late 1920s if not a few years later, with the production of talkies.³⁸³ This chapter attempts to redress the paucity of scholarship on Egypt's silent cinema and the near absence of analysis of Mohamed Bayoumi's films, films which "spoke" to the nation as I soon detail.³⁸⁴

As for the distinction between newsfilm and newsreel, some exposition is in order. In employing *newsfilm*, I have used a term used by Charles Musser and by the British Film Institute's National Film and Television Archive.³⁸⁵ As for labeling Bayoumi's nonfiction works as newsfilms rather than newsreels, as I convey below, a newsreel was serial by design, in the fashion of a newspaper or news magazine, to which the cinema's newsreel is historically linked. A newsfilm in this regard may be considered an *edition* of a given newsreel or more commonly a *story* within an edition of a newsreel. Bayoumi's news films examined in this study have been loosely considered as part of the *Amon* newsreel. My own viewing of the archival DVD transfer of his extant films reveals *Amon* on title cards of only two films, his first two. Moreover, I have noted other organizational ascriptions, such as Studio Photo-Film, as printer and developer, on

³⁸³ Some of these films have long been available and have been studied, unlike Egyptian silent films, including Bayoumi's.

³⁸⁴ Among Egyptian scholars, the movement to reassess of the silent era of the cinema in Egypt began in the late 1980s with the discovery of Bayoumi's films and the publication of the first volume of Ahmed El Hadary's *History of the Cinema in Egypt (1896-1930)*. This movement gained attention with the centennial celebrations of the cinema in Egypt in mid-late 1990s. Since, several scholars have appreciably and rigorously added to literature relating, including referenced herewith Ali Abu Shadi, Mahmoud Ali, and Said Shimi and Samir Farid. In English, no more than several pages have been written about the subject, scantily appearing in Viola Shafik's two books *Arab Cinema*, cited earlier, and *Popular Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007). Otherwise, Andrew Flibbert touches on Egyptian cinema of the 1920s in his in "State and Cinema in Pre-Revolutionary Egypt, 1927-1952" in *Re-envisioning Egypt, 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 448-465.

³⁸⁵ See Charles Musser, *The emergence of cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Simon and Schuster and Prentice Hall International, 1990), 364. The term is used by scholars and practitioners throughout "*The Story of the Century!*": *An International Newsfilm Conference: Papers, Presentations and Proceedings*, eds. Clyde Jeavons, Jane Mercer, and Daniela Kirchner. London: British Universities Film & Video Council, 1998. Most recently, the operative term was used titularly in Mark Garrett Cooper, Sara Beth Levavy, Ross Melnick, and Mark Williams, eds., *Rediscovering U.S. Newsfilm: Cinema, Television, and the Archive* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

his 1924 newsfilm *The Funeral of Sir Lee Stack*, and Bayoumi Film on his *Great Jubilation in Celebrating the Coronation of King Fouad of Egypt* (1932). This finding is consistent with the account given in *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema*, by Muhammad Al-Qalyubi, the scholar and filmmaker who retrieved Bayoumi's surviving films from the latter's family, oversaw their restoration and made a documentary about their maker.³⁸⁶ Egyptian film historian Sa'id Shimi, agrees that the *Amon* newsreel run produced three films, dealing with three subjects, one of which is indeed his earliest surviving—*The Nation Welcomes Sa'd Zaghlul* (1923)—the other two on the release of Abdulrahman Fahmy Bey from prison and the inauguration of Egypt's parliament respectively.³⁸⁷ Bayoumi may have intended to produce a newsreel on a consistent and ongoing basis, but he never did.

Newsfilms in Egypt—Early and Abundant

The first motion picture screenings were carried out by the Lumière Cinematographe Company's Egyptian agent Henri Dello Strologo toward the end of 1896.³⁸⁸ A little over a month later, on December 9th, 1896, Strologo screened in Cairo the newsfilm *Procession to the wedding of Princess Maud* (1896), likely in Schneider Hammam (bath) where the first cinema screening in Cairo had taken place on November 28. The earliest domestic productions would follow a decade later. Edward de La Grange, proprietor of the Pathé Cinema in Alexandria and its exclusive agent in Egypt and the East, screened his own domestic productions: *The Most*

³⁸⁶ Mohamed Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 18-20.

³⁸⁷ *History of Cinematography in Egypt, 1897-1996*, 74.

³⁸⁸ As has been observed by film scholars, there had long been disagreement about the dates of the very first screenings in Alexandria and in Cairo. However, thanks to concerted archival research, the dates have been authenticated with the first Alexandria screening having taken place on November 5th, 1996 and Cairo's on the 28th of the same month. See Farid, Samir, "Periodization of Egyptian Cinema," in *Critical Film Writing from the Arab World*, ed. Alia Arasoughly (St-Hyacinthe, Quebec: World Heritage Press, 1996), 3. The most rigorous dating of these precedents has been performed by Mahmoud Ali, in his *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 23-29.

Beautiful Scenes in Alexandria Opposite al-Sharif Street (Ajmal manadhir fi al-Iskandariya nadhir Shari` al-Sharif, 1906), *The Khedival Exchange* (al-Borsa al-khidewiya, 1906), *Al-Mahmoudiya Canal* (Qanat al-Mahmoudia, 1906), and *Al-Raml Tramway, Going and Coming* (Dhahab wa iyab qitar tramway al-Raml, 1906)³⁸⁹—these earliest of domestic productions were what has commonly been called “actualities,” all and any nonfiction motion pictures made prior to the Great War, and what Tom Gunning would call “views,” films that appeal to “visual curiosity” while making “a claim to recording an event of natural or social history.” Gunning then defines the parameter to such a form: “‘views’ tend to carry the claim that the subject filmed either pre-existed the act of filming or would have taken place even if the camera had not been there.”³⁹⁰

Another relevant term is *topical*, which Jennifer Peterson relates as the one “used to designate news films before 1915.”³⁹¹ Perhaps it is the topicality of the films of concern herewith that sets apart newsfilms from other actualities or views. This topicality borrows its priorities and perspectives from the news press. Pioneering British documentary filmmaker John Grierson in the early 1930s, referred to a newsreel as a magazine: “The magazine item (one a week) have

³⁸⁹ Mahmoud `Ali is credited with this find, one he convincingly supports archivally in *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, thereby expanding on the restricted role of de La Grange as proprietor of Cinema Pathé noted in Ahmed El Hadary’s *History of the Cinema in Egypt (1896-1930)*, 83-84. However, `Ali unconvincingly describes the four identified films as constituent to a newsreel dubbed On Alexandria’s Streets (Fi Shawari` al-Iskandariya) that scholar Ahmad Kamil Mursi had dated to 1912. See *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 47-49.

³⁹⁰ See “Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the ‘View’ Aesthetic (1997)” in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 55. Gunning thinks that multi-shot views were made beginning in 1906, though the mode of capture and the claim inherent dates back to still photography, in a similar fashion to Charles Musser’s historicizing the actuality motion picture as a pre-cinematic form once employed by lantern lectures, *The emergence of cinema*, 364. It may be worth noting that Musser appears to distinguish between views and news films, in describing actualities between 1904 and 1907 as “primarily local views and films of important news events.” See “Moving Towards Fictional Narratives: Story Films become the Dominant Product, 1903-1904,” in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, eds. Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 99.

³⁹¹ “Educational Films and Early Cinema Audiences,” in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, eds. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 283.

adopted the original ‘Tit-Bits’ manner of observation. The skill they represent is a purely journalistic skill.”³⁹²

Events attracting press interest in the late 19th century also attracted motion picture producers, such as the US company Biograph and the Britain based Warwick Trading Company. Sent to capture the news, their cameramen “elbowed themselves into the journalistic melee alongside the reporter and photographer,” according to Stephen Bottomore, who observes that “from the very early days, news provided important subject matter for the cinema and also helped mold its development, stimulating, production and building audiences.”³⁹³ Photography shop owners Aziz and Dorés began to produce motion pictures in Egypt in 1907, making two newsfilms—*Celebration of Garibaldi’s Life at His Centennial Birthday* and *The Khedive Visits the Science Institute in the Sidi Al-Mursi Abul Abbas*. The second of the two was celebrated for decades as the Egyptian cinema’s point of origin, mistakenly so. *Al-Shurq* newspaper, in July of 1907 reported that Dorés made sure to “precede all in taking pictures of important events that take place in [Alexandria].”³⁹⁴ It seems that residents of Egypt’s largest and coastal cities were as ready as their counterparts in North America and Europe to pay for a glimpse or a glom of personages and places that mattered to themselves.

Delivering a weekly or biweekly newsreel with regularity could only be afforded when maintained by a steady audience. In Egypt, motion pictures in the earliest days of exhibition were screened in exchanges, cafes, bathhouses, theatres, restaurants, bars, and halls.³⁹⁵ They

³⁹² “First Principles of Documentary (1932-34),” *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 31.

³⁹³ “News Before the Newsreel: The British Pioneers,” in *“The Story of the Century!”: An International Newsfilm Conference: Papers, Presentations and Proceedings*, eds. Clyde Jeavons, Jane Mercer, and Daniela Kirchner (London: British Universities Film & Video Council, 1998), 15.

³⁹⁴ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 52.

³⁹⁵ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 34-45, 63.

were screened within traveling shows catering to audiences in different neighborhoods and different cities, not unlike in the land of its "veiled protector"³⁹⁶ Great Britain, where "films were seen on an irregular basis in variety halls, fairgrounds and converted shops," where it was not until film exhibited in "nickelodeons, electric palaces and cinemas, roughly around 1907 to 1910, that a settled, regular audience was established, creating the climate in which a true newsreel might flourish."³⁹⁷ By the end of the decade, it appears the newsreel had already flourished in the hands of Pathé, the world's largest film producer and exporter of the time,³⁹⁸ when *Pathé Journal* appeared in France as the world's first in 1908.³⁹⁹ *Pathé Journal* was also the first newsreel to screen in Egypt, in its first year of issue.⁴⁰⁰

The manner of the newsfilm's appeal is worth examining at this point and Pathé's antecedence in newsreel production is an apt case study. Newsreels were named as if newspapers and were illustrative like magazines.⁴⁰¹ Their "correspondents" sought to produce accounts about events that had already taken place and had been covered by the press, events that could take place based on predictions in the press, and events that had yet to take place and were anticipated in the press. Editor of the American edition of Pathé's newsreel, *Pathé's Weekly*, dubbed these

³⁹⁶ Great Britain engaged in Egyptian affairs by way of a "veiled protectorate," between 1882 and 1914, which positioned the former as most powerful authority in Egypt though unofficially. *Protectorate* is a generous term to describe occupation and self-serving executive policy.

³⁹⁷ Luke McKernan, "Newsreels in the Silent Era," in *"The Story of the Century!": An International Newsfilm Conference: Papers, Presentations and Proceedings*, eds. Clyde Jeavons, Jane Mercer, and Daniela Kirchner (London: British Universities Film & Video Council, 1998), 17.

³⁹⁸ Charles O'Brien, "Motion Picture Color and Pathé-Frères: The Aesthetic Consequences of Industrialization," in *A Companion to Early Cinema*, eds. André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 299.

³⁹⁹ See McKernan, "Newsreels in the Silent Era," 17.

⁴⁰⁰ `Ali Abu Shadi, *Waqā'i' al-sinima al-misriya [Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema]* (Damascus: Ministry of Cultural Press, 2004), 12.

⁴⁰¹ Beside *Pathé's Weekly*, in the US, there were *Pathé's Animated Gazette*, *Warwick Bioscope Chronicle*, *Éclair Journal*, and *Williamson's Animated News*. See McKernan, "Newsreels in the Silent Era," 17.

“sudden events,” “impending events,” and “scheduled events” respectively.⁴⁰² A. W. Thomas of the *Marion Star* (Ohio) may have predicted that with the establishment of *Pathé’s Weekly*, newsfilms would be “within a few hours thrown life-like on theater screens throughout the civilized world.”⁴⁰³ This, however, could hardly obtain, because of the delay inherent in exhibiting films, resulting from postproduction and transportation. Even when regularly screened, newsreels could hardly serve as a principle source of the news, certainly not in an Egypt where Arabic daily newspapers had been published since the 1870s⁴⁰⁴ and radio had broadcast beginning in 1924.⁴⁰⁵

Rather, the appeal of newsfilms stemmed from their rendering audiences proximate to large personalities, projected in larger than life proportions on the screen, personalities with whom audiences would have been intimate by way of the news press.⁴⁰⁶ An advert in *The Motion Picture Story Magazine* for *Pathé’s Weekly* from the newsreel’s first year of production tells us that having an up-close and personal look at and into the life and work of the powerful, rich and famous was its pitch for appeal: “Presidents and politicians, pontiffs and princes have appeared in the famous Pathe’s Weekly. If you want intimate living portraits of the world’s most eminent men—if you are interested in the personalities of the world’s rulers, see them at the theatres featuring the unsurpassed Pathe’s Weekly.”⁴⁰⁷ Indeed, as Luke McKernan has surmised, the silent newsreel appealed as entertainment, not as a source of information. Its producers made up

⁴⁰² See the statement by Emmanuel Cohen in Richard Koszarski, *An Evening’s Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (New York: Simon and Schuster and Prentice Hall International, 1990), 167.

⁴⁰³ “The Camera Press Man: Animated Associated Press with Associates Always on the Firing Line,” *Motion Picture World*, July-September 2011, 868, <http://www.archive.org/stream/moviwor09chal#page/n885/mode/2up>.

⁴⁰⁴ Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 8.

⁴⁰⁵ Andrea L. Stanton, “Radio,” *Cultural Sociology of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa: An Encyclopedia* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications: 2012), 355.

⁴⁰⁶ McKernan, “Newsreels in the Silent Era,” 17.

⁴⁰⁷ The advert continued: “... and the members of their families have all appeared on the screen in the world’s greatest film, Pathe’s Weekly.” December 1912, 176.

for its comparative lack of timeliness with vivid animation and otherwise impossible access to that which the printed and, with the subsequent arrival of radio, broadcast news had deemed deserving of coverage.⁴⁰⁸ In a 1930 article for *Al-Hilal* culture and arts magazine titled “Cinematic Newspapers: How Are They Issued and How Do They Collect Their News,” Al-Sayid Hasan Jum’a conveys the similar: “Cinematic newspapers have [in photographing ‘world-class personalities’] created a significant facet that has made connecting with the greats, simple and available to all, for it has shortened the distance between us and them and has made us view them as if they were near us.”⁴⁰⁹ Curiously, Jum’a reports—as had the aforementioned journalist from the Ohioan *Marion Star*, nearly two decades earlier—that newsfilms could be screened a mere few hours after the events captured, though he qualifies the events as local.⁴¹⁰ Perhaps Jum’a had in mind a localized event-and-exhibition capacity as was the case in Cairo and Alexandria, what with their dominant government, population and cinema centers.

By multiple accounts, capturing local and national events and developments of note was a prominent element of cinema production in Egypt for the rest of the silent era. Mahmoud `Ali proposes that films depicting national occasions or politicians were used to draw audiences to the cinemas. Dorés continued to produce films that he developed and printed in his (and Aziz’s) shop in Alexandria, among which were *Images of the Return of the Renowned Hero Aziz al-Misri Bey* (Surat `awdat al-batal al-shahir `Aziz bek al-Misri, 1912) and *Opening of Empire Cinema*

⁴⁰⁸ McKernan, “Newsreels in the Silent Era,” 21.

⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, the term *jarida* (*newspaper*), referring to newsreels, is the one I have encountered most frequently in cinema adverts in Egyptian journals of the 1920s. Curiously, however, the term *film ikhbari* (newsfilm) does appear by the late 1930s, such as in the title of a piece under the attribution of Kino—“al-aflam al-akhbariya: hal ya’tee yawmun tahillu feehi mahal al-jara’id al-yawmiya—ahlamun qadeemah wa haqa’iq jadeeda” (Newsfilms: Will the Day Arrive When They Replace Daily Newspapers and Screens in Homes—Old Dreams and New Facts), November 28, 1938, 47-48, <http://archive.sakhr.it.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=1811005&ISSUEID=14904&AID=335745>.

⁴¹⁰ “Jarai’d al-sinima: kayf tusdar wa kayf tajma’ akhbaraha,” December 1, 1930, 234, 239, <http://archive.sakhr.it.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=1083220&ISSUEID=13228&AID=262033>.

(Iftitah sinima Imber, 1912). Bonfigli was a producer of local interest films who, according to Mahmoud `Ali, all but monopolized films made about Cairo's goings-on. He produced newsfilms such as *Mr. Roosevelt's Visit to Egypt* (Ziyarat al-misyu Roosevelt li-Misr, 1910), *Images of the Celebration of Sultan Fouad's Assent to the Throne of the Egyptian Sultanate* (Suwar al-ihitafal birtiqā' `adhamat mawlana al-sultan Fouad al-awal `arshah al-saltana al-misriya, 1917), and *The Flower War* (a family event, Harb al-zuhur, 1918) among others.⁴¹¹ Abu Shadi colorfully reports that "the cinema was chasing only important and official news," as if ambulance chasers!⁴¹² Said Shimi finds that domestic newfilms were used to complement imported titles and that they appealed to audiences of mostly non-Egyptians, covering subjects such as races and flower exhibits.⁴¹³ Shimi is on point on both counts, according to a catalogue I have made of silent films shot in Egypt and to the reports by the Commercial Attaché to the US Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, posted to Egypt, as shall be examined later in this study.

Production of newsfilms intensified amidst the nationalist fervor that fueled and followed the Revolution of 1919, especially after leader of the Wafd party Sa`d Zaghlul's return from exile in 1921. This is indicated by the titles of newsfilms produced then: *Farid Bey's Funeral in Cairo* (Janazat Farid bek fi al-Qahira, 1920), *Sultan Fouad's Visit to Damanhour* (Ziyarat al-sultan Ahmad Fouad li-Damanhour 1920), *The Nation Celebrates Its New Prime Minister Adli Yakan Pasha* (al-Umma tahtafil bira'is wuzara'iha al-jadid `Adli basha Yakan fi al-Qahira, 1921), *Return of Sa`d Zaghlul Pasha from Abroad* (`Awdat Sa`d Zaghlul basha min al-kharij, 1921), *King Fouad's Visit to the Azhar Mosque* (Ziyarat al-malik Fouad lil-jami` al-Azhar,

⁴¹¹ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 54, 96-100.

⁴¹² His remark concludes a listing of newsfilms from the year 1923, in *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 23.

⁴¹³ *History of Cinematography in Egypt, 1897-1996*, 69-70.

1922), and *King Fouad's Visit to the Camp in Koum Al-Dackah* (Ziyarat al-malik Fouad limu`askarat al-kashafa al-misriya, 1923).⁴¹⁴ We may not be able to watch these films, but their titles bespeak their concern with government figures. The titles of these newsfilm underscore their makers' catering to nationalist inclinations among their potential audiences, as do those of Mohamed Bayoumi's examined in this chapter.

Standing tall among the crowd of nationalist figures of the Liberal Age is Tal`at Harb, who was lauded and extolled in life and venerated in death, as evidenced by the Egyptian press of the time and Egyptian film history current.⁴¹⁵ In 1920, Harb joined a group of local investors to found Bank Misr, which he served as public figure and leader, until his resignation in 1939. Bank Misr was not a national bank, but it was nationalist bank par excellence: boasting an all-Egyptian board, selling shares to Egyptians only, announcing its intent to develop new economic sectors in Egypt or grow existing ones, and putting in place a policy requiring that internal communication be conducted in Arabic.⁴¹⁶ In the same year as the Bank's founding, 1920, Harb established the Arab Acting Advancement Company, affiliated with the Arab Acting Theater, whose construction in Azbakiya Park he oversaw.⁴¹⁷ Harb's interest in acting as performance had driven him to dedicate time and resources to the theater in 1920. In 1925, he would do similar for the cinema, in launching the Company for Acting and Cinema (later renamed Misr Film

⁴¹⁴ See Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 18-23.

⁴¹⁵ In a 1930 piece, simply titled "Mohamed Tal`at Harb," Hafiz Mahmoud calls Harb "the great economic savior," a man "unequaled in modern history of the world's eastern hemisphere," praise the likes of which is common from my examination. *Al-Majalla Al-Jadida*, June 1, 1931, 915, accessed August 26, 2016, <http://archive.sakhrit.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=2013900&ISSUEID=5577&AID=135627>.

⁴¹⁶ Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: rai'd sina'at al-cinema al-misriya, 1867-1941* [Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941] (Cairo: The Public Egyptian Organization for Book, 1986), 20-24

⁴¹⁷ Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941*, 33.

Company), for which Mohamed Bayoumi worked for two years—allegedly—as explored in the next segment.

Personages Named: Bayoumi’s Newsfilms in the Decade Following Independence

In this segment, I discuss around half of Bayoumi’s newsfilms, ones that captured events attended by personages named in the films’ titles, even when not depicted. The span of the films to which I attend next is a decade from the founding of Egypt's first parliamentary government in 1923 to the year of the first hit talkie in 1933, which well sets the stage for a subsequent analysis of the origins of Egypt's national cinema. I moreover attempt to contextualize the discussed newsfilms’ subjects in press coverage of the day, particularly of the country’s political and economic conditions. Such contextualizing is particularly apt in the case of Bayoumi’s films, not only for their rich cultural signification, but also because a discussion of the film’s texts alone would yield little considering their relative shortness—Beside the 21-minute long final newsfilm, the average length of the others is under 5 minutes, constructed of relatively few integral shots and little compositional variation. 1925 is a year in sharp focus in this segment, mainly because of the purported link between Bayoumi and Harb that formed through their mutual connection to the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, founded in 1925.

Although the newsfilm *The Nation Welcomes Sa`d Zaghlul* (Tarhib al-umma al-misriya bi’istiqlal al-ra’is Sa`d Zaghlul basha, 1923) was Bayoumi’s first, he would write, produce and direct the narrative short *Barsoum Looks for a Job*, in that same year. Bayoumi had also shot earlier in that year what has been identified as the first Egyptian narrative feature *In the Land of Tutankhamun*. In *The Nation*, Bayoumi presents a scene from the public celebration in Cairo of national leader (and soon to become Egypt’s first post-independence prime minister) Saad

Zaghlul. Zaghlul, had repatriated from his exile in the Seychelles, an exile that had been ordered by the British occupational authority, because of the national leader's earlier agitation against it. Disembarking in Alexandria, he took the train to the capital and from Cairo Station traveled by motorcade to his house. Crowds cheered him throughout.⁴¹⁸ Inaugurating the *Amon* newsreel with a film about the inauguration, as it were, of the new Egypt, bespoke Bayoumi's nationalism while linking *Amon* to the government project to industrialize and enlighten Egypt.

Bayoumi set up his camera along the route and from the footage captured produced a five-minute, single scene film. The film was shot in a prominent location, likely in the city center, judging from the grandeur of the surrounding buildings, the expanse of pavement upon which the camera was positioned, and the width of intersecting avenues nearby. People line up the sides of one of these, the one to which the camera is directed for parts of the film. Men riding on bicycles hoist Egyptian flags. Flags also drape balconies overlooking the parade. A motorcade presumably carrying Zaghlul passes through the scene as the camera remains stationary on the pavement. Many men look into the camera. Many of Bayoumi's newsfilms contain such images of people looking at or into the camera—bemused, frightened, blank and even enraged. The camera, after the passing of the motorcade, changes positions to show a guard corps, dressed in white, on horseback and wielding long staffs that they use for crowd control. The camera then cuts to a crowd of men cheering effusively while addressing the camera, as if Bayoumi had asked them to cheer to order. One man picks up a teenager he is accompanying to glimpse the

⁴¹⁸ "Cairo Cheers Zaghlul: Throngs Welcome Repatriated Leader, but Make No Trouble," *New York Times*, Sep 19, 1923, 2, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103166702/70C7E0A8E8B462FPQ/4?accountid=14512>

camera. The film's view is intimate. From close quarters, it captures and depicts, or reports, the crowds' revelry in reaction to the procession.⁴¹⁹

The year 1924 was one of busy production for Bayoumi in which he made the one-minute—though what has survived may be a fragment—⁴²⁰provocatively titled *Scene from the funeral of Ali Bey Fahmy Whose Wife Murdered him then Was Acquitted* (Mashhad al-marhoum `Ali bek Fahmi al-ladhi qatalathu zawjatuh wa tabarra'at). Ali Bey, one of Egypt's wealthiest heirs, had married a French "dashing divorcee"⁴²¹ who shot him then was acquitted in England in short order by a jury of women convinced that the Oriental had physically and emotionally abused his spouse in ways shocking to her western sensibility (and their own it seemed). Marie Marguerite Fahmy was found not guilty of murder by the all-woman jury within an hour of deliberating. Crowds in the court cheered when the verdict was announced.⁴²² The film itself depicts a street scene with people walking in a procession, one that includes nuns and a flower adorned coffin. This funeral as depicted is a relatively low-key affair compared to funerals depicted in Bayoumi films to follow, though the films themselves are of a piece stylistically as to seem indistinguishable at certain moments.⁴²³ Indeed, although the film's fleeting address editorializes hardly at all, spare in its depiction as it is, its very choice of subject and title signifies the treatment of Egypt itself by British state institutions.

⁴¹⁹ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963*, Film and Television Archive, University of California, Los Angeles.

⁴²⁰ Al-Qalyoubi, 60.

⁴²¹ Peter Levins, "What Was Justice In This Case?: Prince Fahmy's Marriage Is Finished by Two Bullets in the Great Hotel Savoy," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jul 20, 1930, 11, accessed August 23, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/500977821/pageviewPDF/FB9BA1883B9C4467PQ/1?accountid=14512>

⁴²² On the front page of the New York Times: "London Jury Acquits Mme. Fahmy of Murder of Egyptian Husband in the Savoy Hotel," *New York Times*, Sep 16, 1923, 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/103167572/4DD3DA3153E448B6PQ/7?accountid=14512>

⁴²³ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963*.

Sport events are nowhere to be found in Bayoumi's two-minute *Sports Events Commemorating the Coronation of His Majesty King Fouad in the Barraks of Abdeen* (Haflat al-'ab al-riyadiya allati aqamatha firqat al-haras al-malaki bmunasabat `eid jalalat al-malik dakhil qishlaq `Abdin, Nov 1924), unless a stately procession is considered sport. The first of two Bayoumi newsfilms centering on Fouad, the film depicts the typical scenes of ordered movement down a main avenue of foot soldiers, cavalry, and fancy cars (Rolls-Royces) with crowds surrounding, jostling for a view and some hoisting Egyptian flags.⁴²⁴ King Fouad had ascended to the throne as Sultan in 1917. He later took on the title of king a fortnight or so after Britain had unilaterally declared Egypt's independence on February 28, 1922. The title change connoted a repositioning in the discourses of dominion. *Sultan* emphasizes authority and had been adopted by heads of the Ottoman Empire centuries earlier; the term had long been associated with the non-Arab rulers in Istanbul. Whereas *king*'s equivalent *malik* is derived from *mulk*—ownership. Malik (king) was also the title adopted in recent years in Syria and had been used by the monarchs of Morocco.⁴²⁵ Bayoumi's film wears its nationalist credentials on its sleeve of a title by not only naming the latter-day king, enclosing Fouad's honorific title and term of address, but also by selecting "representatives of the people" to address the camera, endowed with an agency to have recorded their announced, and performed, commentary on the operative event. In the film, a single soldier leans against his sword as he grins to the camera and talks to its operator,

⁴²⁴ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴²⁵ A rather astute semantic analysis for its time from the *New York Times* for its time, considering the pervasive invective in the British and American press of its day against traditions and people of the region. "Fuad Proclaimed as King of Egypt: Independence of the Country, Says Cairo Declaration, Dates from Yesterday. BRITAIN TO INFORM POWERS Special Relations to Be Defined in Treaties Will Be Stated by British Diplomats Abroad. Britain Will Inform the Nations," March 17, 1922, 3, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99573356/fulltextPDF/1F427744E9B746CAPQ/3?accountid=14512>.

Bayoumi. Although *Sports Event* does not transcribe his words, as typical, perhaps because Bayoumi, shooting alone, could not spare the attention to record spoken words.

Bayoumi's *The Funeral of Sir Lee Stack* (Janazat al-marhoum al-sir Lee Stack basha sardar of the Egyptian Army and Governor of the Sudan) produced in the same month as the prior shares the same opening shot with it—the same footage!⁴²⁶ The film is otherwise notable for its signaling a diplomatic circumspection to Bayoumi's nationalist politics. Bayoumi had served in the Egyptian military in Palestine but was recalled when he protested British soldiers' refusal to salute him. His diary is replete with condemnations of British rule.⁴²⁷ He nevertheless elected to document the funeral commemorating Sardar General Lee Stack, governor general of the Sudan (under British occupation) in Cairo, assassinated by Egyptian nationalists. The row that resulted from the assassination was grave and occurred within an already strained relationship between the newly independent state and an occupier that had not relinquished controls over such matters as foreign affairs, protection of the Suez Canal and a European department in the Ministry of Interior.⁴²⁸

The Funeral of Sir Lee Stack is one of two Bayoumi newsfilms that capture a glimpse of a world-class personality—Prime Minister Sa`d Zaghlul. As such, it is one of only two of his newsfilms to deliver on the instrumental appeal of newsfilms to lend audiences proximity to personages. The procession of the film is grand, its participants walking, riding and driving in groups of representatives of military and civilian bodies of government, Egyptian and British,

⁴²⁶ This replication could also be a result of re-editing or re-recording of the film post-discovery.

⁴²⁷ Mohamed Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 42-45.

⁴²⁸ Cable and Associated Press, "British Send Ultimatum, Ready to Move in Egypt: Demand Reply to Stern Note on Stack Murder in Twenty-Four Hours; Sidar is Buried," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 23, 1924, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/161580301/fulltextPDF/85703BB591C24EB9PQ/1?accountid=14512>. For more detail on how the British government intervened in Egypt over the years since independence until the end of this study's period see Vernon A. O'Rourke, "The British Position in Egypt," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1936, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-kingdom/1936-07-01/british-position-egypt>

that “served to attract large crowds to watch the scene so charged with dramatic interest. The Body of the Sirdar was laid to rest amid scenes made impressive by military display and solemnity. Crowds lined the streets, held back by troops.”⁴²⁹ This account does not mention that people had also elected to watch the procession from atop buildings lining the avenue.⁴³⁰

Some but not all of Bayoumi’s found films have survived title cards, albeit ones cut off, typically on the left side. *The Funeral of Lee Stack* (1924) begins with such a card, the only one in which the title is written in English⁴³¹, and above the Arabic title no less, as if Bayoumi anticipated interest in the film among English speaking residents of Egypt. This title card is followed by one containing script in English. other than the production company’s name followed by one cut off that reads “[P]hoto M.M. Bayoumi. [De]veloping and Printing Studio Photo-Film Cairo.” This is unlike Bayoumi’s first newsfilm or his first narrative for that matter, both produced the previous year, that boasted his Amon Film brand, an observation consistent with Abdulghani Daoud’s account that three editions of the *Amon* newsreel were released before it ceased production (one having been lost). It may well be the case that Bayoumi compiled a number of his newsfilms into what would have functioned as editions of a newsreel, but such a newsreel would hardly have taken off the ground, considering that Daoud’s count of newsfilms made in 1923 and 1924 is nine⁴³² and the highest count I have found elsewhere is ten.⁴³³ Among the six from these two years that have survived only two identify a production entity, his first film *The Nation Welcomes Sa`d Zaghlul*, an Amon Film production, and *The Funeral of Lee*

⁴²⁹ “Cairo Will Reject Some of Demands in Note by Britain: Egyptian Premier Gets Chamber's Support for Policy. Military Solemnity for Stack's Funeral. Assassination of Sirdar Is Bitterly Denounced in Communication. Egyptians to Reject Some of Demands in British Note,” *The Washington Post*, Nov 23, 1924, 18, accessed August 28, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/149389532/fulltextPDF/B0266FF0B6DE4253PQ/1?accountid=14512>.

⁴³⁰ Muhammad al-Qalyoubi, *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963*.

⁴³¹ Otherwise, English appears only to name the production company and not consistently so.

⁴³² *Al-Rahiloun fi Ma'at Sanah (1896-1996), fi Al-Ikhraj* [Those Who Have Passed over a Hundred Years, 1896-1996—The Directors] (Cairo: National Center for Cinema, Ministry of Culture, 1996), 145.

⁴³³ Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 24-26.

Stack, which is identified as a product of Studio Photo-Film Cairo. Indeed, Amon had lasted about a year and with no more than ten films, six of which under five minutes long, so that an ascription of *newsreel* is not historically warranted.

In 1930, Bayoumi made *Al-Wafd Committee Celebration in Alexandria on the Occasion of Welcoming and Bidding Farewell to the Official Negotiating Delegation Headed by Al-Nahass Pasha* (Ihtifal lajnat al-Wafd bi-Iskandaria bi-istiqlal wa tawdi` al-wafd al-rasmi lil-mufawada biri'sat dawlat tal-Nahas basha, 1930), a film under three minutes long, produced under a third corporate moniker: "Bayoumi Photo Film in Alexandria on Sa`d Zaghlul St.," as stamped in Arabic and English. Al-Wafd had been by far the most powerful party in Egypt since independence. Its first leader, Prime Minister Sa`d Zaghlul had resigned in 1924, under pressure from British authorities following the assassination of Lee Stack. Zaghlul was succeeded by Mustafa Al-Nahass, who had been exiled with Zaghlul in the Seychelles and subsequently served as minister in his cabinet. This film captures images of the official farewell to Nahass.

Al-Wafd Committee's opening shot is at a railway station—presumably in Alexandria. A dozen tarboush wearing (as such, presumably Egyptian) men stand at the platform and another dozen men atop a train's engine, most waiving to the crowd, some using handkerchiefs. This train approaches and we realize that men are hanging on every ridge and dangling out of every window. Then a very quick shot of a man being escorted through a crowd, so quick that he cannot be identified within the degraded film print. It is unclear when the film's location transitions from train station to port, but we see around 150 men thronging what looks like a tent, before we see a delegation boarding a ship—not a tent—as captured by the camera presumably

stationed atop the ladder leading into the ship. Behind the dignitaries are police officers and formally dressed men who appear to be there to bid them farewell.⁴³⁴

The next few shots are of the crowd bidding farewell to the ship's passengers, intercut with a shot of the ship's passengers. The film concludes with a shot of a middle-aged man dressed in expensive looking clothing, adorned with pocket watch and cufflinks, writing in a hand-sized journal and looking down to it. To his right sits a woman in her twenties, dressed in a fur coat, a fashionable bonnet and what looks like a pearl necklace. She looks directly into the camera. Behind them gather tens of empty chairs. Soon, the man writing looks up to the camera; it is Prime Minister Nahass. This is certainly the most intimate shot of a renowned person in a Bayoumi film. The final shot, in this comparatively complexly structured work, is of a card only in Arabic: "Happy travel and benignant return. Viva the King. Long live al-Nahass Pasha. The Wafd is the Ummah's faithful representative. Bayoumi Photofilm."⁴³⁵ al-Nahas would later resign because of his negotiating team's inability to agree to terms of a treaty of independence with their counterpart representing the government of British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald.⁴³⁶

Great Jubilation in Celebrating the Coronation of King Fouad of Egypt (al-Ibtihaj al-`adhim bi-`eid julus al-malik Fouad `ala `arsh Misr, 1932), whose title card is written only in Arabic, states in full, "Great jubilation over the anniversary of His Majesty King Fouad the First to Egypt's throne. May God offer returns of the same upon his Majesty and upon the Egyptian Ummah dedicated in it devotion. With wellness and happiness. Bayoumi Film." The producer

⁴³⁴ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴³⁵ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴³⁶ This was a first page item: "17 Killed, 400 Hurt in Riot in Egypt; Revolt Is Feared: Police Fire ...," *New York Times*, Jul 16, 1930. Accessed August 22, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/98869276/D3B65458DB324075PQ/1?accountid=14512>.

stamp appears in both Arabic and English at the bottom of this title card, which is followed by a card that reads in Arabic "Photographer Mohamed Bayoumi. Photographer and Cinematographer." Below this it reads in English "Photograph M. Bayoumi." Next appears a signed portrait of Bayoumi dated 1932. Following is a card adorned with a crown logo at the top that reads, "The masses of the citizenry await with utmost anticipation the honorable occasion of the appearance of the redeemed King to hoist congratulations for the anniversary of the throne's ascent." The bottom of the card on the right displays "Bayoumi Film," under a logo of a cinema camera and on the bottom left of the screen shows "The Egyptian Cinema Institute."⁴³⁷ This is the first appearance of the institute in which Bayoumi worked after moving back to Alexandria from Cairo.

The six-minute film's opening shot depicts a long cue of people walking a bridge-like structure casually. Suddenly, a quick cut to nearly the same camera position has it pan to the left to show throngs of people rushing in the direction of the camera, police officers unable to contain them, as they wave their sticks. This cuts to a card, with the same crown motif as in the previous, that reads, "The locals' interest in holding celebrations demonstrating their allegiance to the master of the lands." This is one of two newsfilms containing title cards within the film, other than at its beginning or end. Next, Bayoumi shows decorated shopfronts with signage acknowledging the occasion. Soon, an original card that appears cut off as the rest on the left reads, "The sincere people's rushing to the ... Square to raise their signs of celebration and allegiance in merriment over the occasion of his majesty's ascending the throne, chanting ... His Majesty the Great King and his heir His Highness Farouq." Back to the same bridge as earlier, though now the crowds are much bigger, filling the width of the street and being held back by

⁴³⁷ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

police. Several successive shots show crowds hoisting banners, including uniformed men--the police, likely.⁴³⁸

A card appears that reads “The gathering of thousands of rank and file among whom labor union members with their banners, in front of the distinguished Sarai Ra's al-Teen, awaiting the kind order to have them appear in the Great King's yard.” Next shot is of a different location, it seems, full of people in the street and standing atop fences, with hardly an open space. Beside the magnitude of the crowd, the following few shots, as nowhere else in Bayoumi’s newsfilms, appear to depict people performing their delight, and in one case irritation, through outburst, *to the camera*: one throws his hankie into the air, another his hat and yet a third jumps. A fourth hoists his child seemingly to show him the camera or show him to the camera. Bayoumi here films crowd response to the occasion *and* to the camera. Unlike the common emphasis of newsfilms on personages, Bayoumi continually depicts crowds in attendance of such events, as if to celebrate people celebrating the nation. Bayoumi chooses to affirm their agency by depicting their reactions to the camera. Since Bayoumi’s films contain multiple shots (though relatively few, typically), he could have edited out such reactions to his camera, but he deliberately elected to include them.⁴³⁹ Next is a shot of people walking through a tall gate, perhaps crowds that have been admitted into the yard. The camera pans left and follows them then a card reads “All cheer to his majesty's precious life. This is the utmost expression of the people's attachment to their beloved king.” The film ends with a card: “Long live his Majesty the King. Long live His Majesty the King. Long Live His Majesty the King.”⁴⁴⁰ Bayoumi’s effusive recognition of the king may have been perfunctory, but it certainly formed a component

⁴³⁸ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴³⁹ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴⁴⁰ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

of Bayoumi's nationalist persona, a persona that occupied him markedly, as discussed in this chapter's closing segment.

Vectors of Egyptian Modernity: Pharaonism, Religion, and Sport

In the previous segment, I linked Bayoumi's films—their titles, structures and narratives—to historical events depicted, surrounding and relating. In this segment, I take advantage of the categorical distinction I have created in this chapter between newsfilms that name a personage in their titles and those that do not to focus on three notable and influential cultural vectors of the “liberal” Egypt: pharaonism, religion,⁴⁴¹ and sport.

King Fouad of Egypt may seem to have little to do with the worldwide “King Tut” craze that followed the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun, on February 22, 1923, but he did. A communication from King Fouad's grand chamberlain had informed Lord Carnarvon, who had “discovered” and would first open the tomb, that his majesty would not attend the initial “official opening.”⁴⁴² The expedition led by Carnarvon which had “discovered” the tomb, sealed it after opening it, as it had announced it would,⁴⁴³ but the Egyptian government forcibly re-opened it. This highly publicized event took place between the announcement of Egypt's independence and Sultan Fouad's abandonment of his former title in favor of the modern national title of *king*.

⁴⁴¹ I tackle Islam specifically, the religion referenced in the two films discussed and Bayoumi's own. Although Coptic Christianity also warrants discussion in this regard.

⁴⁴² “Ready for Opening of Inner Chamber of Pharaoh's Tomb,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1923, 1, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/103227848/CODCC38E855E4A53PQ/7?accountid=14512>.

⁴⁴³ “Ready for Opening of Inner Chamber of Pharaoh's Tomb,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1923, 1.

In what followed, Egyptians experienced a turbulent, contested period of national assertion, including, at least through the decade of the 1920s, a “pharanoicist atmosphere,”⁴⁴⁴ pharaonism having been defined as “that body of opinion which postulate[s] the existence of a unique and durable Egyptian national essence persisting from the pharaonic era to the present.”⁴⁴⁵ The Egyptian nation accordingly had reached its zenith during the pharaonic period whose essence had persisted in its people of the Nile Valley, a people now on the brink of regenerating Egypt’s long past greatness. Egypt had once constituted a kingdom ruled by pharaohs; its incumbent pharaoh of new was thus King Fouad.⁴⁴⁶ He was an ersatz pharaoh, he must have realized, since he shared control over his dominion with parliament and with the British⁴⁴⁷ and because Fouad was not indigenous to the Nile valley, but a member of the Albanian Mehmet (Muhammad) Ali Pasha dynasty. Fouad, who characterized Egyptians as cretins, must have realized that the morons’ language was nevertheless on the ascent, which may explain why his son Farouq, became the first ruler in the dynasty to speak the language fluently.⁴⁴⁸

Nevertheless, official and popular output and discourse obliged this pharaonic imperative in the 1920s. National historians were charged with demonstrating how Egyptian social life and the Egyptian personality had been impervious to the millennia since past.⁴⁴⁹ Primary and

⁴⁴⁴ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, 175.

⁴⁴⁵ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, 164.

⁴⁴⁶ A notice annotating a photo of his appearing in *The Washington Post*, read as follows: “Ruler of Egypt. King Fouad. From the latest photograph of the successor of all the Pharaohs.” December 2, 1923, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/149282239/4BAC8609A8E7461FPQ/11?accountid=14512>.

⁴⁴⁷ Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide*, 23-24.

⁴⁴⁸ See Roger Hardy, *The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 2018), 131.

⁴⁴⁹ Roger Hardy, *The Poisoned Well: Empire and Its Legacy in the Middle East*, 149.

secondary school curricula integrated pharaonic history.⁴⁵⁰ Literatures and poets tackled the subject of pharaonism and more tellingly fashioned pharaonic semiology and language into their works.⁴⁵¹ Foremost among Egypt's nationalist intellectuals of the day was Mohamed Husein Haykal whose writings attempted to bridge ancient Egypt to its modern manifestation.⁴⁵² To Haykal, the opening of the tomb offered an unmistakable link between the new Egypt and that of antiquity, as evidenced by the overwhelming joy experienced by the people on the occasion.⁴⁵³ Moreover, the pharaonist atmosphere entailed judging the rulers of the new Egypt against the standards set by the greatest pharaohs of antiquity, in terms of the latter-day leaders' "demonstrated commitment to independence, technological advancement and cultural uplift."⁴⁵⁴

As for the Egyptian cinema, not only did it tackle ancient Egypt topically, but film companies were named after Ancient Egyptian figures real and mythical. Beside Bayoumi's own Amon, named after the Ancient Egyptian deity, Aziza Amir, leading theatrical actor of the 1920s named the company she established in 1928 as Isis Films (the original Isis!) after a deity as well.⁴⁵⁵ Youssef Wahby, a noble who took to the theatre with ardent gusto as director and actor,

⁴⁵⁰ For an extensive analysis of such integration of pharaonism into pedagogy and curricula, see Barak A. Salmoni, "Historical Consciousness for Modern Citizenship: Egyptian Schooling and the Lessons of History during the Constitutional Monarchy," in *Re-envisioning Egypt, 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005).

⁴⁵¹ Barak A. Salmoni, "Historical Consciousness for Modern Citizenship: Egyptian Schooling and the Lessons of History during the Constitutional Monarchy," 191, 224.

⁴⁵² Barak A. Salmoni, "Historical Consciousness for Modern Citizenship: Egyptian Schooling and the Lessons of History during the Constitutional Monarchy," 37-38, 157, 166-171, 194.

⁴⁵³ Barak A. Salmoni, "Historical Consciousness for Modern Citizenship: Egyptian Schooling and the Lessons of History during the Constitutional Monarchy," 169.

⁴⁵⁴ Salmoni, 171.

⁴⁵⁵ According to El Hadary, 'Aziza Amir called herself *Isis*, before she named her production company after it, the company that would back the first Egyptian narrative feature *Layla* (1927). See *Tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz' al-awwal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930* [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930] (Cairo: The Cinema Club, 1987), 210.

named his troupe Rameses, the Ancient Egyptian pharaoh. Wahby reused the name to identify his studio that he would later have built in Cairo.⁴⁵⁶

The tomb's second opening, a national Egyptian affair, was ordered by the minister of works and attended by a number of officials on February 22, 1924. Bayoumi received an official invitation to attend. The invitation appears in the Bayoumi papers that Al-Qalyoubi includes in his noted Biography of the former. The invitation is printed on two adjacent pages framed with an ancient Egyptian motif, with temporal and invitee details filled in by hand. In the invitation, Bayoumi is identified as a cinema photographer (*musawwir al-cinema*) and the event as the ceremonial opening of King Tutankheamun's tomb (*iftitah nawous al-malik Toutankhamoon*) scheduled for the afternoon of March 7, 1924. All of the former is printed on the first page (on the right), whereas the left page presents the event program, which as it happens describes the resulting film's sequence of events. The program is presented in three parts: 1) A designated train was to leave Cairo station on the evening of March 5 and arrive in Luxor next morning; 2) necessary provisions would be made to transport guests from Luxor to Valley of the Kings, 3) a designated train would leave Luxor on the evening of March 7 (day of the opening), arriving in Cairo next morning of a Saturday.⁴⁵⁷ Bayoumi's invitation differs from a note, a fictional one presumably, that appears abruptly during his *The opening of Tutankhamun's Tomb* (*Iftitah maqbarat Tut`ankamun*, 1924), which reads in Arabic: "The Minister of Public Works and Madam Murqus Hanna Pasha hope you may honor them by drinking tea with them near the tomb of Tutankhamun at 4:30 PM on March 6, 1924, determined for the official opening."

⁴⁵⁶ Edward Asswad, "Egypt," *Variety*, June 6, 1933, 61, accessed April 22, 2017, <http://archive.org/stream/variety110-1933-06#page/n59/mode/2up/search/arabic>.

⁴⁵⁷ Al-Qalyoubi, 136.

The film does indeed depict two personages at short distance, including as they pose for the camera in a two-shot that appears on two occasions in the film. The film captures dignitaries, but also crowds of common people who had gathered at a train station—not surprisingly for Bayoumi. The most striking image, however, in what appears a café, is of what seem the opening’s invited guests, judging from their relatively refined dress. In a medium-long shot of several of these guests posing for the camera, as if for a still photograph, we see a woman in modern, fancy European dress along with a woman dressed full in black, including a niqab, evidently challenging ahistorical remarks that Egyptian women only began to cover their faces in recent decades, because of the influence of Wahabi Islam.⁴⁵⁸ Bayoumi films throughout the trip, including exterior shots on both train trips, a technique he would replicate in a much later narrative film.⁴⁵⁹ Bayoumi underscores the film’s nationalist credentials by inserting in the film a still photo of the Sphinx, considering that he does not film inside the tomb, as if to visually link pharaonic culture to the modern nation whose state flags are depicted later in the film hoisted amid cheering crowds, in an atmosphere of evident merriment.⁴⁶⁰

Bayoumi, as earlier mentioned, had in the previous year photographed the first domestic narrative feature production *In the Land of Tutankhamun* (Fi bilad Tut`ankhamun, 1923), for director producer Victor Roseto. Bayoumi was not the first to shoot a film relating to ancient

⁴⁵⁸ It is well known that Egyptian women, including members of the elite and aristocracy, veiled their heads and faces, and that the removal of the veil as exigent within the modernization necessary to raise the standing of the Egyptian nation. Huda Sha`rawi, arguably Egypt’s most renowned feminist of the twentieth century, chronicles her removal of the veil (from the face but not the rest of the head), on two public occasions, first upon disembarking the same carrier that had repatriated national leader Sa`d Zaghlul to Egypt, in 1923. See Sha`rawi’s *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist, 1879-1924*, trans. Margot Badran (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1986), 129-130. For a rigorous on contemporary discourses on the veil in Modern Egypt see Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁴⁵⁹ *Night in a Lifetime* (1933).

⁴⁶⁰ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963*.

Egypt; they had been abundantly made by non-Egyptian producers and even by a few domestic ones. Nor was his film of the tomb's opening the only Egyptian newsfilm capturing the event. Yet, unlike films made prior relating to ancient Egypt, those that Bayoumi worked on, coinciding the rise in pharaonism, name pharaohs in their titles, as if national personages.⁴⁶¹

Pharaonist nationalism in Egypt of the Liberal Age competed in the marketplace of ideas with Islamist conceptions of nationalism. Just as government and popular attention had been drawn to the unveiling of the tomb of Tutankhamun to the world, developments in post-independence Egypt were moving Egyptian intellectuals, political figures and the press to address the role of Egypt in the Muslim world. This was unavoidable, considering that in the wake of the Ottoman Empire's defeat in World War I, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, under Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, abolished the Caliphate, in March of 1924.⁴⁶² The unilateral abolishment brought to the fore the question of its continuation and inheritance, which not surprisingly was contested principally between the kingdom of the Hijaz and the kingdom of Egypt. The former was land of the religion's origination and its prophet, as well as the site of the two holiest mosques in Islam. Egypt, on the other hand, was the most populous, most economically and culturally advanced of the Arabic speaking majority-Muslim countries. Egypt was also home of al-Azhar, long one of the most influential Islamic institutions.

The standoff between the kingdoms of Egypt and the Hijaz came to a head in 1924, a year in which king Hussein of Hejaz claimed the caliphate within days of its abolishment by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, a claim which was rejected across Egyptian public

⁴⁶¹ Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 21-25.

⁴⁶² "Bill to Abolish Caliphate and Expel Caliph Passes," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Mar 4, 1924, 10, accessed September 2, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/499260680/AA23E16452DE4AD9PQ/2?accountid=14512>

opinion.⁴⁶³ This development arrived less than a year after King Hussein's having rejected the medical mission that had long accompanied the caravan that annually delivered a new cover to adorn the Kaaba.⁴⁶⁴ Egypt had for centuries provided the brocade and silk cover to the Kaaba, the structure that Muslims circumambulate during the Hajj. However, in the wake of shifting power dynamics with the Central Powers' defeat in World War I, disputes erupted between the two governments and the caravan carrying the cover to the Kaaba was called home, its offerings rejected.⁴⁶⁵

Bayoumi captured the reception in Cairo of the caravan, following its recall by the Egyptian government, in July of 1923, but released *The Caravan Carrying the Cover for the Holy Kaaba, Returning without Fulfilment of Pilgrimage Due to Differences between the Egyptian Government and the King of Hijaz* (al-Mahmal al-sharif wa ruju`uhu bidoun ta'diyat faridhat al-haj li-khilaf bayn al-hukuma al-misriya wa malik al-Hijaz) the following year. The film, under a minute, captures crowds that had gathered for the occasion, though the caravan itself is not shown. What is most notable about this film, unlike those previous, is Bayoumi's use of a moving camera, on horseback I suspect, attracting more attention from people in the vicinity than in the earlier films. A few people seem startled and in one case afraid, as a teenage boy runs away from the camera, tripping because of his haste, possibly having thought the camera a weapon.⁴⁶⁶

Those present may have wondered if the caravan would ever repeat its recently thwarted mission. An agreement was reached the following year, 1924, but the question of the caliphate

⁴⁶³ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, 57

⁴⁶⁴ "The Holy Carpet: Recalled to Cairo Sequel to the Hedjaz Ban," *The Times of India*, Jul 17, 1923, 7, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/311395147/407928736567446DPQ/6?accountid=14512>

⁴⁶⁵ Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, 240.

⁴⁶⁶ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963*.

had become emblematic of the debate over Islam's role in forming the identity of the new nation, especially after its highest Islamic authority al-Azhar had announced its plans to hold a meeting of Islam's leading authorities in Egypt two years thereafter, in 1926. Public opinions varied as to the value, feasibility and timing of Egypt's taking on the role of leader of the Islamic world. Notably, Prime Minister Saad Zaghlul questioned the utopian conception's productivity as pursued by modern nation-states. King Fouad, however, sought the title for himself, that was at least until the Cairo Caliphate Congress failed as a fiasco in 1926. Zaghlul and even Fouad and by this point, along with other dissenters, framed their objections to the reactivation of the caliphate around Egypt, in terms of its potential to harm the interests of the nation, domestically or abroad.⁴⁶⁷

By the time Bayoumi made his other religion themed film, *The Transportation of Al Morsy Abulabbass Mosque's Pillars* (Naql a`midat masjid al-Mursi Abu al-`Abbas, 1932), Islam was pervasively perceived as having undergone a process of Egyptianizing long ago, one that positioned the cultural, social, philosophical institution of faith as one of many that had been assimilated into Egypt over the centuries. It is thus perhaps fitting that the mosque named in the film's title, originally constructed in the 14th century, during the reign of the Turkish Mamluk Sultanate, would be rebuilt by an Italian architect, in a neo-Mamluk style, in the most cosmopolitan of Egypt's cities—Alexandria. *The Transportation* is mainly notable for how unceremonious its depicted affair is—construction workers using various devices and implements to move and place one of the mosque's pillars. Bayoumi seems as interested in capturing the process of the transport as he is in capturing the workers laboring.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁷ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 72-73.*

⁴⁶⁸ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

The last of the three vectors of nationalism I wish to cover in this segment also depicts Egyptians working, though in this case their work is play—football to be exact. *Football match between Egyptian National and Austrian Alhakou Team* (Haflat kurat al-qadam lifirqat muntakhab al-Qahira wa firqat al-hakuwa, 1925) integrates dialogue cards to introduce the teams and each half of play, as well as for editorializing purposes. In it, Bayoumi is focused on the players who appear in his stationary view from behind and to the right of the Hakou team’s goal, to the point that he misses capturing the goals scored. He does later manage to introduce the player who scored the first with a card that reads, “One of the Hakou that struck Egypt's goal,” before showing him smiling to the camera. At *Football Match*’s conclusion and following a card that reads “end,” two cards appear: “Misr film,” which is yet another production label Bayoumi used. The film’s final card reads, “The police maintains order,” as if to remind audiences of who they would be compelled to contend with if they elected to act rowdily at the next popular sporting event they attend!⁴⁶⁹

Sport may seem a trivial cultural vector when compared to ancient indigenous civilization or a long practiced, predominant religion. Sport served Egypt’s modern culture as a grounds for performativity. Performativity is a condition that Bayoumi repeatedly captures in his newsfilms in the manner of ritual, such as procession. A particular form of performativity gained popular recognition following the 1919 Revolution—sport.⁴⁷⁰ Sport, according to Lucie Ryzova, was a significant component of effendi culture, as sporting activities and facilities once restricted to the

⁴⁶⁹ *Newly discovered films of Mohamed Bayoumi, 1894-1963.*

⁴⁷⁰ The 1919 Revolution has been dubbed the “Effendi Revolution.” Effendi is a Turkish term akin to esquire, which in Egypt came to describe a class of professional and white-collar workers. See Mohamed Al-'Afifi, “Cinema as a Source of History” (Al-sinema ka masdar lit-tarikh), in *Egyptian Cinema: Origination and Formation* [al-Sinema al-misriya: Al-nash'ah wa at-takwin], ed. Hashim Al-Nahas (Cairo: The Higher Culture Council, 2008), 47.

elite became available to the effendiya in the interwar period.⁴⁷¹ Sport constitutes an overlooked and significant site within the construction of the modern Egyptian nationalist history and mythos, a site wherein occurred what Wilson Chacko Jacob calls the “sea-change that the desire to translate and create a new kind of institutional life signified in epistemological and material terms.”⁴⁷² Ryzova even identifies a film title from each of the 1930s and 40s centered on sport.⁴⁷³

An examination of Egyptian silent film productions on the subject of sport actually yields many more titles than two. More importantly, Ryzova’s observation about the popularization of what had been an elite activity is demonstrated in the topical shift in sport films released over the silent period., so that popular sport is relatively depicted with greater regularity than sport of the elite. The first Egyptian film about sport appears to have been *Sporting Holidays in Frere School* (Al-A`yad al-riyadiya fi madrasat al-Frere, 1907). The elite association is evident, since the sporting activity in this film takes place in the prestigious Jesuit international school De la Sal Frere. Granted, sport films with an elite association persisted past the 1919 Revolution and the ascendancy of a nationalist politics, as with two newsfilms, dated a month apart, both named *Race Days in Sporting Club in Alexandria* (Ayam al-sibaq fi nadi Sporting bil-Iskanadria, 1920), as well as with the 1923 release *His Majesty the King in the Race Party* (Jalalat al-malik fi haflat al-sibaq). Nevertheless, the following year, 1924, saw the release of *Sporting Games in the Ahli Club*, the legendary Egyptian sport club. Another newsfilm was released in 1924 titled *A Sports Festival in the Police School in Cairo with the Attendance of Saad Zaghlul Pasha* (‘Eid riyadi fi

⁴⁷¹ “Egyptianizing Modernity through the ‘New Effendiy’: Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt under the Monarchy,” in *Re-envisioning Egypt, 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 158.

⁴⁷² See Wilson Chacko Jacob, *Working Out Egypt: Effendi Masculinity and Subject Formation in Colonial Modernity, 1870–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 86.

⁴⁷³ “Egyptianizing Modernity through the ‘New Effendiy’: Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt under the Monarchy,” 158.

madrasat al-bulis bil-Qahira bi-hudur Sa`d Zaghul basha). As for Bayoumi's film, two legendary footballers appear in it—Mahmoud Mukhtar al-Tatch and Husein Hijazi.⁴⁷⁴ By the end of the silent era, Egyptian celebrity athletes had begun to appear in narrative films, such as Mukhtar Hussein in *Miracle of Love* (Mu`jizat al-hub, 1930), a trend that would grow in the sound era.⁴⁷⁵

Bayoumi's Final Newsfilm: Sound, Bank Misr and the Emergence of National Cinema

Bayoumi made his last films in 1933, including his nonfiction hybrid *The Inauguration of Al-Said Club in Alexandria* (Iftitah nadi al-Si`id bil-Iskandaria that ri`ayat Husein basha Sabri muhafidh al-Iskandaria), his final film.⁴⁷⁶ The film combines elements of silent newsfilm and documentary nonfiction. It indeed does report a news story, but it also thoroughly introduces viewers to the club's facilities, departments and members. In two distinct parts, *The Inauguration* introduces its audience to the club's facilities, methodically, then soon links such facilities to the club's departments and their staffs. The film introduces its viewers to the club's staffs first by way of a scene of staff gathering during the workday—in the lunchroom to be exact—then as members of the club's various departments and visiting delegations of organizations invited to attend the inauguration. These latter shots, mostly taken at the main entrance to the club, have staff and guests standing in spots on the steps to indicate their relative position within their respective departments or organizations, so that horizontal centrality and standing on the lowest step used indicates superiority of rank.

⁴⁷⁴ Al-Qalyoubi, 98.

⁴⁷⁵ Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 41.

⁴⁷⁶ The DVD collection I viewed in the UCLA Film and TV Archive was restored through a preservation effort overseen by Egypt's Academy of Arts, including Fawzy Fahmy of the Academy of Arts and Shawki `Ali Mohamed, Dean of the High Institute for Cinema. It is likely that this film along with others in this collection were dated by the Mohamed Al-Qalyoubi, who discovered the film, based on Bayoumi's papers which the latter's family made available to him.

These shots are conducted as if still photographs were to be taken, with those photographed standing square to the camera in stationary positions and smiling. Bayoumi had already demonstrated such an approach in *The opening of Tutankhamun's Tomb* nearly a decade earlier, but uses it far more extensively here. Although Al-Qalyoubi notes this technique in terms of the earlier film, he does not explain why Bayoumi depicted these club members in a way typical to group portraiture photography.⁴⁷⁷ It could have to do with Bayoumi's own background as a still photographer, or with club members' preconceptions of what subjecting them to *taswir* (*imaging, picturing, or photography*) would entail, or, as a third possibility, these departmental shots may have replicated the tropes of still portraiture not by design, but as a spontaneous enactment of photography, as club members themselves had understood it. Still-photography-like cinematography is not unique to *The Inauguration of al-Sa'id Club*, but is so extensively used herein as to constitute a salient motif, especially as Bayoumi extends the exercise of "taking shots" of club departments to the various constituency delegations that had materialized for the inauguration celebration. The latter part of the film employs a typical Bayoumi newsfilm style—minimalist, intimate, and humanistic—what with its focus on the attendants' participation in the revelry, including their individual expressions in reaction.

1933 saw the first notable box office smash of an Egyptian film—*The White Rose*, a talkie whose unprecedented success pointed to the potential profitability of domestic narrative talkies.⁴⁷⁸ My analysis of Bayoumi's incomplete narrative film *Night in a Lifetime*, leaves me

⁴⁷⁷ According to al-Qalyoubi: "At times does Mohamed Bayoumi's camera photograph the opening's guests of the upper class in Egypt as well as foreigners as if they were in a fashion show, having them stand before him presenting displaying themselves before the camera," 66.

⁴⁷⁸ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," December 19, 1933, 3, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

convinced that it was intended as a talkie.⁴⁷⁹ The film was never finished,⁴⁸⁰ as if to deny him the opportunity to seize a new modality of cinema with which to revitalize his filmmaking career. On the other hand, the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema would emerge as an industry powerhouse in Egypt's burgeoning cinema industry, one in which the Company, soon to be rebranded Studio Misr, would "speak" to Egyptian audiences through its sound productions. The Company in the early 1930s sought and benefited from the Egyptian government's caretaking of and investment in domestic cinema production, thereby exemplifying the emergence of a national cinema.⁴⁸¹ At this point, I wish to examine the historical link between Mohamed Bayoumi and the Company for Acting and Cinema; surveying how the latter engaged the Egyptian government to support its activities and those of domestic production by extension. Close examination of the practices of Bank Misr, and of the Misr Group by extension, points to its inconsistent application of nationalist precepts it had adopted relating to the Arabic language and its willingness to harm the interests of Egyptian exhibitors in lobbying for its own. I will approach this complex confluence from its reported onset in 1924.

Bayoumi's account of his practical founding of the Company for Acting and Cinema is related in his diary, though incompletely and rather incoherently. The diary and pieces he published toward the end of his life, in the 1950s, exhibit an immense dejection over his unrecognized contribution to launching the Egyptian cinema. He continually deplores the

⁴⁷⁹ Although this has not been stated elsewhere, I judge from the repeated and prolonged depiction of characters speaking that this film, which was found in fragments and constructed based on the direction of its discoverer al-Qalyoubi. Perhaps the sound was meant to be recorded on disc, which may explain the absence of a soundtrack on the celluloid itself. Al-Qalyoubi who mentions his knowledge and impressions of *Night in a Lifetime*, never speculates that it was a sound film, 78-80.

⁴⁸⁰ The incomplete film is presented as such in the Bayoumi archival DVD. Moreover, a letter in Bayoumi's collection was written to collect production costs for the film, which suggests that the soundtrack was never added.

⁴⁸¹ It is worth noting that the Arabic term *watani*, often used to characterize the Misr Group, denotes *patriotic*, not quite *national*.

distortion of the origins of Egypt's cinema so as to have attributed it in great part to Tal'at Harb, when he himself was the "founder of Bank Misr," the "genius in Egypt," and its "unknown soldier."⁴⁸² Bayoumi reports that his first interaction with Tal'at Harb was after he had sold his own cinema equipment to Bank Misr at a great discount,⁴⁸³ for which a receipt exists and is one of four business documents that Mohamed Al-Qalyoubi has included in his definitive biography of the beleaguered filmmaker.⁴⁸⁴ Bayoumi reports in his diary that he was brought on to lead the Company for Acting and Cinema in February of 1925, month of the equipment sale, a position he held until he resigned his post in February of the following year.⁴⁸⁵

Bayoumi elsewhere reports that, while in the Company's employ, he was to set out to Europe to purchase more equipment for the "factory," when Harb asked Bayoumi and Sayid Bashlawi, head of Misr Printing, to accompany him. Bayoumi reports having remained in Europe to undertake film laboratory training, after Harb had returned. When Bayoumi himself returned, he was dismayed by the standard of operations of the Arab Acting Theater, founded by Harb in 1920 and presumably part of Bayoumi's engagement with the Company. When he attempted to turn things around at this theatre, Bayoumi reports his having been ignored, which then convinced him to resign.⁴⁸⁶ Beside the receipt for the equipment Bayoumi sold to Bank Misr, his papers contain a letter from director of the Bank's Economic Research Department notifying Bayoumi of their receipt of his letter sent to Tal'at Harb, a letter inviting Bayoumi to visit the

⁴⁸² Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 48-55.

⁴⁸³ Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 42-43.

⁴⁸⁴ Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 129.

⁴⁸⁵ Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 42.

⁴⁸⁶ Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 42-45.

department on the first floor of Misr Printing, but not expressly to meet with Harb.⁴⁸⁷ Otherwise, no original documents pertain to Bank Misr in Bayoumi's papers as reprinted in Al-Qalyoubi's biography.

I find Bayoumi's claim to have worked for the Company for Acting and Cinema to be dubious, and although al-Qalyoubi casts doubt over Bayoumi's recollections al-Qalyoubi seems not to question Bayoumi's account of such employment. Not only does he not present evidence of employment or engagement, but his name does not appear anywhere in the expansive study of Harb's contribution to the cinema in Egypt, Ilhami Hasan's *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941*. Indeed, Bayoumi does name one of the company's in-house cinematographers, rather pejoratively, and does identify a speech delivered by Harb in 1927, in which the industrialist publicly ushers in the second phase of the Company for Acting and Cinema, a phase in which it would embark on film production. Yet, both pieces of information were public, so that an employee's exclusive access was not required to learn of them.⁴⁸⁸

Thus, having established the company in 1925,⁴⁸⁹ and equipped it with production capacity and know-how, its humble staff of seven or so embarked on working along four tracks: industrial, commercial, promotional, and educational—titles that do not comport with their typical uses in English locution. The industrial track at first involved in-house or contracted productions of short subjects. Then once domestic feature films were being made with regularity,

⁴⁸⁷ Muhammad Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: The First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema* (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 128.

⁴⁸⁸ See Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941*, 38-48.

⁴⁸⁹ The Company for Acting and Cinema was the third subsidiary incorporated by Bank Misr, following Misr Printing (1922) and Misr Company for Cotton Ginning (1924). That it was the third is indicative of Bank Misr's interest in the cinema industry from the early 1920s, especially when one considers that Bank Misr had incorporated twenty-two subdivisions by 1939. Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941*, 22-23.

starting in the late 1920s, the Company for Acting and Cinema worked on photographing, developing and printing some, such as *Zaynab* (1930), *The Qualm* (Wakhz al-damir, 1931), *Sons of the Aristocrats* (the first domestic talkie, *Awlad al-dhawāt* 1932) *Repent* (Kaffiri `an khati`atik, 1933), and *When a Woman Loves* (Indama tuhib al-mar`a, 1933). The commercial interest was one of distributing foreign films in Egypt and to other Middle Eastern regions. The promotional effort was one of producing films intended to boost Egypt's exposure abroad and to attract tourism.⁴⁹⁰ If that seems particularly nationalistic, then it may lend perspective to know that Bank Misr had established the Misr Company for Freight and Transport in 1925 and Misr Airlines in 1932, both concerned with international movement. The first nonfiction films made by the company in 1929 were perhaps in the view or travelogue tradition: *Silk Weaving in Domyat* (Nasij al-harir fi Dumyat), *Sporting Games in Elementary Schools* (Al`ab riyadiya fi al-madaris al-awaliya), *Al-Gazeera Party* (Haflat al-Jazira), and *Fishing in the Red Sea* (Sayd al-asmak fi al-bahr al-ahamr). These films were reported to have screened in the United States.⁴⁹¹

The promotional effort may also have been coupled with the fourth track—educational. Harb perhaps made no statement more telling of the Company's interest in working jointly with the Egyptian government than he did in remarking on the production of educational films:

...Therefore, we think that our educational company's task in producing films makes it among the companies that perform a public service, which veritably nominates it to take on this charge in government schools in concert with the ministry of education and in private schools in concert with their management, especially since the custom in western countries is producing films and screening them in schools are technical tasks in which companies such as ours or organizations supported by national and municipal governments with annual grants, so that education ministries' expertise is restricted to

⁴⁹⁰ Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal`at Harb: Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema Industry, 1867-1941*, 50-52.

⁴⁹¹ Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 38.

contracting such companies and to selecting films preferred for screening in school and to insuring the fulfillment of contracts.⁴⁹²

Harb likely had not learned of the Egyptian government's first film commission, that of the film *The Sultanic Guard* (al-Haras al-sultani) in 1916.⁴⁹³ The film, likely an actuality, depicting the functions of the guard, was screened non-theatrically to an audience that included Sultan Hussein-Kamal himself, among other dignitaries, in the palaces of Gabares, in a rural area between Tanta and Damansour, approximately 150 km outside of Cairo. Harb likely did learn, however, of the news that the Egyptian government would invest sixteen thousand pounds in motion picture equipment and "cinematographic educational tapes"⁴⁹⁴ to be used in eighty-five government schools (*madaris amiriya*) in the academic year following the establishment of the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema. This news was reported in the June 4th edition of the weekly film magazine *Motion Pictures* (al-suwar al-mutaharrika),⁴⁹⁵ merely days before the establishment of the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, on June 13, 1925.⁴⁹⁶ Yet the news, a flash more than a report, does not name Bank Misr or Tal'at Harb, even though the very same journal had published a full-page piece titled "Bank Misr and Moving Images," on April 23 of

⁴⁹² Hasan, *Mohamed Tal'at Harb*, 53. The speech was a well-publicized as part of an event that took place on successive days, the 29th and 30th of March, 1927, in Azbakiya Park, an event to which dignitaries had been invited to view some of the Company's productions. See El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 221.

⁴⁹³ This is arguably this essay's most significant find, one that has been missed even by historians who have reviewed the primary publication to discuss this affair, such as Faridah Mar'i and Ahmed El-Hadary. This find moves up the date of the Egyptian government's first investment in cinema by ten years from that cited in El Hadary's authoritative history, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 195.

⁴⁹⁴ The Arabic term used to describe reels or films by the very first cinema journal published in Arabic, *al-Suwar al-Mutaharrika (Motion Pictures)* is *shareet*, the same term used decades later to refer to audio tapes—cassettes—and video tapes.

⁴⁹⁵ Concerning the education films see "Hadith al-suwar" (Talk of the Pictures), June 4, 1925, 1, *Motion Pictures*, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo. Concerning the commissioned project, see "Ikhlil min al-ghar: rajul `amil fi sabil fan Kabir" (Wreath of Laurels: A Man Working for the Sake of a Big Art), *Motion Pictures*, June 4, 1925, 10,

⁴⁹⁶ According to El Hadary, the Company's date of foundation and capitalization figure were reported in a notice published by about the Misr Group in the special silver jubilee edition of the culture magazine *al-Sabah*. See *tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz' al-awwal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930 [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930]* (Cairo: The Cinema Club, 1987), 193.

that same year, six editions earlier.⁴⁹⁷ This prior piece reports that Bank Misr had already charged Mohamed Bayoumi with producing films, assisted by others, and that the team was currently working on “news, descriptive, and educational tapes.”⁴⁹⁸

This earlier piece in *Motion Pictures* mentions scenes produced by the Company that its unnamed author had seen.⁴⁹⁹ These are three scenes, one documentary of sugar manufacture in Egypt, the other two newsfilm clips, one of the opening of parliament and the other of guests of the international geography conference. Al-Qalyoubi’s findings of Bayoumi’s name only the third of these topics: Bayoumi, according to his own papers, had made a film, now lost, about a visit by members of the geography conference. Al-Qalyoubi, also notes having learned of the film from documents and three photos relating, along with a telegram that Bayoumi had sent to Bank Misr, about a promotional film he had made titled *Al-Mahalla Train Engine*, from the same year of 1925.⁵⁰⁰ My own estimation is that Bayoumi was working independently and was attempting to sell his films to Bank Misr as he had anticipated—perhaps expected—joining the Company, after selling his equipment to the Company a couple of months earlier (at what he later deemed a pittance).⁵⁰¹ As for *Motion Pictures*’s identifying Bayoumi as head of the photography crew of the newly established Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, it is worth

⁴⁹⁷ This story takes up the entirety of page 20.

⁴⁹⁸ The term *wasfiya*, which means *descriptive*, is one I have not encountered elsewhere and likely suggest a documentary form, especially since in the same paragraph, the author refers to a film that documents the manufacture of sugar in a particular plant in Egypt. See “Bank Misr and Moving Images,” 20.

⁴⁹⁹ According to film historian Faridah Mar’i’s critical analysis of the journal, over its two-year run, the author is likely owner, executive director, and co-editor Mahmoud Muhammad Tawfiq, son of the journal’s founder Muhammad Tawfiq. See Mar’i, “Majallat al-Suwar al-Mutaharrrika wa al-sinema fi Misr” (*Motion Pictures Journal and the Cinema in Egypt*), in *Sahafat al-sinema fi Misr: al-nisf al-awwal min al-qarn al-`ishrin* [Cinema Press in Egypt: The First Half of the Twentieth century], ed. Faridah Mar’i (Cairo: Egyptian Film Center, 1996), 31-32.

⁵⁰⁰ Al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi*, 61.

⁵⁰¹ The sale itself is all but certain, considering the detail of the receipt whose image al-Qalyoubi includes in his biography, 140.

noting that the article also refers to Bayoumi as “colleague,” which leads me to suspect that the article’s author learned of Bayoumi’s alleged hiring by the Company from Bayoumi himself.⁵⁰²

I have found no evidence that the Misr Company for Acting and Cinema produced films prior to 1926,⁵⁰³ although its production became systematic in 1929, the year in which the Ministry of Education’s first films were produced. Indeed, I had suspected that the films produced by the two entities in that year were the same, since I had found discrete US government reports from 1929 that each of the Company’s films and the Ministry of Education’s films went on to screen in the United States.⁵⁰⁴ That is until I encountered a confidential communication from the US Commercial Attaché in Egypt that the Egyptian government had asked the Company to make educational films about Egypt’s industries, to be sent to Egyptian consulates abroad for propaganda purposes.⁵⁰⁵

The 1932 US commercial attaché report on cinema activity in Egypt stated that “there is no picture-making industry in Egypt to speak of. There are a few free lance [sic] camera men.”⁵⁰⁶ The attaché’s office further found it unlikely that an Egyptian production industry could form in the near future, because of the scarcity of capital, of technical know-how and because of the

⁵⁰² *Motion Pictures*, April 27, 1925, 20.

⁵⁰³ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 204.

⁵⁰⁴ These films included titles such as *Delta Tourism*, *Cairo City*, *The Pyramids*, *The Sphinx*, *Cairo*, *Luxor*, *Tieba*, *Dandarah and Aswan*, *Villa Island*, *Luxor and Karnak*, and *Idfo*. See Abu Shadi, *Proceedings of the Egyptian Cinema*, 38-39.

⁵⁰⁵ Leys A France, “Revision of World Motion Picture Data: Answering Mr. Burke’s Memo of September 13,” November 18, 1935, 4, Box 195, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. 1929 also saw the production of *Narcotics*, funded by Alexandria’s police authority. See Abu Shadi, *Proceedings...*, 39. In 1934, the US commercial attaché’s report refers to an amateur film by the same name made by English residents of Alexandria, also funded by the police department. The latter film’s named director is different to the other, which leads me to believe that it was likely an amateur knock-off. See George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Amateur Film Produced Here,” May 18, 1934, 6-7, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵⁰⁶ George Lewis Jones, “Subject: Motion Picture Questionnaire—Egypt, 1932,” January 13, 1933, 4. Box 193.

market limitation of Arabic.⁵⁰⁷ The report would be proven wrong within a few years, but in 1932 Egyptian sound films had just begun appearing and the first domestic box office hit *The White Rose* had yet to be released. Further, foreign talkies themselves had not proved popular enough in Egyptian cinemas, so that the majority of non-wired cinemas were not persuaded to install sound equipment.⁵⁰⁸ The era of “the freelance men,” like Mohamed Bayoumi, was nearing its end and would not much longer stand for domestic production.

Even though the vast majority of the cinemas in Egypt were foreign owned, 70-80% of their receipts were gained from Egyptian customers.⁵⁰⁹ Yet, in 1933 Cairo, two Egyptian owned cinemas opened: the newly constructed Wahby cinema, part of a studio complex built by renowned theatrical director and actor Yusef Wahby, and the newly refurbished Fouad.⁵¹⁰ The Fouad Cinema urged Egyptian cinema goers, through press and pamphleteering, to patronize it, rather than its foreign owned competition, a short-lived campaign that nationalist students waged.⁵¹¹ In that pivotal year, the US Commercial Attaché’s office discounted the possibility that the studio whose construction had been announced by the Company for Acting and Cinema in 1933 would impact the market for American films in Egypt. Yet, the Company’s parent Bank Misr is mentioned as a source of agitation against foreign owned entertainment interests:

At the moment, however, there is a new wave of feeling that Egyptians should patronize Egyptian places of entertainment as a result of the appearance of Mohamed Abdel Wahab’s full length Egyptian (French made) talking picture “The White Rose”, the appearance of the Bank Misr Company’s weekly Arabic news feature and the active

⁵⁰⁷ George Lewis Jones, “Subject: Motion Picture Questionnaire—Egypt,1932,” January 13, 1933, 6, Box 193.

⁵⁰⁸ George Lewis Jones, “Subject: Motion Picture Questionnaire—Egypt,1932,” January 13, 1933, 6, Box 193.

⁵⁰⁹ George Lewis Jones, “Reference: Mr. Golden’s circular memorandum of September 19, 1934—agitation,” October 29, 1934, 1, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁵¹⁰ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: New Theater Opened, Egyptian nationalist propaganda against foreign owned theatres increasing” January 30, 1934, 2-3, box 194.

⁵¹¹ George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: New Theater Opened,” January 30, 1934, 3, box 194.

propaganda instituted by the native proprietors of the Fouad Cinema (formerly the American Cosmograph).⁵¹²

The secretary to the US commercial attaché's here uses dissimilatively, even if not consciously, terms as Egyptian, French, native, and American as to imbue his analysis with cutting credibility, when French above means more than it should—*The White Rose* was at least in part Egyptian made, in good part—and native less than it should, in the case of Egypt that is. I do think, however, that such terms were not entirely understood by many in a population not having absorbed the 1929 Decree-Law on Egyptian citizenship.⁵¹³

In 1934, the Egyptian Ministry of Commerce joined the Ministry of Education in producing films, having purchased for the purpose three cameras—a 35mm, a 16mm, and an 8mm—along with three projectors, one for each size. The films were intended for screening at international fairs and Egyptian consulates abroad, notably that in San Francisco which had asked for films about Egypt's industries and topography.⁵¹⁴ As did the Ministry of Agriculture when it made its first educational film whose purpose was to instruct local cultivators in modern agricultural practices.⁵¹⁵ Not to be outdone, the Ministry of Education, having for several years used motion pictures in secondary school classrooms in the capital, conceived of using scenic films of Egypt in rural elementary classrooms, films which were also to serve as propaganda in the hands of the Egyptian Tourist Development Association and Egyptian diplomatic missions abroad.⁵¹⁶ The year also notably saw the second in command of the Egyptian diplomatic mission

⁵¹² George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Nationalism Affects Foreign Owned Theaters," December 19, 1933, 2, Box 193.

⁵¹³ See Gianluca Paolo Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion and Nation-state* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 79-81.

⁵¹⁴ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Government Takes Its Own Propaganda Films," May 18, 1934, 3, box 194.

⁵¹⁵ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Modern Agricultural Methods Taught by Cinema," June 28, 1934, 3, box 194.

⁵¹⁶ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egyptian Ministry of Education Entertaining with Instruction by Motion Pictures," May 18, 1934, 4-5, box 194.

to Italy attend the International Cinematic Conference, as Egypt's delegate to it. This official action underscored the Egyptian government's interest in placing the Egyptian cinema industry on the global map.⁵¹⁷

Government regulation in terms of taxation, censorship and licensing had long influenced the cinema in Egypt, but in 1933 the Ministry of Finance imposed an amusement tax on various services including cinema exhibition. The tax on tickets at the point of sale dented cinema revenues, particularly those of cinemas that catered to low-income customers, as well as revenues of production companies that rented to Egyptian cinemas. Two years later, in 1935, the customs duty on imported positive film, imposed since the early 1920s if not sooner, was increased considerably. Just like the amusement tax, the new customs duty was scaled back after its introduction, but still constituted a 250% rise after adjustment.⁵¹⁸ This increase in customs duty financially disadvantaged exhibitors, including nationalist (read: Arab Egyptian owned) cinemas such as the Fouad, because even the Fouad screened foreign films. Meanwhile, it indirectly benefited domestic producers, since their product could be acquired by domestic exhibitors without a customs duty attached, producers such as the Misr Company.⁵¹⁹

The Misr Company for Acting and Cinema which was rebranded Studio Misr, with the opening of its magnificent new studio just outside of Cairo, in October of 1935,⁵²⁰ had not made public its intent to produce anything but Egyptian films, presumably in the language it had mandated for its internal communications—Arabic. Nevertheless, the US Commercial Attaché

⁵¹⁷ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Egypt Represented at Rome Cinematographic Conference," May 18, 1934, 6, box 194.

⁵¹⁸ Leys A France, "Revision of World Motion Picture Data: Answering Mr. Burke's Memo of September 13," November 18, 1935, 2-3, box 195.

⁵¹⁹ It does not therefore surprise that Studio Misr rented and renovated the building that had housed Cinema Triumph, which had specialized in screening foreign films, to open Cinema Studio Misr, intended to screen Studio Misr productions. See Ilhami Hasan, *Mohamed Tal'at Harb*, 77-78.

⁵²⁰ Leys A France, Motion Picture Notes--Egypt," November 18, 1935, 1, box 195.

did report that he had learned in confidence of the Company for Acting and Cinema's plan to use the raised customs duty to its productions' advantage, but he also reported the Company's inquiry into making English language films employing Egyptian actors in a joint production capacity.⁵²¹ Hence, Arabic had at the outset instrumentalized as a means of underscoring nationalist credentials, but the language was a decade and a half later proposed to be dispensed with, in pursuit of alluring economic opportunity. The attaché further confidentially reported that Studio Misr had lobbied the Egyptian government to impose a quota of 10% domestic films on all exhibitors' bookings in Egypt,⁵²² which if true would have posited a nationalism slipping into Machiavellianism. Such theorizing would indeed be consistent with the findings of Robert Vitalis, resulting from his extensive study of Bank Misr:

... Harb played a key role in articulating basic objectives of the business community in nationalist terms. It is therefore not surprising to find that, during his most outspokenly nationalist period, foreigners in Egypt continued to cultivate Harb, encouraged his investment activities and even joined him in his Bank Misr venture in 1920. Rather than Harb and the Misr group ceasing to pose a threat to dominant forces in the local economy in the 1930s as they increased their involvement with foreign investors, he and the other Egyptian business nationalists only began to pose a threat at that time, as these new groups demonstrated increasing influence over markets and politics.

The basic objective of the Misr group and all other post-1922 Egyptian investors was profit or, even more preferable, rent. ... Rent seeking yields a far less exalted image than conventional portraits of bankers seeking to challenge European economic hegemony. It does, however, resolve many of the conventional paradoxes, including inexplicable complexities in the personalities of businessmen like Harb who, while

⁵²¹ Leys A France, "Motion Picture Notes--Egypt," June 10, 1935, 2, box 195.

⁵²² Leys A France, "Revision of World Motion Picture Data: Answering Mr. Burke's Memo of September 13," November 18, 1935, 3, box 195.

“hostile” to foreign capital, served on the boards of the biggest foreign-owned firms in Egypt.⁵²³

Presumably, Egyptian government officials, having begun a conservative rhetorical and financial investment in the cinema in 1929, later determined to pursue a more robust nationalist cinema policy. The chief beneficiary of its largess relating would be the most capitalized domestic producer, the Company for Acting and Cinema. This manifested when the Ministry of Finance instated an annual subsidy of 1,750 Egyptian pounds (\$8,750) to produce films, “which will serve to advertise Egypt in foreign countries.” In singling out the Company for its production subsidy—in effect a grant—the Egyptian government revealed that its nationalist actions were guided by a favoritism for the powerful, especially when one considers that its only previous dole out for domestic production had been an annual 50 pounds to each of four Egyptian film producers, in 1933.⁵²⁴

Although Studio Misr would not be nationalized until 1960, it had already formed strategic alliances with the ministries of finance and education by the time it had gained a new name and building in 1935. It has been remarked that Bank Misr, under Harb’s leadership, had been cautious in developing its cinema business. It seems that the Egyptian government acted similarly in investing in the Egyptian cinema. However, by 1935 it had evidently spent money on producing films and on subsidizing their making. Moreover, the Egyptian government had by then promoted Egypt’s films—as well as Egypt through films—abroad, in diplomatic and

⁵²³ In Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide*, 48.

⁵²⁴ Not surprisingly, Mohamed Bayoumi was not one of the four. Although this grant was intended as annual by the Ministry of Education, I have not found accounts of awards following the first instance in 1933. See Munir M. Ibrahim, *al-Sinima al-misriya fi al-thalathinat* [Egyptian Cinema in the Thirties] (Cairo: Cultural Development Fund, Ministry of Culture, 2002), 81-83.

industrial circles, and protected it locally, at least its film production, through heightened taxation and customs fees on imports.

Egyptian newsfilms, such as those by Mohamed Bayoumi, had confirmed the public's interest in nationalist films. The Misr Company for Acting and Cinema, with the help of the Egyptian government, would fashion and apply a strategy to promote itself and its product as the quintessence of a national cinema.

Chapter 4

Theatre to Cinema: Fostering and Facilitating

This chapter's title is borrowed from the title of the original work by Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, which I read in the course of learning about the cultural landscape in which the cinema emerged.⁵²⁵ The influence that the theatre in Egypt had on the country's early cinema is varied and potent and would have warranted a chapter on historical grounds alone as herewith elaborated. I found it sensible to examine such influence along formal-industrial lines, since theatre troupes were often assembled and specialized in one generic form or another—(melo)dramatic, singing, or comedic theatre—although dramatic and comedic theatre invited singers to their theatres, either by integrating singing within dramatic or comedic plays or by complementing such plays with song, for Egyptian musical performances of the era typically centered on singing, as described in the second segment of this chapter.

Significantly, writing about theatre's relationship to the cinema in Egypt presented an opportunity to link to and augment discussions from this study's earlier chapters. The first segment on the (melo)dramatic theatre looks into the experience of women filmmakers in the early industrial era examined, so as to lend contextually to the discussion about Assia Dagher's experience as a single Egyptianized woman filmmaker, not least since the several filmmakers discussed herein were all "native," unlike Assia. The second segment on comedy discusses Mohamed Bayoumi's narrative films, all comedic, thereby completing the textual, screen analysis of Bayoumi's oeuvre, a unique but worthy component in a study otherwise concerned with cultural history. The third segment on singing cinema concludes with an examination of the

⁵²⁵ *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

appeal of *The White Rose*, a history that explains why the boycott campaign against “foreign”-owned cinemas, examined in the first chapter, chose *The White Rose* as its filmic target. This final chapter thus serves to make the study it concludes more cohesive and trenchant.

It is no surprise that the theater of Egypt, in its practice, practitioners, poetics, and discourses served the cinema of the era under study more than the latter did the former, for two obvious reasons. First, theatre predated cinema as a cultural form in Egypt as it did in many regions of the world, in the case of Egypt by a couple of decades. Second, cinema evidently borrowed much from theatre in coming into its own. The Egyptian theatre’s contribution to the narrative cinema that emerged in the country in 1917, with the first of the few short narrative films made by the ill-fated and earlier discussed STICIA, was one of fostering and facilitation. Theatre provided for the growth of cinema in Egypt by offering the latter its venues, its stories, its practitioners, its production practices, its promotional strategies and more. Examining such nourishment promised to shed light on economic and political issues of concern to this study: nationalism, citizenship, Egyptianess, cultural industry, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and competition.

As channels interconnecting the two cultural, commercial fields emerged and strengthened, practitioners and observers took stock of how practices and people shared between theatre and cinema affected the two forms. This chapter investigates the ways and means of this noted fostering and facilitating—venues, practitioners, audiences, capital, knowhow—accounting for what was written about the association between the cinema and theatre on matters that inform a great deal about the grounds from which Egyptian film production emanated and that explain why domestic film production only took off after synchronized sound film production had begun. Egyptian cultural observers contemporary to the era under study and

historians of the theatre of our day have described the modern theatre of Egypt in three categorical terms—singing, dramatic, and comical—the order of this chapter’s segmentation.

The theatre of 19th century Egypt is perhaps most associated with the Khedival Opera House, founded in 1869, year of the opening of the Suez Canal, and with its commissioned inaugural performance of Verdi’s *Aida*. Performers in the Opera House were not residents of Egypt as a matter of course, however. Further, the domestic singing theatre, above mentioned, emerged a quarter-century or so after the founding of the theatre in Egypt that Syrian immigrants had been most responsible for activating and cultivating, beginning in the 1870s—a dramatic theatre. Decades after such emergence, in the 1920s to be precise, Ramses Theatre, a theatre specializing in (melo)drama, would earn the respect and patronage of Egypt’s elite, who along with the country’s European residents had hitherto largely restricted their diet of performance culture to non-Egyptian works in venues owned and run by non-Egyptians.⁵²⁶ It was Ramses Theatre, under the evolutionary direction of its owner and artistic director and lead performer Youssef Wahby, that paved the way for broad social and governmental acknowledgment of the cinema as constituent to the development of the newly (nominally) independent modern nation, as cultural industry and as discursive promotional platform, as I argue herein. It was also Ramses Theatre where the Youssef Wahby penned *Sons of the Aristocrats* premiered, a play that Wahby later adapted for the screen as the first Egyptian talkie, by the same title, released in 1932. Founded in 1923, Ramses was the site of unique formal interactions between the stage and the apparatus of the cinema. The professionalism manifest in the operation of the venue, enabled Wahby’s troupe to demanded and garner greater respect from its guests than hitherto known in

⁵²⁶ See Yunan Labib Rizk’s segment titled “La’ihat al-tiyetrat” (The Theatre Bill), in the seventh volume of his survey, Part 4, of *al-Ahram* newspaper’s reportage over several decades titled *Diwan al-haya al-mu`asira* [Register of Modern Life] (Cairo: al-Ahram History Center, 2002), 93.

Egypt's domestic theatre, in terms of the behavior expected from audiences of the Ramses onsite, in ways that would transfer to cinematic exhibition.

1. (Melo)dramatic Theatre: Women as cineastes and cinemagoers in the early industrial era of the cinema in Egypt

Egypt's serious theatre (al-masrah al-jiddi)—slightly distinct from dramatic theatre, in that it also comprised melodramatic work and practices relating—contributed markedly to the country's cinema in the years following the emergence of synchronized sound. This segment focuses on women's experience as practitioners and as audience members in Egypt's playhouses and movie houses during the pre-Studio Misr era of the cinema in Egypt. Youssef Wahby's Ramses Theatre and, to a lesser degree Ramses Films, serve as focal points for this investigation, one culminating with its production of *Sons of the Aristocrats* (Awlad al-Dhawwat) in 1932. This was a film Wahby adapted from a play by the same name that had underperformed at the box office, as if to right a wrong, a film he produced and that starred himself.

I here mainly attend to how the Ramses theatre created a space and a public forum that empowered and dignified women in attendance, contributing to normalization of women's cinema going. Ramses also drew attention to its women performers and lent them distinction so as to attract talent and money, which they then boldly used to cease an incipient industrial moment in Egyptian film production. For several years, between 1927 and 1934 and for the only time in Egyptian cinema history, women competed with the most accomplished male practitioners of the cinema if not exceeded them in output, critical enthusiasm, and industrial ambition. This segment serves as an opportunity to identify such women pioneers of the Egyptian cinema, to historicize their contributions to the cinema in Egypt, and to demonstrate

how their careers largely benefitted from the elevated success of the theatre in the 1920s, and that of the Ramses Theatre in particular.

A Brief History of Egypt's Modern Theatre

Egyptians experienced a particular theatre prior to the 19th century, a shadow play theatre that exerted little influence on the modern theatre of Egypt and the Levant, especially in the second half of that century. Egyptians were introduced to dramatic, secular theatre when European visitors performed it, after the Napoleonic military campaign on the Levant, 1798-1801, including members of French and Italian troupes. Although Italian theatre maintained a more sustained presence than the French prior to the ascendancy of Khedive Ismail (1863-1879), it was French theatre that would ultimately have the greatest impact upon Egypt's emerging modern theatre,⁵²⁷ part and parcel of an influence upon Egyptian cultural activity that exceeded that of all other European nations,⁵²⁸ even though France's representation among the European contingents in Egypt throughout much of this study's decided period of 1896-1934 was fourth, fewer than resident Britons and significantly smaller than Italian and Greek communities living therein⁵²⁹.

European theatrical troupes visited Egypt regularly during Khedive Ismail's reign, what with his avowed appreciation for arts and culture. His "munificence," as observed by Jacob

⁵²⁷ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 52-55.

⁵²⁸ See Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-thalith* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 3] (Cairo: Ahrām History Center, 1999), 355.

⁵²⁹ A table of Egyptian population figures according to national background is offered by Dia' Mar'i in his xenophobic but well researched "al-Ajanib fi al-sinema al-misriya" (Foreigners in the Egyptian Cinema) in *al-Sinema al-misriya: al-nash'a wa al-takwin* [The Egyptian Cinema: Genesis and Formation], ed. Hashim al-Nahas (Cairo: The Supreme Council of Culture, 2008), 219.

Landau, declared loudly to the world in the year 1869, in whose January he launched the comedy theatre in Azbakiya, then Cairo's Opera House in November, both occasioning the great feat of the Suez Canal, itself inaugurated three weeks after the Opera. French troupes performed comedies and Italian companies staged operas for the country's European residents, its khedival leadership, its Ottoman Egyptian ruling class, and its "native" Egyptian intellectual and economic elite familiar with European languages and cultural offerings, by education and visitation.⁵³⁰ In wanting and spending to "make Egypt part of Europe," Ismail availed opportunities to those who would bring Europe to Egypt, such as in a domestic, Arabicized modern theater.⁵³¹

Most, but not all of the practitioners in the domestic theatre in the last third of the nineteenth century were Levantine Christians who had moved to Egypt, lured by promise of gaining from Ismail's largesse and from the economic opportunities available in its large cities.⁵³² Some Levantine practitioners got involved in the theatre after moving to Egypt while

⁵³⁰ Ahmad Hasan al-Zayat, *Tarikh al-Adab al-'Arabi, al-tub`a 23* [History of Arab Literature for the Secondary and Higher Schools, 23rd ed.] (Cairo: Nahdet Misr publishing Group, 1962), 427. See also Landau, 67. *Al-Hilal* literary magazine adds European tourists to the groups that frequented the Opera House. "al-Tamthil al-'arabi" (Arab Acting), 14, no. 3 (1905), 146, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://archive.alsharekh.org/Articles/134/12984/253757/9> As for visits to Europe, beside those who could afford it among the affluent, promising Egyptian students were systematically sent to Europe on scholarship beginning in 1815, one of whom was Rifa`a al-Tahtawi who would become one of the leading Egyptian intellectual figures of the century and who would offer the first rigorous analysis of the theatre, as he had experienced it in Paris, in his 1837 autobiography. See Ahmed Shams al-Din al-Haggagi, *The Origins of Arabic Theater* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1981), 61-63. Al-Haggagi also dates the inauguration of the Azbakiya theatre to 1868 as noted, in *The Origins...*, 25. However, Kamal al-Din Husein relates what took place as a refurbishing of the Azbakiya theatre in *al-Masrah wa al-taghaiyur al-ijtima`i fi Misr* [The Theater and Social Change in Egypt] (Cairo: The Egyptian-Lebanese Publishing House, 1992), 57.

⁵³¹ Quoted in Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725-1975* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985), 97.

⁵³² See the chapter titled "Migrational Patterns and Occupational Trends since the middle of the Nineteenth Century," in Thomas Philipp's *The Syrians in Egypt, 1725-1975* for an extensive study of the movement of Syrians (or *shawam* [Levantines] as they were locally called) to Egypt then. Thomas Philipp offers the motivation for immigrating to Egypt on the part of several Syrian literatures distinctly, in none of whose cases was migration for reason of civil unrest or fear of sectarian violence, 78-80, which is an explanation given for the immigration of Syrian intellectuals to Egypt by Jacob Landau in his oft referenced, including in Egyptian Arabic language histories, *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema*, 63.

others visited in company, including the first of many headed by Salim al-Naqqash and Adib Ishaq (1876-1878). Drawing on the work of Salim's uncle Marun al-Naqqash, who performed the first modern plays in Arabic in Beirut, beginning in 1848, Salim and Ishaq understood the appeal of music to audiences. Marun had added sung passages to the French comedies he translated into Arabic for performances in Beirut a quarter-century before his nephew would take his company to Egypt.⁵³³ Coupling theatre and song, as in comedy and operetta, became commonplace in the Egyptian theater, beginning in the late nineteenth century, a paring common to this day.

Predating the short lived Ishaq-Naqqash theater was that of Yaqub Sannu`, an Egyptian Jew who first staged modern theatre in Arabic in Egypt in 1870. Sannou` wrote his plays in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, unlike the predominantly Syrian theatre that pervaded until the end of the century. Evident in some lines from Sannou`'s plays that became common speak is that he not only wrote them in colloquial Egyptian, but with an understanding for plight and humor: "came from Paris in a tin" and "We said that. They said, 'get out town.'"⁵³⁴ These plays appealed to the public, judging from their success. Sannou` further set a precedent by employing women to perform in his plays, unlike most of the Syrian troupes that employed men and boys to perform the roles of women. Moreover, Sannou` introduced politico-satirical theatre, demonstrating a commitment to addressing social problems that soon earned the ire of Khedive

⁵³³ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 56-65.

⁵³⁴ Landau's finding, detailed in *Studies in Arab Theater*, 68-69, that Sulaiman al-Qirdahi was the first to employ female actors is odd considering that he cites two sources, of a handful or so relating to Sannu`, that assert Sannu`'s precedence in employing female actors. See Ibrahim `Abdu, *Abu Nadhara: imam al-sahafa l-fukahiya al-musawara wa za`im al-masrah fi Misr* [Abu Naddara: Leader of Illustrated Comical Journalism and Master of the Theater in Egypt: 1839-1912] (Cairo: Literature Library Press, 1953), 25-26. The other noted source is by Muhammad Yousef Najm, "Mulier Misr: Ya`qub Sannu` Abu Naddara" (Egypt's Mouliere: Ya`qub Sannu` Abu Naddara), *al-Adib*, April 1, 1953, 17, accessed May 19, 2019, <https://archive.alsharekh.org/Articles/144/14609/327204/4>

Ismail, who then had Sannou` exiled to France, after a mere two years of theatrical activity. The third leg of the Naqqash-Ishaq collaboration, an actor named Youssef al-Khayat, attempted to pick up where his compatriots had left off and succeeded, including as Sannou` had once, by performing in the opulent Opera to its coveted audience. He unwisely selected Salim al-Naqqash's allusive *The Tyrant* (al-Dhuloum, 1878) to perform before khedive and company and, like Sannou`, was proscribed.⁵³⁵ These measures of censure, extreme as they were, formed a precedent for censorship of performance, with content in mind—cinema not far into the horizon—a precedent witnessed and internalized by practitioners and patrons alike.

Censorship of performance, such as in withholding governmental permission to produce a screenplay or to screen a film already produced is a subject that has been extensively and sufficiently discussed by Egyptian film historians, as has been public censure that was inextricably connected to it. I certainly address censure in the press, emanating from persons and institutions, throughout this study, as I do here, but only in how it impacted orientation of performers, whether in the flesh or projected, and audiences, at the point of contact between the two in theatres and in cinemas. By orientation I mean the conditions and developments by which performers and audiences experienced the theater and cinema differently over the span of this study, women in particular, which is the concern of this chapter's examination of the (melo)drama, with the Ramses Theatre as the locus of this history, the subject of the first of the three theatre genres examined herein.

Dramatic Theatre: Women gain in Attendance and Professional Practice

⁵³⁵ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 65-67. See also Husain, 59-63.

You have created a field of criticism not perfectly known, and you have presented the actor before the people as better than a mendicant or “tramp” as the people had known him, and have shown the actress as better than a “harlot,” as she had been known. You have transformed theatres into honorable fora for families and thoughtful women, after they had been pits of corruption that righteous woman were not permitted to frequent. And you transformed the people’s view of art and its beauty, so that it was desired by young men and women after they had long avoided it. And you presented stars that were it not for your theatre would have still suffered the dark of night and the distress of approaching dark clouds.⁵³⁶

Serious (jiddi) is a term that Egyptian theatre reviewers contemporary to the studied era dubbed the theatrical counterpart to farcical (hazali), a serious theatre that was optimized then epitomized in the Youssef Wahby led Ramses Theater, one that also influentially impacted women’s participation in performance and attendance in ways that carried through to film production and exhibition in Egypt, particularly of (melo)dramas and all the more after the emergence of synchronized sound cinema. Such orientation was itself shaped by women’s appearance on stage or on screen, and the presence of women in a given audience. I find that participation of women in these two commercial artforms had notable social implications and indicated social change to an extent that justifies examining production, performance and exhibition practices in the era. Moreover, Wahby’s Ramses Theatre enhanced the cultural standing of the theatre through professionalizing practices and protocols of presentation, as examined in this segment, following a discussion about women audiences and practitioners of theater to cinema.

⁵³⁶ M. Shawkat al-Touni, “Wada`an ya ibn Wahby” (Farewell, Oh Son of Wahby), *al-Kashkoul*, Apr 15, 1927, 7, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

Women's Attendance of Playhouses and Movie Houses:

It should come as no surprise that men performed female characters in the early days of modern Arab theater to those with a cursory knowledge of global theatre histories, nor should one be surprised by the Orientalist justification of it offered by Jacob Landau in 1958. I would offer that logistics of movement and communication for members of theatre troupes in a society not accustomed to interaction between men and women outside of family would have persuaded their directors not to employ women as performers. I doubt that Marun al-Naqqash in Lebanon and others to follow hired men exclusively because they despised women for their ignorance, as Landau argues.

A contradiction emanates from the second reason Landau offers for the absence of women, that “religious opposition—particularly among Muslims, whose womenfolk were guarded jealously in the harems and allowed in the street only if veiled.”⁵³⁷ The incongruity lies in Landau's assertion that his assessment of the non-participation of women, as explained by the two reasons above, stood among “criteria of the Arab theater for a long time.” Not only were most practitioners of the early modern Egyptian theater Christian, but they also aimed to perform for the elite, well accustomed to seeing women on stage as members of the European troupes that visited Egypt and performed in Azbakiya and the Opera House. Moreover, Landau's noted “long time” was a mere fourteen years after the first modern Arabic performances in 1870, according to Landau's own dating.

⁵³⁷ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 58. I fail to understand why Landau would not have sought to demystify the enigmatic, fairly fantastical place, as it had for centuries been presented in Orientalist literature, knowing well the an infinitesimal minority of Egyptian men could afford to “keep harems” even if they wished.

Certainly, social strictures in Egypt of the era under study checked women's involvement in the theatre as spectators or as performers, strictures that were informed by religious doctrine, only that Muslim Arabs were not unique in this regard. Having named theatres of Elizabethan England and Ancient Greece, as examples of a lapsed practice of refusing to employ female performers, Landau then mentions Yiddish theatre of Abraham Goldfaden as having done the same, but on religious grounds, like the Arab theatre of modernity. Landau fails to mention that such a theatre was contemporary to that of the modern Arab, let alone to elaborate on such a likeness. Nor does Landau name Kabuki theatre, which in the year of his operative book's publication was still employing men only to perform, as noted by Earle Ernst's English language study published by Oxford in 1956.⁵³⁸

It is impossible to research theatre and cinema of the era under study without encountering the term *Harem*, a term which Edward Said rightly critiques.⁵³⁹ In English, *harem* refers to women's quarters within households run by patriarchs wealthy enough to afford such luxury. This conception is itself likely drawn from the French *dames de Harem* (ladies of the harem), which would *a-priori* disqualify *harem* from denoting women, an expression that appears in the first adverts for motion picture screening in Cairo, in late 1896.⁵⁴⁰ In Arabic, *harim* is the plural form of *hurma*, to mean that which is disallowed (haram) and specifically in this case a woman with whom contact is disallowed to all but members of her immediate family. *Harim*, the Arabic term, does indeed refer to a location in palaces, but this usage is rare shorthand for *women's quarters*.⁵⁴¹ *Harem* is not only misappropriated in common European and

⁵³⁸ *The Kabuki Theatre*, 10-11, 164-165.

⁵³⁹ See *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary ed. (New York: Random House, 1994), 186-190.

⁵⁴⁰ The advert appeared in *al-Muqattam* Arabic language newspaper on Dec 18, 1896, as published in Mahmoud 'Ali's *Fajr al-sinima fi Misr* [Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt] (Cairo: Cultural Development Fund, 2008), 28.

⁵⁴¹ The term haram in Arabic may indicate the inviolable according to religious mandate, such as the spaces of mosques and the bodies of women dependents, a term that some scholars have determined as the term from

neo-European discourses relating, but deliberately so, to properly serve a dual purpose. The first is to signify the moral superiority of the western (Christian) male in his having opted not subjugate female members of his immediate family, as the “oriental” has. The second purpose is to titillate him while relieving him of the moral guilt incurred from objectifying women by serving his sexual fantasy life “savage” females whose intellectual discernment scarcely outbounds their primal impulses, women of low civility as it were.

In the case of cinema, such titillation is embodied on the screen, not merely imagined through linguistic description. A cursory scan of western film titles including the term *harem* produces fifty results or so, leading up to the conclusion of this study’s period, 1934⁵⁴², and beginning with the first year of Egypt’s experience of the cinema, 1896, in whose year James White made *Turkish Harem* for Edison.⁵⁴³ The next year, George Melies made *Dancing in a Harem* (Danse au Sérail).⁵⁴⁴ In 1915, having reportedly left her spouse Prince Hassan Ibrahim—nephew of the last khedive to reign, Abbas II, during whose reign they married—for his stern oriental ways, including in having required her to wear a veil,⁵⁴⁵ a garment she later defiantly

which the English language harem derived. Even though it would seem sensible to consider the secluded space of inviolable women as inviolable itself, I have not encountered any definition in Arabic of such, likely because the space that houses women is not sacred, in the way that a mosque or an immediate family member is to a Muslim male.

⁵⁴² This was by way of a cursory search on IMDB.com.

⁵⁴³ Charles Musser, *Edison Motion Pictures, 1890-1900: An Annotated Filmography* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 247.

⁵⁴⁴ Philippe Rège, *Encyclopedia of French Film Directors, Volume 1* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 698.

⁵⁴⁵ The veil as discussed throughout this study should be assumed to cover the face as well as the hair, as was standard practice to by only Turkish women, but also city dwelling Egyptian Muslim women, up to when Huda Sha`rawi and her feminist compatriots famously removed it as discussed elsewhere in this study, and as related in her own memoir, wherein she recalled not having removed her veil but having replaced it with an Islamic statutory veil (hijab shar`i). See *Mudhakkirat Huda Sha`rawi* [Huda Sha`rawi’s Memoir] (Cairo: Hindawi Publishing, 2013), 199. What better support of my argument that the conception of the harem, dubious as it is, has penetrated the western imaginary to the extent that a feminist scholar educated in Arabic in al-Azhar would not only adopt *harem* in her editorialization of Sha`rawi’s memoirs into a book titled *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*. Sha`rawi’s memoir, in forty-four parts and of 328 pages includes four iterations of *harim*, all of which to mean *women*: 56, 59, 65, 234. Whereas Badran, told in the third person but inexplicably assigned Sha`rawi as an author organizes the memoirs into four parts, two of which integrate the term harem, as does the introduction—

told the press that she had refused to wear,⁵⁴⁶ Ola Humphrey continued to use the name Princess Hassan publicly and professionally. The *San Francisco Chronicle* either gullibly or falsely reported that she “had to bear the title, which once gave her just a little pride to possess.”⁵⁴⁷ That pride would have lasted at least four years past her escape from the cruel prince in 1911, at least up to when she engaged in promotion for her 1915 series of two-reelers for Universal Film Company, an occasion for which she was ready to wear the veil, not least since the film series was about her own life in the harem: “[Carl] Leammle signed a contract with her in which the Princess agreed to appear in a series of moving pictures depicting her life in the harem.”⁵⁴⁸ The series *Under the Crescent* was presented in six luridly titled episodes in which “the gowns worn by the Princess Hassen [sic] are of the ‘harem’ type,” about which Humphrey stated, “nothing is more simple and attractive than the oriental garb.”⁵⁴⁹ Likely the fee she received for her performances was also attractive, especially as the princess pursued a lucrative settlement that was not forthcoming, until it came in spades.⁵⁵⁰ By contrast to a western popular culture obsessed with the harem imaginary, I have been able to locate *harim* in a mere three titles among

seventeen times! This devious rendition by Margo Badran was published by a feminist press, which signals its sanctioning of a telling of Muslim woman’s exceptional experience in modern history according to discursive constructions of western men, rather than as offered by the woman herself—an intellectual travesty. See Margo Badran, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1986).

⁵⁴⁶ “American princess fighting in vain for divorce from cousin of khedive,” *The Washington Post*, SM4, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/145290115?accountid=14512>.

⁵⁴⁷ Helen Hoffman, “Don’t Marry a Prince: The American Princess Hassan, Who Married a Person Who Wanted to Be Buried With. Two Cases of Champagne, Issues a Warning After a Failed Romance,” 3, Sep 28, 1919, accessed April 4 2019, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/574719683?accountid=14512>

⁵⁴⁸ “First of crescent Series to Be Presented on May 5,” *Motion Picture News*, May 1, 1915, 61, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://archive.org/stream/motionpicturenew112unse#page/n411/mode/2up>.

⁵⁴⁹ “Princess Hassan,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, a10, May 30, 1915, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/496833856?accountid=14512>

⁵⁵⁰ She won a \$5 million settlement, after taxes, for which she was sued for half by her attorney. See “Demands \$2,500,000 of Turk Princess: New York Lawyer Says He Will Sue Princess Hassan for Divorce Efforts. She Once Was Stage Star Native Born, She Married Moslem Later Accused as a German Spy,” *New York Times*, 14, Mar 8, 1922, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/99620764?accountid=14512>.

Arabic language films produced to this day, in all of which does *harim* mean *women*, addled with a male-centric, reductive connotation.⁵⁵¹

In addition to film titles, *Harem* appears in early cinema western press relating to Egypt. Gene Gauntier, lead actor and screenwriter for the American film company Kalem, performed in the narrative short *A Prisoner of the Harem*, shot in Egypt in 1912, a year in which the Kalem spent months in Egypt producing various works. The screenplay to this film was written by a “United States Consul for twelve years at Alexandria, Egypt,”⁵⁵² rather than by Gauntier, who would have a direct experience of the “harem” while in the country, unlike the (western) men who had written on the subject, men who would have been disallowed from such quarters by virtue of their sex. Conversely, Gauntier was invited to a Turkish wedding of two exceptionally wealthy brothers. She reported her experience to *Moving Picture World* magazine that year, including in interrupting herself, “Right here I want to say that respected and wealthy Egyptians do not, as a rule, have more than one wife.”⁵⁵³ From my own review I would add that most non-respected and poor Egyptian men did not have more than one wife either; they could not have afforded it even if they had desired it.

I wish Gauntier had reported on an invitation to join Egyptian women in a cinema equipped with women only boxes, as they were. By 1914, a male correspondent for *The Moving*

⁵⁵¹ The films are *Souq al-harim* (Women’s Market, 1969), *Women’s Cage* (Qafas al-Harim, 1986, the cage being marriage), and *Harim Karim* (Karim’s Women, 2005). I identified these titles through a cursory search of the Arab cinema equivalent to IMDB, named elcinema.com

⁵⁵² Thus, here we have a U.S. government diplomat weaving harem yarns. See “A Prisoner of the Harem,” *Kalem Kalendar*, July 1, 1912, <https://archive.org/stream/kalemkalendar19100unse#page/n277/mode/2up>. For more on the woman pioneer filmmaker, see Gretchen Bisplinghoff, “Gene Gauntier,” in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, eds. Jane Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall’Asta, (New York: Center for Digital Research and Scholarship, Columbia University Libraries, 2013), last modified September 27, 2013, <https://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-gene-gauntier/>.

⁵⁵³ “Picture Players at a Turkish Wedding,” *Moving Picture World* 13, no. 3 (1912): 253-254, <https://archive.org/stream/moviwor13chal#page/n255/mode/2up>.

Picture World in Cairo reported that cinemas in the capital had finally enabled women's attendance of all screenings "by building special boxes for women, which they call harem boxes."⁵⁵⁴ The correspondent described them thus: "These have fine blinds drawn over them through which the occupants can see, but which shield them from the crude, staring men in the pit below."⁵⁵⁵ The correspondent's account is credible, not that of the behavior of the lascivious men in the pit, but in terms of exhibition practice relating to such women's loges and in terms descriptive of such boxes' architectural design. Cinema Olympia offered as advertised *Lages speciales Harem* seating for forty piasters and *Fauteuils de Loge Harem* for ten, the first being the entire loge and the latter merely a seat in it.⁵⁵⁶ A description of the women's box, including of its blinds, is offered by Rawiya Rashid of the Ramses Theater in her biography of Youssef Wahby, as detailed below.

Theater Ramses was among the houses⁵⁵⁷ serving women that integrated women's loges structurally, either originally or after refurbishing. I have not encountered a list of these, nor have I come across an explanation in primary or secondary sources of the conditions that led to such an architectural augmentation, but believe that they were typically venues that could attract audiences at the premium ticket prices assigned to such seating. In the case of the American

⁵⁵⁴ Homer Croy is excused from misappropriation in the case of these spaces because indeed *harem* does appear in venue promotional materials in French and English that he would have been able to read. *Harim* to mean women appears in Arabic promotional materials from the same era. An advert in al-Sinima al-Sharqi (Eastern Cinema) from late 1912 states, "... and as it matters to management to please the honorable national element, it shall hold screenings at three of every Friday, designated especially for *harim*, whose service will be overseen by women." See Mahmoud `Ali, 63. However, Croy does later in his piece state, "All their lives they have been shut up and now for the first time they are having a chance to see what is going on outside the doors of their harems," which definitely presents harem as a location. See "Just Think of That," Dec 26, 1914, 1831, <https://archive.org/stream/movingpicturewor22newy#page/1830/mode/2up>

⁵⁵⁵ Homer Croy, "Just Think of That."

⁵⁵⁶ The advert is in French. Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 70.

⁵⁵⁷ Plays and films were not presented only in theaters and cinemas respectively, but also in clubs, restaurants, and bars among a variety of public venues. See Mahmoud `Ali, (Cairo: Cultural Development Fund, 2008), 63-67. Also note a reader's question about moving images screening in Cairene venues (*nawadi*) in 1905.

Cosmograph, the single cinema named by the *Moving Picture World* correspondent, a newspaper advert listed, in French and in English, balcony seats for seven piasters and orchestra seats for three. The advert listed *galerie* seats for two piasters, but in French, not in the English listing.⁵⁵⁸ In the Olympia, whose balcony women's box seats sold for ten piasters as mentioned above, similar seats in the non-gendered loge, effectively the men's loge, were five piasters, whereas *troisièmes* (third-rate) seats were listed at one piaster, a tenth of the cost of the least expensive seat for women.⁵⁵⁹ Certainly, structurally integrating loges into a newly constructed cinema or refurbishing an existing one with them would come at a substantial cost. I induce that offering relatively expensive balcony seating, especially women's, signaled opulence that appealed to the well-to-do class of clientele such establishments wished to attract, members of the middle and upper classes, such as was the case with Ramses Theatre, refurbished and opened in 1923 to integrate loges, as discussed shortly.

Far more common than designating women's only seating sections in theatres and cinemas was that of dedicating presentations, performances or screenings, often matinees, as women only sessions. This practice must have obtained during the first quarter-century or so of the modern theatre in Egypt, because it was applied to the first film screenings in Cairo, in Schneider Hammam in January of 1896, when *Mu'ayad* newspaper printed a notice of screenings for "national and foreign mesdames."⁵⁶⁰ The Pathé Ciematographe, the first house to screen films exclusively in Cairo, launched in 1906, designated a women's session on Thursday afternoons.⁵⁶¹ One of the most telling reports relating to such a practice in theatres and in cinemas was in the

⁵⁵⁸ The advert is in two parts, the French above the English. See Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 64.

⁵⁵⁹ The advert is in French. Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 70.

⁵⁶⁰ The advert is in French. Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 28.

⁵⁶¹ Mahmoud `Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 83.

Arabic language *al-Express*, dating to early 1918, one of Egyptian women of the capital making substantial and regular appearances in its theaters, “neither veiled nor disappeared, in the best attire and the most splendid, beautiful appearance ... especially on Tuesdays when special performances are held for them in theaters that are not attended by men. And cinemas crowd with women on Thursday afternoons, and they occupy all of its seats and loges.”⁵⁶² Women before the end of the Great War were attending theaters and cinemas with vigor and were sitting according to at least two arrangements—separate seating in mixed audience presentations and select presentations to women audiences exclusively. The Sultanic Opera, in 1917, offered performances exclusively for women, instead of for its longstanding gender-mixed but separate audiences, for the first time since its launch in 1869, suggesting that the Opera was keen on attracting a female patronage it had deemed enthusiastic and lucrative.⁵⁶³

Ramses Sets a Standard:

The “dean of the Arab Theatre” (‘Amid al-masrah al-‘arabi) Youssef Wahby has been written about widely and for a century, but seldom at length.⁵⁶⁴ His role in reviving his country’s theatre is acknowledged as resulting from his troupe’s appeal to audiences through an active catering to their tastes, as the Ramses exceeded Egyptian theatregoers’ expectations of the theatrical experience, in both staging and environment.⁵⁶⁵ Launched in 1923, the Ramses attracted

⁵⁶² As quoted in Mahmoud ‘Ali, *Dawn of the Cinema in Egypt*, 20-21.

⁵⁶³ Lutfi ‘Abd al-Wahhab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season* [al-Masrah al-Miṣrī, al-mawsim al-masrahī 1917-1918] (Cairo: National Center for Theater, Music & Folklore, 2001), 123.

⁵⁶⁴ An exception is Rawiya Rashid’s *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears* [Yousef Wahbi: sanawat al-majd wa al-dumou] (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 2016). Otherwise, Jacob Landau discusses Wahby’s contribution to the Arab theatre in *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958), 81-86.

⁵⁶⁵ Several years after the launch of the Ramses Theatre, it was praised, for some of what had won it plaudits early in its activity, when art critic in *al-Jadid*, a publication with differing ownership and writing staff from the earlier cited *al-Ahram* reporting on the troupe, characterized the Ramses among Cairo’s four Arabic theatres as having “the most sophisticated audience and the quietest seating”, in “Theaters and Amusements: Preface” (al-Masarih wa al-malahi), Mar 25, 1929, 2692, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

dignitaries and upper class Egyptians from the outset.⁵⁶⁶ By 1931, the Arabic theatre had garnered sufficient esteem as to newly attract government dignitaries, including the head of the leading political party of the interwar period the Wafd, several ministers, even the prime minister himself. The Ramses elevated the social, not only cultural, standing of the theatre. Among the Arabic theaters in the capital city, the Ramses was one that the country's ruling elite attended, conveying unprecedented approval in their patronage of an Arabic theatre.⁵⁶⁷

Ramses's success conditioned Egyptian audiences to experience the cinema as a serious and generative artform in its own right. Ramses was the theatre that instated the three-season regular performance schedule, excepting summer, a suit other troupes followed and which then became the standard annual exhibition season for the country's cinemas.⁵⁶⁸ Ramses Theatre also set the stage for Egyptian audiences' support of and enthusiasm for native engagement in the cinema, beginning in its year of foundation of 1923, by projecting magic lantern images of troupe performers in the theatre's entrance, by screening captured rehearsal footage of plays upcoming onto a stage screen during intermissions,⁵⁶⁹ and by coupling projected filmic segments with theatrical performances.⁵⁷⁰

Contrary to the Opera's moving to stage performance for women-only audiences, during World War I, Youssef Wahby's Ramses moved from the practice of the exclusive to that of the integrated. Wahby was no altruist, but he did lionize the theater and did demand respect for it as

⁵⁶⁶ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 105.

⁵⁶⁷ Suheil, "Acting World: The Previous Acting Season" (*`Alam al-tamthil: al-mawsim al-tamthili al-munsarim*), *al-Musawar*, June 19, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁵⁶⁸ A brief discussion of the theatrical season is offered in Suheil, "Acting World: The Previous Acting Season."

⁵⁶⁹ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 101.

⁵⁷⁰ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 26-27. "Acting World: Justice on the Ramses Stage" (*`Alam al-tamthil: al-`adala `ala masrah Ramsis*), *al-Musawar*, May 1, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

he pursued glory for himself, a glory that could only follow renown and popularity. He also realized that women by 1923, year of his founding Ramses Theater, were attending entertainment houses prolifically and consequently sought them out as customers. Further, Wahby may have determined that the customer base for the playhouse's performances would grow overall if audiences were gender integrated. According to Rawiya Rashid's most expansive biography of Wahby, Ramses first welcomed women to two performances on Sunday afternoons, but attendance was lackluster, until Wahby invited one of the most powerful Egyptian woman of the era, predominant Wafd party member and feminist Huda Sha`rawi to attend an exclusive performance with her companions. The promotional move payed off, as over time women attended even evening performances in accompaniment to their spouses,⁵⁷¹ but sat in designated loges dressed with net like coverings, as the above noted report in the *Moving Picture World* describes of the Cairene American Cosmograph cinema nearly a decade earlier.

Wahby did not care for this barrier customary in gender-mixed venues. Self-serving and intemperate as he may have been, Wahby believed in the power of the theater to move audiences—animated by the theatre as Wahby himself long had been—and as such aimed to optimize the connection between audience and performers. It is for this connection that he preferred the theater to the cinema, whose best bond to offer was one between a cinemagoer and a photographic image of the performer thrown onto a screen. As Rawiya Rashid relates, Wahby slyly got what he wanted by replacing the netted loge covering with a velvet one, so that women in attendance could hardly see the stage and consequently complained. Responding to audience complaints, Wahby had the curtains removed completely, so as to usher in a new standard of

⁵⁷¹ *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears [Yousef Wahbi: sanawat al-majd wa al-dumou]* (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 2016), 99.

public audience configuration whereby women's sections in venues were no longer covered in any way.⁵⁷² Rashid's account of Wahby in this regard glows in the critical manner of constructed legend, since it was already the case not later than the year of the Popular Revolution of 1919 that women could attend Arabic troupe performances offered to mixed-gender audiences, whereby their spouses and children could join them in theatre balconies, although as documented in Alexandria, more liberal and cosmopolitan than Cairo, where the Ramses Theatre was located.⁵⁷³ Documentation does exist of integrated, mixed seating for non-relatives no later than 1923, as may be deduced from the pages of *Motion Pictures*, the first of Egypt's Arabic language cinema magazines.

Egypt's Early Cinema Magazines on Women as Audience:

The three cinema magazines published in Egypt during the early industrial era examined herewith scarcely commented on women's attendance of the cinema, although the first of these *Motion Pictures* (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika, 1923-1925) allotted considerable space to a discussion among its readers about the propriety and value in Egyptian women's taking to the stage as performers. One such reader wrote in to admonish against such a practice on religious grounds. To support his argument, he cites a scandal at the Ramses: "Have we not heard of 'N' who one member of the Ramses troupe wanted to tempt to fall into the epicenter of corruption.

⁵⁷² *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 99-100. Wahby's memoirs in three volumes *I lived a Thousand Years* [ʾIshtu alf ʾaam] is best avoided to my mind, because Wahby, as Rawiya Rashid herself has observed, wrote them as if "a play he wrote hurriedly." Rashid's own biography is the most detailed I have encountered of the celebrated figure, and is sourced by several memoirs, multiple interviews, and a host of contemporary periodical press. The biography is not annotated, however, a condition of many Egyptian history books I have encountered. See *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears* [Sanawat al-majd wa al-dumouʿ] (Cairo: Shouk Press, 2016), 15, 99-100.

⁵⁷³ "Discussion of Acting and Actors" (Hadith al-tamthil wa al-mumathilin), *Alexandria Express*, Aug 10, 1919, 2-3, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 138-140

This is the state of actors with audience members.”⁵⁷⁴ Implicit in this reader’s reference to the Ramses theater is that if women were imperiled therein, at the most prestigious of the Egyptian theaters, then it could be assumed that impropriety thrived at other, lesser, houses of entertainment.

Remarks about women’s attendance in reader letters, presumably authored by men where unidentified, intimated that the cinema was not a place for women, for one reason or another. A reader wrote in to complain about women’s chewing of gum in the cinema, as indicated by the title of his note: “The woman who attends the cinema to listen to music only, not to watch the narrative film (riwaya) has no place there and she must not be among the fans of cinema.”⁵⁷⁵ Another reader wrote in to poetically relate his experience of being asked at the cinema by a portly woman behind him who Charlie Chaplin was, underscoring her ignorance of the cinema.⁵⁷⁶ These men wrote to complain about undeserving women invading their exclusive cinema spaces at such proximity as to interfere with their viewing experience, women they did not know. Significant is that only the latter reader offered his hometown, which happened to be Alexandria, the same city in whose theaters a mixed seating for non-family members could be found no later than 1919. I could not confirm that this practice of nonfamilial, gender-mixed seating had spread from the most cosmopolitan city in Egypt that is Alexandria to other parts of the country, until nearing the conclusion of the noted early industrial era, as soon discussed.

⁵⁷⁴ H. M., “Motion Pictures Parliament: A Response to Objections” (Barlaman al-suwar al-mutaharrika: Rad `ala i`tiradat), *Motion Pictures* [al-Suwar al-mutaharrika], Oct 25, 1923, 9, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁵⁷⁵ M. ` . B., “Motion Pictures Parliament: Gum Chewing” (Barlaman al-suwar al-mutaharrika: Madgh al-liban), *Motion Pictures*, May 31, 1923, 21.

⁵⁷⁶ Muhammad `Abd al-Karim, “Motion Pictures Parliament: Poetry” (Barlaman al-suwar al-mutaharrika: Zajal), *Motion Pictures*, Nov 8, 1923, 11.

Men also voiced concern about the impact certain content would have on women's morals and virtue, as did one who wrote in twice to denounce the screening of the controversially prurient *La garçonne* (Armand Du Plessy, 1923) for reasons including the film's "interest in inciting a girl's degeneracy."⁵⁷⁷ He also called for banning the film "to save the dignity of our women and morals."⁵⁷⁸ The magazine's resident film critic the Questions Man (Rajul al-As'ila) in reviewing *La garçonne* joined the insistent reader's call for its ban on the grounds that it imperiled Egyptian women's virtue: "Why do we permit these shameful narrative films the opportunity to appear before the eyes of our women when the vast majority of them are ignorant, tricked by the ways of corrupt European modernity to think that it is better than what they enjoy in their current lives? It is a duty of government to protect members of its populace, especially the weak among them and is there weaker than our women?"⁵⁷⁹ The Question Man's concern for women as audiences was born out of a dismissive paternalism, that men must protect women from corruption, because women are incapable of protecting themselves, even intellectually.

Whereas the subject of women as cinema patrons was touched on a few times over the twenty-seven issues of *Motion Pictures* magazine, it is telling that I have not encountered even a passing reference to women as audience in the tens of issues of culture magazines I have reviewed dating to the 1920s and first half of the 1930s, publications such as *al-Musawar*, *al-Sabah*, and *al-Kashkoul* except for that quoted at the outset of this essay from the last, a reader's letter applauding the Ramses. Moreover, the subject was broached merely once by each of the shorter-lived cinema magazines published near the end of the early industrial era—*Screen Art*

⁵⁷⁷ Muhammad Hijazi, "Motion Pictures Parliament: *La garçonne*" (Barlaman al-suwar al-mutaharrika: al-Mar'a al-mutarajjila), *Motion Pictures*, Mar 20, 1924, 2.

⁵⁷⁸ Muhammad Hijazi, "Motion Pictures Parliament: *La garçonne* Also" (Barlaman al-suwar al-mutaharrika: al-Mar'a al-mutarajjila aydan), *Motion Pictures*, Apr 17, 1924, 7.

⁵⁷⁹ Questions Man, "Review of Narrative Films: *La garçonne*" (Isti`rad al-riwayat: al-Mar'a al-mutarajjila), *Motion Pictures*, May 29, 1924, 15.

(*Fan al-sinema*, eighteen issues, 1933-1934) and *Cinema Planets* (Kawakib al-sinema, three issues, 1934). Fortunately, both passing mentions are significantly indicative of women's cinemagoing experience, a decade after the Ramses had opened its doors, of a relative empowerment of women in attendance. The first such mention appears in a regular feature concerning cinema news in *Screen Art* titled "The Cinema in Egypt and Abroad," which upon the release of the highly anticipated Egyptian film *The White Rose* (al-Warda al-beida) related, "It has been evidently apparent that the smashing majority of women in morning screenings may be attributed to the rough sex's being busy during these times."⁵⁸⁰ That women and men would attend the same screenings in Cairo's Royal Cinema, site of *The White Rose's* premiere, was not new. However, what had developed since a decade earlier was a steady, if relatively scant, Egyptian narrative film production, an industry whose success depended on the patronage of all patriotic Egyptians, including women. That the unparalleled success of the Egyptian cinema *The White Rose* was boosted by women's prolific attendance was not lost on *Screen Art* or likely on other cultural observers.

A year after the release of *The White Rose* a film magazine appeared that proffers a final and significant observation about Egyptian women's cinemagoing. In *Cinema Planets'* first issue, the editor in the publication's introductory statement banters about women's cinemagoing: "The most repugnant thing to me is to accompany a woman to one of the cinemas." He goes on to explain: "Not that I am that backward... only that no sooner is the light turned off than hot kiss shells are launched in from every point and in every direction and in their wake 'soft' laughs

⁵⁸⁰ "The Cinema in Egypt and Abroad: The White Rose" (al-Sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij: al-Warda al-beida), *Screen Art* [Fan al-Sinema], Dec 9, 1933, 4, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

take off that ‘electrify’ ‘yours truly.’”⁵⁸¹ Considering that *Cinema Planets* was published in Cairo,⁵⁸² the cinema the editor attended was likely there, suggesting that the practice of nonfamilial, gender-mixed cinema attendance and seating had spread to it from Alexandria where the practice had been implemented a decade and a half earlier. Equally important is the boldness, the defiant pluck that women were willing to exhibit in public, if not to be seen, then at least to be heard. Egyptian women by the mid-1930s had broadly made their voices heard, including when at the movies.

Egyptian women Gradually take to the stage

Whereas discussion in the press about women’s attendance of such venues as theatres and cinemas seems to have tapered off, Egyptian women’s acting alongside men continued to bother public figures with influence up to the closing years of this study. Mixed-gender casts caught greater public, including institutional, flack in the case of Egypt’s theatre than its cinema for two reasons. Unlike in the theater, actors for the cinema, including women, did not materialize in the flesh, in the immediate space of spectators. Another consequential difference between Egyptian women’s performing for the stage and the screen is that the latter did not begin until 1919, when Fouad al-Jazayirly, comedic actor and troupe leader, appeared along with his act Dar al-Salam in one of the first narrative (short) domestic film productions *Madam Loretta*, based on a theatrical sketch of al-Jazayirly’s. Among al-Jazayirly’s troupe members was his spouse Ihsan, who then

⁵⁸¹ See “Quips” (Muda`abat), *Kawakib al-sinima* [Cinema Planets], Sep 22, 1934, 4, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁵⁸² See Farida Mir`i and May al-Tilmisani, “Cinema Planets Magazine” (Majallat “Kawakib al-sinima”), in *Cinema Press in Egypt: The First Half of the Twentieth century* [Sahafat al-sinima fi Misr: al-nisf al-awwal min al-qarn al-`ishrin], ed. Farida Mir`i (Cairo: Egyptian Film Center, 1996), 249.

likely appeared in the long lost film.⁵⁸³ Ihsan al-Jazayirly thus became the first Egyptian woman to act for the screen a mere four years after Munira al-Mahdiya, as discussed below, became the first Egyptian woman to act for the stage, both precedents occurring during the Great War years.

It is then fortuitous that the first women of any background to appear on Egyptian screens was in 1896, year of the cinema's introduction in the country, itself quarter of a century after women first performed in the (popular) Arabic theatre of Ya`qub Sannu`'s troupe, in 1871.⁵⁸⁴ As one of several measures to professionalize his operation, he sought women to perform, perhaps dissatisfied with the female performance he had prior drawn from a designated member of the all-male cast he had directed,⁵⁸⁵ a practice common to the shadow theatre,⁵⁸⁶ an artform that Egypt had known since the thirteenth century.⁵⁸⁷

A series of letters published over the summer months of 1915 in *al-Ahram* daily newspaper penned by a woman who dubs herself the first Arab to perform on the Egyptian stage, not surprisingly a Levantine, offers keen insight into the work of women performers in Egypt's modern theatre of the day. The mighty daily had begun to publish reviews of publications,

⁵⁸³ See Ahmed El Hadary, *al-Sinima fi Misr, al-juz' al-awwal min bidayat 1896 ila akhir 1930* [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930] (Cairo: The Cinema Club, 1987), 145-146.

⁵⁸⁴ Adam Mestyan's article on the origins of Sannu's theatrical work is the definitive about a contested history that I link to one of this study's central arguments, that elision of the modern historical contribution of non-Egyptians to the country has occurred not only because of a nationalist and exclusive discourse propagated by the Egyptian regimes since but also at the primary source level, adducing two cases of such, one of which being this theatrical work of Sannu's. See "Arabic Theater in Early Khedival Culture, 1868-72: James Sanua Revisited," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 117-137.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibrahim `Abdu, *Abu Nadhara: imam al-sahafa l-fukahiya al-musawara wa za'im al-masrah fi Misr [Abu Naddara: Leader of Illustrated Comical Journalism and Master of the Theater in Egypt: 1839-1912]* (Cairo: Literature Library Press, 1953), 25-26. Appearing in the same year as `Abdu's book is an article which though not annotated, does reference a speech of Sannu's delivered in Paris, in 1902; see Muhammad Yousef Najm, "Egypt's Mouliere: Ya`qub Sannu` Abu Naddara" [Mulier Misr: Ya`qub Sannu` Abu Naddara], *al-Adib*, April 1, 1953, 17, accessed May 19, 2019, <http://archive.alsharekh.org/newPreview.aspx?PID=1779125&ISSUEID=14609&AID=327204>.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibrahim al-Dardiri, forward to *al-Masrah al-Miṣri, al-mawsim al-masrahi 1918-1919* [The Egyptian Theater: 1918-1919 Season], (Cairo: National Center for Theater, Music & Folklore, 2002), 15.

⁵⁸⁷ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 18.

including literature, in 1901,⁵⁸⁸ then beginning in 1908 had “launched a campaign to Egyptianize the theater,” predominantly European over the several decades since the Cairo Opera house and Azbakiya theatre had opened in 1869.⁵⁸⁹ It was little surprise then that *al-Ahram* would later amply cover the formation of the first notable domestic theatre organization, the Acting Advocates Association (Jam`iyat ansar al-tamthil), formed in January of 1914. The Association, which Egyptian modern historian Yunan Labib Rizk characterizes as the most storied in all of the history of the theatre in Egypt, was significant because its board included no actors, which enhanced the board’s legitimacy at a time when acting was widely considered a suspect profession, and, no Levantines, then dominant in Egypt’s theatre, whose absence boosted the Acting Advocates Association’s nationalist credentials.⁵⁹⁰

The Association’s lustrous board, which included no women as mentioned, held promotional events attended by the press, one of which in al-Ahli Club for Physical Exercise. This event included a presentation by a pharmacist and amateur actor who lamented Egyptian women’s appearance in brothels and dance halls and called on the Association to deliver Egyptian women to the acting stage, and that if it “was found difficult to get daughters of [good] homes and school students to appear in the theaters then it is necessary to bring together girls from the street and teach them how to become actors.” To this an employee of al-Ahli Club stood to respond, to voice his objection to “the Egyptian woman’s going out uncovered upon the stage

⁵⁸⁸ Yunan Labib Rizk, “Taqrīd al-ta’līf” (Authorship Encomium), in *Diwan al-haya al-mu`asira, al-kitab al-sabi`* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 7] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2002), 295-304.

⁵⁸⁹ Yunan Labib Rizk, “La’ihat al-tiyatrat” (The Theater Bill), in Register of Modern Life, vol. 7, 93.

⁵⁹⁰ Yunan Labib Rizk, “Jam`iyat ansar al-tamthil” (Acting Advocates Association), in *Diwan al-haya al-mu`asira, al-kitab al-thamin* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 8] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2003), 302-304.

to act among men.” The club employee who then requested endorsement of the position that “an Egyptian woman’s standing upon the stage is contrary to religion, morals, and customs.”⁵⁹¹

Responses to *al-Ahram*’s report taking exception with the proposed proscription from the Arabic stage followed as expected, including a series of articles by an actor named Mariam Sammat, who described having been the first woman to perform on the Egyptian stage, beginning twenty-five years earlier, at a time when female characters were performed by “young actors whose whiskers had not grown.”⁵⁹² She had first performed in Iskandar Farah’s troupe then in that of Abu Khalil al-Qabbani, which included two other women, named Mariam and Labiba. Sammat took it on her male colleagues that they refused to listen to her advice, despite her relatively long experience, merely for being a woman. Yet, Sammat also cited her female colleagues for their bent for envy and sabotage. Sammat offers an instance when a performance of which she was part was canceled because a female actor (likely herself, Rizk speculates) had refused to perform.⁵⁹³ This account strikes me as the first inkling of the power that leading women actors would hold in production of the Egyptian theater and subsequently the cinema, a power that would enable a few to variedly pursue film projects as later elaborated.

In the last of Sammat’s series of articles published in *al-Ahram* about her experience in the theatre, she discusses how Sulaiman al-Qirdahi “hatched” actresses by taking in poor girls and developing them to perform. She names a Mrs. Estassi who was trained by al-Qirdahi then went on to become leading lady in the troupe run by George Abyad and Salama Hijazi, around 1914.⁵⁹⁴ Sammat finds that al-Qirdahi’s practice was vital in making available and ready female

⁵⁹¹ Yunan Labib Rizk, “Acting Advocates Association,” in *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 8, 304-305.

⁵⁹² Yunan Labib Rizk in a segment titled “Acting Advocates Association,” *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 8, 306.

⁵⁹³ Yunan Labib Rizk, “Acting Advocates Association,” *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 8, 307.

⁵⁹⁴ Kamal al-Din Hussein marks 1914 as the year of the founding of the partnership between the two pioneers Hijazi and Abyad in *The Theater and Social Change in Egypt*, 75. Whereas Ahmed al-Sadudi offers that the

talent for the Egyptian theatre.⁵⁹⁵ Estassi was likely of non-Egyptian origin, as were vastly the actresses of the years prior to the Great War.⁵⁹⁶ It perhaps took a special talent to persuade troupe leaders to present an Egyptian actress to audiences. In this case the persuasion may well have resulted from a decade of incremental, standout success of Munira al-Mahdiya, at first “Mrs. Munira” (al-sit Munira), then “Azbakiya’s leading singer” (mutriabat al-Azbakiya al-oula) then and for the remainder of her near four-decade career the “sultana of song” “sultanat al-tarab,” the leading female musical performer in Egypt for most of the period of this study.⁵⁹⁷

Talent was not the only thing that persuaded theater director `Aziz `Eid to take al-Mahdiya up on her offer to perform in his troupe. By 1914, al-Mahdiya owned and ran the most renowned café in Cairo, dubbed “Spirits Jaunt” (Nuzhat al-nufus), a café that like many venues around Azbakiya Park and on `Imad al-Din Street that offered varied and everchanging entertainment, a café that was held in such public esteem that the occupying British authorities permitted its continued operation, having shuttered all other venues of entertainment at the outbreak of the War.⁵⁹⁸ `Eid approached al-Mahdiya with the idea of adding his troupe’s performances to the offerings in her café, an opportunity that she took to fulfill an occupational ambition of hers that Salam Hijazi had inspired—to act as well as sing. `Eid agreed and assigned

collaboration began in 1912 and ended in 1914, in “Salama Hijazi: ra’id al-oberet al-misirir” (Salama Hijazi: Pioneer of the Egyptian Operetta), *al-Thaqafa*, no. 69, November 10, 1964, 13-14, accessed May 18, 2019, <http://archive.alsharekh.org/newPreview.aspx?PID=2002014&ISSUEID=4982&AID=124244>. Jacob Landau merely marks 1914 as a year by which Abyad and Hijazi had already joined forced, in *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 87.

⁵⁹⁵ Yunan Labib Rizk, “Acting Advocates Association,” *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 8, 308.

⁵⁹⁶ They were vastly Jewish and Christian, mostly Syrian, as qualified by Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 74, and by Ratiba al-Hifni in *al-Sultana Munira al-Mahdiya wa al-ghina’ fi Misr qablaha wa fi zamaniha* [*Sultana Munira al-Mahdiya: Singing in Egypt before her and in her Time*] (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 2001), 90.

⁵⁹⁷ Ratina al-Hifni, *Munira al-Mahdiya*, 83. Arguably, Um Kulthoum had overtaken Munira al-Mahdiya in popularity by the mid 1930s.

⁵⁹⁸ Ratina al-Hifni, *Munira al-Mahdiya*, 87.

her a male part in 1915. She would play male roles repeatedly, despite promoting herself as the “first actress.”⁵⁹⁹ Al-Mahdiya’s performances attracted gentry and dignitary, including state officials, whose admiration could only have enhanced public approval of women’s, especially Muslim Egyptian women’s, performing on the stage to men and women alike.

A few Muslim Egyptian women did act for the stage during the war years, though more frequently they delivered singing performances that bracketed sketches and plays, as historians have observed. Although, such historians have qualified the national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds of the women of the Egyptian theatre during the Great War rather broadly as mostly Jewish, Christian, and Syrian. Having poured over promotional advertisements, reviews and letters from readers relating to Egyptian troupes in the years 1917-1920, I have encountered several likely Muslim (and as such likely Egyptian) women’s names, an Armenian name and a “Moroccan” name, though most seemed Christian or Jewish.⁶⁰⁰ Even Rihani’s troupe, one of the most successful, was criticized for not employing more Egyptian women, in place of “foreigners who do not enunciate Arabic well and whose talk and singing no human understands.”⁶⁰¹

Nevertheless, Egyptian women, performed as singers and actors in theaters and other venues of

⁵⁹⁹ Ratina al-Hifni, *Munira al-Mahdiya*, 89-90.

⁶⁰⁰ For the sake of naming women practitioners, considering that women have largely been written out of history, here is a list of the women of the Egyptian theater as performed and advertised in the press, over the years 1917-1920: Mrs. Meliadian, Nadhli Mizrahi, Zakiya al-Shamiya (as singer), Ms. Rosaria (as dancer), Abriz Estassi (mentioned above who performed a male role), Rose al-Yousef (who would become one of Egypt’s leading actresses in the decade following), Camille Shamir, Labiba Faris, Najwa Hasan, Latifa Hijazi, Victoria Musa, Nuha Husni (as singer), Saliha Qasin, Mary Ibrahim, Sofia, Sirina Ibrahim, Lina Idyal, Anisa Badran, Ibriza Statti, Almadh Istani (as singer), Ester Shattah, Ms. Milia, Mrs. Tawhida (as singer), Fatima Qidri (as singer), Fathiya Ahmad (as singer), Victoria Levi, Dina Liska al-Maghribiya, Latifa Amin, Warda Milan, Zahia Lutfi, and Mariam Sammat. See Lutfi `Abd al-Wahhab, *al-Masrah al-Miṣrī, al-mawsim al-masrahī 1917-1918* [The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season] (Cairo: National Center for Theater, Music & Folklore, 2001), 23, 24, 34, 35, 37, 40, 47, 51, 66, 68, 99, 102, 114, 120, 125, 129, 135, 137, 141, 150, 152, 159, 160, 161, 166, 179, 181, 185, 188, 201, 206, 209, 210, 225, 246, 248, 249, 251, 280, 296. Also see *al-Masrah al-Miṣrī, al-mawsim al-masrahī 1917-1918* [The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season], ed. Osama Abu Talib (Cairo: National Center for Theater, Music & Folklore, 2002), 50, 55, 67, 70, 71, 88, 94, 117.

⁶⁰¹ “Hadith al-tamthil wa al-mumathilin” (Talk of Actors and Acting), *Alexandria Express*, Aug 19, 1919, 2-3, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 139.

the capital by the end of the decade, led by a diligent, successful and charitable singer, actor and troupe leader in the singular Munria al-Mahdiya. When al-Mahdiya teamed up with journalist and public intellectual Farah Antoun, audiences came for the great singer, observed a long-patron of the theatre.⁶⁰²

Egyptian women who dreamed of commanding audiences and earning applause would have been encouraged by news of increased interest from Egyptian elite in the domestic theater, evidenced by Egyptian troupes being invited to perform in the Sultanic Opera house for the first time since Khedive Isma`il had banned them from what was then the Khedival Opera, in 1879. Girls and women who aspired to act professionally would also have been heartened to learn of Syrian and Egyptian elite, including Tal`at Harb, discussed centrally in the previous chapter, investing in troupes and in the venues that housed them.⁶⁰³ Such women and girls in the year of the Popular Revolution of 1919 would have also been encouraged to read about theatrical performances that many, especially Munira al-Mahdiya's, gave to benefit varied groups and institutions, and not only those of the elite.⁶⁰⁴ These beneficiaries included women's groups such as the New Woman, signaling that by the end of the century's second decade, such women not only approved of the country's theatrical activities, but also sought to boost their own standing in society, with the aid of a theater troupe's implicit endorsement, albeit one deemed dignified and high minded as the Acting Advocates Association.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² Both Antoun and author of this letter were Levantine, Antoun from Tripoli and the traveling writer from Damascus. See Nazil al-Qahira (Guest of Cairo), Ahmed `Ubayd, "al-Tamthil ams wa al-youm" (Acting Yesterday and Today), *al-Sufour*, Sep 20, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 405-411.

⁶⁰³ Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, preface to *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 15-16.

⁶⁰⁴ `Ali Fahmi, "Tharwat 1919 wa al-masrah al-misri" (The Revolution of 1919 and the Egyptian Theater," in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 24-25.

⁶⁰⁵ A notice to this even appeared in the Wafdist newspaper *Misr* on July 10, 1919 as reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 118.

Egyptian women who sought greater cultural legitimacy would have been disappointed by the edict issued by the state backed al-Azhar forbidding women's acting alongside men. During the War years, the censor's principle concern was not moral rectitude of public expression, but activities and publications critical of a British occupation, an apprehension that had been contained with the "unveiling" of the empire's Protectorate over Egypt, soon after the launch of the Great War.⁶⁰⁶ The War years saw a politically timid, sexually audacious theater of the sort to be expected in a country under occupation whose occupier is at war.⁶⁰⁷ And if ribald Arabic theater gained in popularity among the locals, then the occupational authorities may well have approved of such a trend as a sign that Moslems (with an *o*) were finally letting loose a little, just in time to be distracted enough from activities that resisted the occupier's plan for "protection" or merely publicly supported such resistance.

Prurience evinced in various singing and comedy theater forms, often in combination, led by `Ali al-Kassar's and especially Najib al-Rihani's troupes. Letters to the press as well as reviews by their own arts and culture critics at times defended these practitioners and pointed out the cultural value in the work of these two and other troupe leaders, even in vaudeville as presently staged.⁶⁰⁸ However, most press coverage railed against theater of the naughty,

⁶⁰⁶ The occupying authorities extended its vigilant censorship of dissent beyond the War years with the launch of the popular 1919 Revolution a few months after its conclusion. See `Ali Fahmi, *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 23.

⁶⁰⁷ Yunan Labib Rizk in a segment titled "Nahdat al-tamthil al-`arabi" (Arab Acting Renaissance), *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 12, 72-73.

⁶⁰⁸ A letter critically championing the right of performance arts to exist was obviously in response to a the disclamatory letter published in the same newspaper two days earlier, as cited below. "Development of Arab Literature and Acting" (Tatawur al-adab al-`arabi wa al-tamthil), *al-Watan* Newspaper, Jan 31, 1917, 1, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 40-44. *Al-Nahas*, "al-Ghina' wa al-tamthil" (Singing and Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 12, 1918, 1, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 259-261. A reader writing in to *al-Manbar* newspaper argued that the public would support farcical theatre if it could elevate its material above the vulgar in "al-tamthil" (Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 21, 1918, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 267-268. Novelist Muhammad Taymour offered a mixed, keen analysis of al-Rihani's career trajectory that accordingly acknowledged a generative, if unintended, effect on the Egyptian theatre, as discussed in this chapter's following segment. published a sophisticated criticism

objecting to its moral corruption of audience members who may be influenced in their own thinking and behavior by what they heard and saw,⁶⁰⁹ as well as against the evidently corrupt

of Rahani's work, arguing that what the latter had adopted after audiences turning their back on his performances compelled al-Rihani to abandon his Franco-Arab theatre was not an operetta, but more of a revue, which turned out as morally low as his earlier work. Yet, Taymour does acknowledge Rihani's positive influence on other performers of the theatre, specifically George Abyad, in "Khawatir tamthiliya: 1) al-Rihani bayn ansaruh wa khusumuh" (Notions of Acting: 1) al-Rihani between his Champions and Opponents), *al-Manbar*, Aug 26, 1918, 1, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 269-273. Riyad Shams, writing in *al-Watan* Newspaper, acknowledges the silliness of Kishkish Bey, but argues that its success has to do with its attending to concerns of current Egyptians, unlike many translated plays. See "Nahn wa al-lahu: al-tamthil al-raqi" (We and Amusement: Toward Sophisticated Acting), June 21, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 107-110. "al-tamthil al-hazali al-watani" (Patriotic Farcical Acting), *Alexandria Express*, July 7, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 116-117. A reader's letter described vaudeville as "very beautiful and of beneficial effect on people private and public, but requires much repair," in "Hadith al-tamthil wa al-mumathilin" (Talk of Actors and Acting), *Alexandria Express*, Aug 19, 1919, 2-3, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 138-140. *Al-Ahram*, the daily highest in circulation promoted the potential of farcial acting if performed thoughtfully in "al-Tamthil al-hazali" (Farcical Acting), Aug 31, 1919, Najib Shaqra, "Hawl al-tamthil al-sha'in, 1" (About Abominable Acting (1)), Aug 24, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 158-159, as well as in Mahmoud Kamil Safwat, "Hawl al-tamthil al-sha'in, 2" (About Abominable Acting (2)), *al-Ahram*, Aug 24, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 159-160. Notable among these letters was one signed Amin Sidqi, Manager of the Sidqi and Kassar troupe, which had been named in several letters, absolving his troupe of the prurience and baseness rightly under attacked, that the Kassar troupe's in the Majestic play songs are not randy, titled "al-Tamthil al-mujuni: Kalimat haq" (Buffoonish Acting: A Truthful Word), *al-Manbar* Newspaper, Aug 27, 1919, 1, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 162-163. See also "Hawl al-tamthil" (About Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 26, 1919, 2, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 165-166. Amin al-Manqabadi distinguishes between two modes of farcial acting—disreputable and sophisticated, observing that troupes have moved from performing the more reputable and tasteful farce, in "Hawl al-tamthil al-hazali" (About Farcical Acting), *Misr* newspaper, Sep 10, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 192-193. Ahmed Wafi, *al-Basir* correspondent in Bilqas, "al-Tamthil al-hazali" (Farcical Acting), *al-Basir*, Sep 23, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 208-210. A notice defends writer for al-Kassar's Majestic troupe, the much maligned Amin Sidqi for having raised the standard of comedic theatre, after audiences had turned away from prurient comedy, in "al-Tamthil al-fukahi—Furijat, Rahat `aleik" (Comedic Acting—*Relived and You Missed It*), *al-Manbar* newspaper, June 8, 1920, 3, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 375-376. "al-Tamthil `induna" (Acting Where We Are), *Misr* newspaper, July 14, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 388.

⁶⁰⁹ I later discuss reportage critical of the farcial theatre by one Hamdan in *al-Manbar* newspaper, as reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 119-120. "Tatawur al-adab al-`arabi wa al-tamthil" (Development of Arab Literature and Acting), *al-Watan* newspaper, Jan 29, 1917, 2, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 38-40. See `Abd al-Halim al-Ghamri, editor in *al-Watan* newspaper, "al-Ihtijaj `ala al-faudfil" (Protest Against Vaudeville), *al-Afkar* Newspaper, Mar 2, 1917, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 79. Mustafa Isma`il al-Qashashi, "Masarih lil-tamthil aw bu`ar lil-fasad" (Theatres for Acting or Pits of Corruption), *al-Manbar*, Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 118. "al-Tamthil al-kumidi aw al-hazali" (Comedic or Farcical Acting), *al-Afkar* Newspaper, Sep 12, 1917, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 161-163. "'Ala al-masarih: al-ghina` wa al-tamthil" (Upon the Stages: Signing and Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 11, 1918, 1, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 258-259. "Mumathil mahzoun" (Aggrieved actor), "Masrah al-aqlam `ala al-masarih" (Theatre of Authors upon the Stages), *al-Manbar*, Aug 12, 1918, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 261-262. Hamid Muhammad al-Si`idi, "'Ala masrah al-tamthil al-hazali" (Upon the Stage of Farcical Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 20, 1918, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The*

Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season, 264-266. Gorge Tannous, "Shababuna wa al-tamthil: khatarun yajib an yudra" (Our Youth and Acting: An Imminent Danger that must be Staved off), *al-Basir*, Jan 15, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 37-38. "Khatar al-tamthil al-hazali" (The Danger of Farcical Acting), *al-Islah* newspaper, Mar 1, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 37-38. "al-`Asima limakatibini fi 4 al-jari: al-tamthil al-hazali wa al-haraka al-fikriya al-jadida" (The Capital to Our Offices on the 4th of the Current: Farcical Acting and the New Intellectual Movement), *al-Basir* newspaper, 5 Mar, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 68-69. "Intiqad al-tamthil al-hazali fi Misr—Kishkish bey" (Criticising Farcical Acting in Egypt—Kishkish Bey), *al-Lata'if al-Musawara* [Pictorial Pleasantries], 17 Mar, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 76-78. *Al-Ahali* printed a letter calling for legal restriction of the operations of farcical theatre troupes, titled "Ba`d anwa` al-tamthil" (Some Types of Acting), Aug 3, 1919, which it followed with a mild statement of dissent, as reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 132-135. "Muharabat al-tamthil al-hazali al-sha'in" (Battling Abominable Farcical Acting), *al-Muqattam*, Aug 19, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 147. Younis, "Muharabat al-tamthil al-sha'in" (Battling Abominable Acting), *Misr* newspaper, Aug 20, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 148-149. Egyptian, "al-Tamthil al-fadih" (Scandalous Acting), *al-Ahram*, Aug 22, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 151-152. "al-tamthil al-khali" (Resisting Lewd Acting Muqawamat), *Misr* newspaper, Aug 23, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 157-158. Najib Shaqra, "Hawl al-tamthil al-sha'in, 1" (About Abominable Acting (1)), *al-Ahram*, Aug 24, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 158-159. Mahmoud Kamil Safwat, "Hawl al-tamthil al-sha'in, 2" (About Abominable Acting (2)), *al-Ahram*, Aug 24, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 159-160. Notable among these letters was one signed Amin Sidqi, Manager of the Sidqi and Kassar troupe, which had been named in several letters, absolving his troupe of the prurience and baseness rightly under attacked, that the Kassar troupe's in the Majestic play songs are not randy, titled "al-Tamthil al-mujuni: Kalima sadiqa" (Buffoonish Acting: A Truthful Word), *al-Manbar Newspaper*, Aug 27, 1919, 1, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 162-163. See also "Hawl al-tamthil" (About Acting), *al-Manbar*, Aug 26, 1919, 2, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 165-166. `Abd al-Rahman Sidqi, "al-Tamthil" (Acting), *al-Ahram*, Aug 28, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 166-167. "al-Funun al-jamila" (al-Funun al-jamila), *Misr* newspaper, Aug 29, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 167-168. The Critic Hafidh al-Sayid Youssef, "Isti`rad al-a`rad fi marasih al-hazal" (Presenting Privates on the Stages of Farce), *al-Hurriya*, Aug 29, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 168-171. Muhammad Fouad Rajab, "al-Tamthil al-hazali" (Farcical Acting), *Misr* newspaper, Aug 30, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 173-174. *Misr* newspaper reported that it had received many letters protesting farcical acting, including to report that al-Rihani's troupe had been driven out of a provincial town after the theatre curtains had been drawn to present only three 'lewd' women and from another town by students who (mis)greeted it in the town's train station, in "al-Tamthil al-hazali: muqaratun bayn Misr wa al-aqalim" (Farcical Acting: A Comparison between Cairo and the provinces), Aug 30, 1919, 2, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 174-175. A significant letter from an Egyptian woman actor in Sharbin by the name of Amina Ahmad Samaha denounces lewd acting, but decried the government's overzealous policy of denying serious theatre troupes travel to perform in the provinces, which has left her and her troupe members without work. Samaha also called for the founding of an actors' union in the letter published by both *al-Ahali* and *al-Basir Newspaper*, Sep 3, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 182-183. "al-Tamthil" (Acting), *al-Basir*, Jan 10, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 268-269. "Kayf yakhdim al-mumathil watanuh" (How Does an Actor Serve His Country), *Misr* newspaper, May 27, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 370. "Khatar al-tamthil al-hazali `ala al-akhlaq wa al-adab al-`amma" (Danger of Lewd Acting on Morals and Public Proprieties), *al-Watan* newspaper, June 9, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 376-378. "al-Talaba wa Dour al-Tamthil al-khali" (Students and Lewd Acting Houses), *al-Islah*, Aug 20, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 393-394. M `S, Actor, "Fi al-mala'ib wa al-masarih" (In the Playgrounds and Theatres), *Abu al-Houl* newspaper, Nov 16, 1920, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 434.

actors whose appearance and behavior off the stage enclosed the corruption they had signed on to portray.⁶¹⁰

Women, including actors, participated in these debates. An actor wrote into *al-Manbar* newspaper, which printed regularly on the matter of the theatre's propriety, to defend farcical theatre troupes, for the renewed returns they offered their audiences and performers alike in terms of staging and material, unlike sophisticated troupes that spent too little on their productions and which mostly performed old plays, as old as the Egyptian theatre itself, refusing to adequately pay translators to Arabize European plays.⁶¹¹ During a severe slump in the theatre business, particularly the dramatic "sophisticated" theatre, all but one of these disbanded or left the country. When actors in the remaining active troupe of `Abd al-Rahman Rushdi protested their treatment by the owner, Rushdi shut down the troupe's operations. Rushdi's move led to protests that compelled him to reinstate performances, upon whose resumption a women actors union delegated the task of addressing the protestors outside the theatre to one of their own named Daliezal: "Oh people! We have not asked for a raise in wages but as educators of the nation ask for suitable wages and we have denied you the league of great peoples the theatre for a week ... And we are sorry."⁶¹² Although the year 1919 stood out in Egyptian modern history for its dating the Popular Revolution that delivered independence, it was also a year that saw "a sweeping movement to form unions. The matter was such that it is difficult to find an Egyptian

⁶¹⁰ This reader, who identifies as a fan of acting, relates a dubious story about drunk and dissolute actor hitting his female actor companion in public for refusing to share the stage with a "prostitute." Bilqas-Wafi, "Wa hasratah `ala al-tamthil" (Oh, What Regrets over Acting), *al-Basir* newspaper, Mar 1, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 65-66. Muhammad, "al-Tamthil al-hazali huna wa hunak" (Farcical Acting Here and There), *al-Ahali*, July 29, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 129-130.

⁶¹¹ Actress, "Ma wara' al-sitar: `uyoub al-tamthil al-raqi" (What Is Behind the Curtains: Flaws of Sophisticated Acting?), *al-Manbar*, Sep 11, 1919, 3, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 194-197.

⁶¹² Youssef Iskandar Jreis, "l'tisab al-mumathilin: al-tamthil huna wa hunak" (Actors' Strike: Acting Here and There), *al-Manbar*, Sep 30, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 194-197.

then who did not belong to a union!”⁶¹³ A decade later, the women actors union was active enough to hold social events covered by the press.⁶¹⁴

Of the various options available to al-Azhar to act, from disavowing leaders of “exploitation” troupe leaders, to openly calling for a legal ban on vaudeville, revue and their ilk, the storied center for Islamic thought and education elected to forbid women from performing onstage alongside men. Despite the state funded al-Azhar’s misguided, conveniently patriarchal stance, women of the Egyptian theatre suffered alongside their male counterparts during the economic slump of the War years and the uncertainty of the years that followed the 1919 Popular Revolution. Nor would institutional resistance to women’s performing in the theatre end with the largely ineffective 1917 decree by al-Azhar against women’s thespianism.⁶¹⁵ In 1925, the recently launched satirical literature and politics newspaper *al-Kashkoul* reported that the Grand Imam of al-Azhar had published a notice that Muslim women’s “flaunting” was a sin, and that a great sin was for a Muslim woman to act professionally. *Al-Kashkoul* openly questioned what the grand Imam had done to apply his decree on the matter dating to 1917, and what affect he thought “lines of ink on a publication of paper” would have on longstanding indecency. The conservative *al-Kashkoul* had likely overestimated al-Azhar’s legal and actual influence on not only the cultural industries, but also public opinion.

Al-Azhar would weigh in on women’s acting for a third time during the era of my study, when it joined the resistance to the government funded Acting Art Institute (Ma`had fan al-

⁶¹³ See the segment titled “Naqaba likul Misri!” (A Union for Every Egyptian!) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-`ashir* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 10] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2004), 37.

⁶¹⁴ “Fukaha: Naqabat al-mumthilat—ma`rad al-jamal” (Humor: Women Actors Union—Beauty Exhibition), *al-Sabah*, Dec 2, 1928, 18-19, private collection.

⁶¹⁵ The decree had an impact on Egyptian society, though not on the theatre industry, according to Ahmed Shams al-Din al-Haggagi, *The Origins of Arabic Theater*, 29.

tamthil), established in 1930, specifically because of the rhythmic dance course students had taken. The Institute moved to a different venue for its second academic year, and suspended all studio courses, so that study was merely theoretical.⁶¹⁶ The Egyptian theatre suffered mightily in the decade of the 1930s, but this had to do more with economic hardship resulting from the Great Depression's reverberations and from the sinking price of cotton, as well as from competition that was the talking cinema. By the early 1930s, Egyptian women performers had already leapt to the lead of film production in the country, aided by the wide esteem for Munira al-Mahdiya, whose influence and success continued into the 1920s, and by the respect for their profession earned by the Ramses Theatre's operations actuated and prestige garnered.

Ramses Promotes the Theatre and Its Women Actors in Tow:

The "dean of the Arab Theatre" (ʿAmid al-masrah al-ʿarabi) Youssef Wahby has been written about widely and for a century, but seldom at length.⁶¹⁷ His role in reviving his country's theatre is acknowledged as resulting from his troupe's appeal to audiences through an active catering to their tastes, as the Ramses exceeded Egyptian theatregoers' expectations of the playhouse experience, in both staging and environment.⁶¹⁸ Wahby attained such new heights partly by

⁶¹⁶ See the segment titled "Ma'had fan al-tamthil" (Acting Art Institute) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu'assira, al-kitab al-sadis `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 16] (Cairo: Ahrām History Center, 2007), 19-20. *Al-Musawwar* weekly politics and culture magazine covered the Institute's debacle. See "'Alam al-tamthil: ma'had al-tamthil" (Acting World: The Acting Institute), July 17, 1931, 17; "'Alam al-tamthil: ma'had al-tamthil" (Acting World: The Acting Institute), Aug 7, 1931, 16; "'Alam al-tamthil: Hawl ma'had al-tamthil" (Acting World: About the Acting Institute), Aug 21, 1931, 15; "'Alam al-tamthil: `ala anqad al-ma'had" (Acting World: On the Ruins of the Institute), Aug 28, 1931, 6, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo. Clear news of the Institute's conversion into a lecture center in Subul al-`Awda, "Ilgha' ma'had al-tamthil" (Canceling the Acting Institute), *al-Kashkoul*, Aug 7, 1931, 25.

⁶¹⁷ Elsewhere I qualify and cite the thoroughgoing work by Rawiya Rashid, *Yousef Wahby: sanawat al-majd wa al-dumou`* [Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears] (Cairo: Dar El Shorouk, 2016). Otherwise, Jacob Landau discussed Wahby's contribution to the Arab theatre in *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 81-86.

⁶¹⁸ Several years after the launch of the Ramses Theatre, it was praised, for some of what had won it plaudits early in its activity, when art critic in *al-Jadid*, a publication with differing ownership and writing staff from the earlier cited *al-Ahrām* reporting on the troupe, characterized the Ramses among Cairo's four Arabic theatres as having

cultivating members of his troupe, demanding effort, diligence, and professionalism from them. Wahby also remunerated his actors handsomely and unprecedentedly, attracting top talent, which compelled his competitors to raise their actors' pay, so that professional actors could earn enough to lead a dignified life, and which in turn invited better educated and more professional people to the profession.⁶¹⁹ Launched in 1923, the Ramses attracted dignitaries and upper class Egyptians from the outset.⁶²⁰ By 1931, the Arabic theatre had garnered sufficient esteem as to newly attract government dignitaries, including the head of the leading political party of the interwar period the Wafd, several ministers, even the prime minister himself. The Ramses elevated the social, not only cultural, standing of the theatre. Among the Arabic theaters in the capital city, the Ramses was one that the country's ruling elite attended, conveying unprecedented approval in the measure of a native Arabic theatre in patronage.⁶²¹

Ramses's success conditioned Egyptian audiences to experience the cinema as a serious and generative artform in its own right. Ramses was the theatre that instated the three-season regular performance schedule, excepting summer, a suit other troupes followed and which then became the standard annual exhibition season for the country's cinemas.⁶²² Ramses Theatre also set the stage for Egyptian audience support of and enthusiasm for native engagement in the cinema, beginning in its year of foundation of 1923, by projecting magic lantern images of

"the most sophisticated audience and the quietest seating", in "al-Masarih wa al-malahi" (Theaters and Amusements: Preface), Mar 25, 1929, 2692, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶¹⁹ This was observed by Hundus, code name for Muhammad al-Tabi'l, early in his storied career, here in the capacity of art critic for the top-circulated daily *al-Ahram*, as quoted in "Nahdat al-tamthil al-'arabi" (Arabic Acting Renaissance) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu'assira, al-kitab al-thani 'ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 12] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2007), 78.

⁶²⁰ Rawiya Rashid, Youssef Wahby: *Years of Glory and Tears*, 105.

⁶²¹ "'Alam al-tamthil: al-mawsim al-tamthili al-munsarim" (Acting World: The Previous Acting Season), *al-Musawar*, June 19, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶²² A brief discussion of the theatrical season is offered in "'Alam al-tamthil: al-mawsim al-tamthili al-munsarim" (Acting World: The Previous Acting Season), *al-Musawar*, June 19, 1931, 16.

troupe performers in the theatre's entrance, by screening captured rehearsal footage of plays upcoming onto a stage screen during intermissions,⁶²³ and by coupling projected filmic segments with theatrical performances.⁶²⁴ This segment, however, is mainly concerned with Egyptian women's experience of the theatre as practitioners and audiences. Ramses is central to a discussion of both of these experiences, in having first "exposed" Egyptian women in attendance to male audience members, as earlier discussed, and in having promoted the theatre as a cultural practice and forum, which then drew attention to Egyptian women actors in a way hitherto enjoyed exclusively by Munira al-Mahdiya. Attention entailed attraction of both talent and money.

In linking the success of women pioneers of the early industrial era of cinema production in Egypt, that is the pre-Studio Misr era, to the success of the Ramses is not to detract from these women's accomplishments. In a way, women's leadership in Egyptian film production supports a periodization based on the founding of Studio Misr, which Samir Farid similarly finds constituted an end to the era in which filmmaking was, as Samir Farid puts it, "more like hobbyism than professionalism."⁶²⁵ Narrative feature film production regularized with the release of *Layla* (1927), the work that followed Egypt's first domestic narrative production, the outlier *In the Land of Tutankhamun* (1923). However, such production work required years to professionalize in an industrial sense, so that for several years to follow, production labor was not differentiated or specialized as it would later become.

⁶²³ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 101.

⁶²⁴ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 26-27. "'Alam al-tamthil: al-'adala `ala masrah Ramsis" (Acting World: Justice on the Ramses Stage), *al-Musawar*, May 1, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶²⁵ See "Akthar min muqaddima, 1982-2010: Sourat al-mar'a fi al-sinema al-'arabiya" (More than an Introduction (1982-2010): Women's Image in Arab Cinema), in his *Aflam al-mukhrijat fi al-sinema al-'Arabiya* [The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema] (Cairo: al-Hilal Publishing, 2016), 20.

Enterprising Egyptian women, especially actors of the stage, seized the opportunity to establish themselves in a business whose landscape was yet undetermined and whose economy was not yet shaped, by engaging in film production, buoyed by the feminist movement that had emerged forcefully during and since the 1919 Revolution.⁶²⁶ None of the pioneers discussed below directed a film after Studio Misr was founded. Further, the three who may be considered career cineastes each produced merely a single film in the era of industrial growth in film production inaugurated with the launch of the Middle East's first bona fide studio, even though these three acted in many more films during this latter era. To wit, in the case of two pioneers of the four identified who had not a theatrical background, increased press coverage and endorsement by Egypt's elite of the country's theatre meant that these practitioners, both from patrician families, could draw on the talents and moneys of their social circles. I here use the term *pioneer* to refer to cineastes who took charge of at least one film production project in the years predating the establishment of Studio Misr in 1935. In what follows I discuss the groundbreaking work of four women, all of whom happen to be "native," who along with non-"native" Assia Dagher directed and/or produced at least one narrative feature film, slated for public theatrical exhibition, before Studio Misr's founding. Specifically, I discuss how these pioneers benefited from the theatre's vitality in the 1920s and early 1930s, in order of their emergence as accomplished cineastes, by virtue of their having led the production of a film that made its way to the country's cinemas. I also describe their early industrial careers, in terms of their ability to corral resources, financial and human, that they put toward delivering films to the market.

⁶²⁶ Samir Farid, "More than an Introduction (1982-2010): Women's Image in Arab Cinema", in *The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema*, 20.

`Aziza Amir:

Kickstarter of cinema production, specifically narrative feature production, Amir deserves recognition for such a contribution to the country's cinema. Amir stepped off the stage and onto the set, to will her first work into existence, aided by a ready financier, theatrical experience gained, and by a network of people who had witnessed her acting career soar while with the Ramses. In attendance at the premiere screening of `Aziza Amir's first film *Layla*, were the country's most esteemed poet Ahmed Shawqi and most celebrated industrialist in Tal'at Harb.⁶²⁷ *Layla*, and its principle `Aziza Amir had thus garnered plaudits from exemplars of the country's culturalist and capitalist classes. Certainly, Harb who had decided to restrict the output of the Company for Acting and Cinema to short nonfiction films, especially newsfilms, had reason to directly experience the unique event of premièring the first natively produced narrative feature film, reason that he could not find a few years ago when he turned down Youssef Wahby's invitation to attend the Ramses Theatre's premiere performance, a declination that Wahby later reported being hurt by.⁶²⁸ Amir's accomplishment was singular so that, as Ahmed El Hadary notes, Amir garnered broad admiration for her gumption and resiliency in delivering a film under arduous production conditions and obstructive events.⁶²⁹

As related earlier, `Aziza Amir attracted the attention of wealthy Upper Egyptian mayor Ahmed al-Shiri`i, who became her spouse and business partner. Al-Shiri`i financed Amir's first film *Layla* and played a small part in it. Their business affiliation was formalized when al-Shiri`i became financial manager of Amir's production company Isis Films, which he bankrolled, and which released *Daughter of the Nile* (Bint al-Nil) in 1929, two years after the company's first

⁶²⁷ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 209.

⁶²⁸ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 101.

⁶²⁹ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 220.

release.⁶³⁰ Amir named her company after her own alter ego, Isis, linked to a renowned pharaonic personage, like Wahby's Ramses, consigned her at Ramses by Wahby himself.⁶³¹

Wahby had earlier suggested a stage name with a ring of sophistication to Mufida Ghuneim; the name was `Aziza Amir.⁶³²

Amorous of literature and the arts, Amir frequented theatres and cinemas when she read in the papers that the Ramses was looking to hire new faces. She sent in a letter of application accompanied by a headshot. She was consequently hired by Ramses in 1925, two years after the troupe/theatre's launch. Amir spent a season with Ramses then left to perform for other troupes before returning to engage in a single performance as female lead in *Sons of the Aristocrats*, a play that Wahby later adapted into the first Egyptian talkie. Amir fell ill and while bedridden was attended to by Ahmed al-Shari'i, who she had met and married while with the Ramses. Amir's spouse, possibly for knowing her regard for the moving pictures, bought her a home film projector and some foreign films. She was not satisfied and asked for a movie camera, which she then used to take home movies that she then screened on her home projector. Amir resigned the theatre by early 1926 to dedicate herself to the movies, having met Turkish filmmaker Vedat Örfi Bengü (Wedad Orfi) with whom she embarked on her first film project, one that began as *God's Call* (Nida` Allah) and eventuated as *Layla*, as screened in late 1927.⁶³³

Wahby supported `Aziza Amir's first film project, the Egyptian press reported, when it dismissed rumors that Wahby had opposed members of his troupe's joining the production of

⁶³⁰ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 302.

⁶³¹ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 163.

⁶³² Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 157.

⁶³³ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 210-219. Also see Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 163, as well as Muḥammad al-Sayid Shusha, *Ruwad wa ra' idat al-sinema al-miṣriya* [Pioneers of the Egyptian Cinema] (Cairo: Rose al-Yousuf, 1998), 7-9.

Amir's second film *Daughter of the Nile*.⁶³⁴ The project suffered enough without Wahby's opposition, as evidenced from its having gone through two directors before Amir's taking over directorial duties, as she had in making *Layla*, when she decided to refashion *God's Call*, directed by Vedat Örfi Bengü.⁶³⁵ *Daughter of the Nile* also amassed an enormous budget of twenty-thousand Egyptian pounds (\$100,000), according to Amir, a figure that she may have exaggerated for promotional purposes.⁶³⁶ After all, promotion was not a skill that Amir lacked, as evidenced by reports of two local furniture shops competing to have their offerings appear in *Daughter of the Nile*, in what may have been the first case of product placement in an Egyptian film.⁶³⁷

Leading film critic of the era Sayid Hasan Jum`a, writing about the brief history of the cinema in *al-Ahram*, in the year concluding this study, observed that Isis Films collected little profit in making its three films, because of over-expenditure and the absence of adept management. Amir would not direct following *Atone for Your Sin* (Kaffiri `an khati`atiki, 1933).⁶³⁸ In 1930, Amir announced that her production company was for sale.⁶³⁹ She later reported seeking backing from the Ministry of Education for her fourth film, which she never made.⁶⁴⁰ By then, she had attained unequalled renown for her acting, including in two non-

⁶³⁴ "al-Masarih: Mumathilou Ramsis" (The Theatres: Ramses's Actors), *al-Sabah*, Aug 20, 1928, 10.

⁶³⁵ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 210-219.

⁶³⁶ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 302.

⁶³⁷ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 303.

⁶³⁸ See the segment titled "al-Sinima wa al-malahi" (The cinema and the Amusements) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Diwan al-haya al-mu`assira, al-kitab al-sabi` `ashar* [Register of Modern Life, vol. 17] (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2007), 88-89. The article in question is titled "al-Sharikat al-sinima'iya al-misriya" (Egyptian Cinematic Companies), *al-Ahram*, Sep 9, 1933. Yes, this is the same Jum`a, one of the Cineaste Critics Group that published *Screen Art*, discussed at length earlier in this study. This article appeared during *Screen Art's* brief run.

⁶³⁹ *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 384.

⁶⁴⁰ See "Aziza Amir tuharrir mudhakkaratihā" (Aziza Amir Edits Her Memoir), Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

Egyptian productions—*The Tunisian Girl* for Aubert (al-Fata al-tunisiya, France, 1930)⁶⁴¹ and *In Istanbul's Streets* for Paramount (Fi shawari` Istanbul, Turkey, 1932).⁶⁴² Indeed, Amir's acting career would persist for another twenty years, during which she would perform in almost as many films. Perhaps more notable is that Amir would add more than a dozen writing credits to the three she had already gained for the films she had directed.⁶⁴³

Ihsan Sabri:

The least persuasive case for pioneer may be made for Ihsan Sabri who did not engage in performance or photographic arts before or after the lone film which she ushered to Egyptian audiences in 1928, *The Victim* (al-Dahiya). When a notice for the film appeared in the “critical, contemporary, weekly newspaper” *al-Sabah*, in a preview of the upcoming season's domestic movies, it printed “performed by a group of amateurs” beneath the title. The notice itself excepts Sabri from the group of amateur contributors, since she had written the script and hired a cinematographer for the film, one Monsieur Cornell who had adeptly shot *Su`ad, the Gypsie* in the same year.⁶⁴⁴ Sabri had also organized a “new cinematic company whose director and members are youth of deep rooted families,” as boasted in the film's press notices, to join in making a film that she, in addition to writing the screenplay to, would direct and in which she would play lead. The company was the one-off Sawsan Films.⁶⁴⁵ Although Egyptian press covered the film first in 1928, it was not until 1930 that the film screened, not in Egypt wherein

⁶⁴¹ “Foreign Film Notes: Talkie in Arabic,” *Exhibitors Daily Review and Motion Pictures Today*, June 18, 1930, 6.

⁶⁴² Ahmed El Hadary, *Tarikh al-sinema fi Misr, al-juz' al-thani min bidayat 1931 ila akhir 1940 [History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II from the beginning of 1931 to the end of 1940]* (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 2007), 82. Also see “‘Alam al-tamthil: al-sayida `Aziza Amir bayn Misr wa Turkia” (Acting World: Mrs. `Aziza Amir, between Egypt and Turkey), *al-Musawar*, July 17, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶⁴³ Look under “Aziza Amir” in elcinema film database, <https://elcinema.com/en/person/1051244/>.

⁶⁴⁴ “al-Sinema fi Misr: min al mutanafisin alan fi ikhraj riwayat sinima'iyia” (The Cinema in Egypt: Who Will Win and Succeed Among Those Competing to Direct Narrative Movies?), Aug 13, 1928, 6-7.

⁶⁴⁵ For more about the project, perhaps one which vanity describes, see Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 287-291

no cinema agreed to, but in Sidon, (then) Syria. Nor is there proof that the screening was public.⁶⁴⁶ Sabri, a journalist, may be the least indebted to Wahby and Ramses for her cinema work, but her work was short lived and turned out unacceptable for the rather forgiving standards of Egyptian cinemas at the time.⁶⁴⁷ Sabri left the cinema field after *The Victim*.

Behija Hafidh:⁶⁴⁸

Like Ihsan Sabri, Bahija Hafidh came out of the native socioeconomic elite, from which she later drew to staff and finance a film project underway. Like Sabri, Hafidh entered the cinema field from a profession other than thespianism, a profession that she put to the service of her film projects. Sabri, a journalist and public intellectual, wrote the screenplay to her *The Victim*; Hafidh, a musical composer, wrote the score to her *The Victims!* Unlike Sabry, however, Hafidh had already begun a career in the cinema when she made *The Victims*, a career that then extended well past her second film as actor and musical composer.

Hafidh had studied and written music since childhood, composing her first piece for the piano at age nine, an interest she capped with a diploma in music from Paris, earned in 1930, the year that saw *Zaynab* (1930). Hafidh had already launched a career in Cairo as music teacher, annotator and, notably, as the first Egyptian woman composer to record. Having minted multiple pieces for both Columbia and Odeon Records in the late 1920s, Hafez's visage was published to the tagline "First Egyptian Music Composer" on the cover of *al-Mustaqbal* magazine, owned by

⁶⁴⁶ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 358-359. El Hadary marks the film as one that had received a public screening but offers no proof that the Sidon screening attended and payed, rather than as invited.

⁶⁴⁷ For more about *The Victim*, see Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 287-291.

⁶⁴⁸ Bahija Hafidh is a more accurate transliteration, but the spelling I use is one from the pressbook to *The Victims*, her own company's production, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

Youssef Wahby's brother Isma'il.⁶⁴⁹ She also held regular gatherings in her home, after the "intellectual salons" fashionable in the day. It was there that she met Mohamed Karim, who suggested her to Youssef Wahby. Wahby knew of Hafidh's distinguished family, which may have helped convince him of Karim's casting choice.⁶⁵⁰ Although, it was likely Hafidh's talent as writer of music that convinced Wahby to hire her to write the score to *Zaynab*, in addition to her playing in its lead role of the first feature film directed by Mohamed Karim, who would go on to direct the storied *The White Rose* (1933) discussed prior and later. *Zaynab* was the first filmic outing by Youssef Wahby, who produced the adaptation with the backing of his own production house, dubbed Ramses Films.⁶⁵¹ Although *Zaynab* was silent, its audiences saw Hafidh and "heard" her, since the film screened in accompaniment to her musical score.⁶⁵²

Hafidh stepped into the field of the cinema in sparkling fashion. Over five weeks in its first run, behind a sensational premiere that attracted celebrity poet Ahmed Shawqi and star singer Mohamed Abdel Wahab, *Zaynab* convinced the latter to embark on a film project with its director Mohamed Karim, necessarily a film that could sing.⁶⁵³ Karim would indeed go on to make the sensational synchronized-sound film *The White Rose* starring Mohamed Abdel Wahab. By then, he had made a second film for Wahby's company, starring Wahby and adapting the latter's play *Sons of the Aristocrats* (*Awlad al-dhawat*, 1932). Bahija Hafidh had signed on to play the female lead, but her spoken Arabic, which was noticeably Alexandrian and choppy, and

⁶⁴⁹ Muḥammad al-Sayid Shusha, *Pioneers of the Egyptian Cinema*, 25-26.

⁶⁵⁰ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 180. Also see Mohamed Karim's *Mudhakkarat Muhammad Karim* [Mohamed Karim's Memoirs] (Cairo: Radio and Television Books, 1972), 97-98.

⁶⁵¹ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 334-343.

⁶⁵² *Mohamed Karim's Memoirs*, 120.

⁶⁵³ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 181-182.

execution of the scenes underwhelmed director Karim. Hafez could not tolerate Karim's stern ways and quit.⁶⁵⁴

Hafidh sued Ramses Films for the balance of her contract in the first scandalous legal confrontation between producer and star of its kind in Egypt.⁶⁵⁵ In that year of 1932, Hafidh achieved another precedent in Egypt when she sued Columbia Records for its altering musical compositions she had sold to the company.⁶⁵⁶ She also wasted little time before founding Phare Films (Fonar film), a production company, with her spouse Mahmoud Hamdi, to undertake the film project *The Victims* (al-Dahaya). She sought support from family and acquaintances, some of whom performed in the film, but must not have raised enough to follow through with her initial plans to make the film as a talkie.⁶⁵⁷ Hafidh hired director Ibrahim Lama, possibly because of his experience in shooting action sequences, which *The Victims*, a narcotics trafficking policier set in Alexandria was set to include. However, the film's pressbook lists Mahmoud Hamdi as director,⁶⁵⁸ yet another film that seems to have suffered from an incohesive vision, as evidenced by the film's low ranking in the a readers' poll of the best Egyptian film of the 1932-1933 season in *Screen Art* magazine, in which *The Victims* placed fourth, at 5% of the vote.⁶⁵⁹ Nevertheless, reviews in the press did admire the film's artistic standard and the evident effort

⁶⁵⁴ Mohamed Karim's *Memoirs*, 139-140.

⁶⁵⁵ Mohamed Karim's *Memoirs*, 140.

⁶⁵⁶ See "Taht sama' al-fan: musiqa fi al-mamhkama" (Under the Sky of Art: Music in the Courtroom), *al-Kashkoul*, Mar 4, 1932, 24.

⁶⁵⁷ See "Taht sama' al-fan: al-Dahaya" (Under the Sky of Art: *The Victims*), *al-Kashkoul*, Mar 27, 1932, 24. Also see Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 60-61.

⁶⁵⁸ See *The Victims*, pressbook, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶⁵⁹ "Natijat musabaqat al-aflam al-misriya: "indama tuhib al-mar'a," yafuz bimidalayat jama`at al-nuqqad al-sinema'iyin" (Result of the Egyptian Film Competition: *When a Woman Loves Wins* the Cineaste Critics Group's Medal), *Screen Art* [Fan al-Sinema], Nov 12, 1933, 31, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

that was expended to achieve it.⁶⁶⁰ True to form, Hafidh composed the score to *The Victims*,⁶⁶¹ as she had for *Zaynab* and as she would for six more films, over the course of two decades.⁶⁶²

Hafidh, as did Assia Dagher and other early filmmakers, appealed to patriotic and nationalistic impulses, possibly toward the end of enhancing her own nationalist credentials and those of her production company, by contracting to hold *The Victims* première in the newly opened and native-owned Fouad Cinema, an occasion that served as the cinema's own première screening.⁶⁶³ Moreover, the film's second run in Cairo was arranged for the Ramses Cinema, sister cinema to the Fouad.⁶⁶⁴ Hafidh then astutely moved to involve one of the Egyptian Cinematographic Company principles, owner of the Fouad and Ramses, in producing her next project for Phare Films *The Accusation* (al-Ittihad, 1934). Although Hafidh is not listed as producer—her spouse and business partner Mahmoud Hamid is—she was then co-owner of Phare Films. It is also the case that beside performing in the lead and composing the music to *The Accusation* Hafidh did cowrite its screenplay, her first of numerous screenwriting credits.⁶⁶⁵ The film was criticized for its unsynchronized soundtrack,⁶⁶⁶ which likely was the result of the faultily recording the soundtrack onto the filmstrip directly, for the first time entirely in Egypt. The film integrated lavish elements of dedicated and intricate production design as

⁶⁶⁰ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 64.

⁶⁶¹ *The Victims* pressbook, Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶⁶² Look under “Bahiga Hafiz” in elcinema.com, <https://elcinema.com/en/person/1086762/>.

⁶⁶³ Ahmed El Hadary identifies the Fouad as site of *The Victims*' first run in *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 60.

⁶⁶⁴ A press advert identifies the Ramses as exhibitor of *The Victims*, a second-run house, in <https://elcinema.com/en/work/1001510/gallery/124159040>.

⁶⁶⁵ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 133-136 for *The Accusation* credits and under “Bahiga Hafiz” in elcinema.com, <https://elcinema.com/en/person/1086762/>, for career credits.

⁶⁶⁶ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 137.

acknowledged by *al-Ahram* art critic of the day and as recognized by Samir Farid since.⁶⁶⁷

Hafidh's Phare Films produced at least two more pictures—her standout *Layla, Daughter of the Desert* (Layla bint al-sahra', 1937) and its follow-up *Layla the Bedouin* (Layla al-badawiya, 1944) for which she took up her typical functions of acting, composing, and writing in addition to costume design.⁶⁶⁸

Fatima Rushdi:

Strongest linked to Wahby among the women pioneers of the cinema is certainly Fatima Rushdi, who made her fame as an indomitable woman of the stage, a fierce, but ultimately admiring mentee-turned-competitor of Youssef Wahby's. Rushdi dedicated her memoir published decades later to "Youssef Wahby, the people's artist,"⁶⁶⁹ a work curious in its all but eliding her early film career, before dwelling on her experience as lead actor in arguably the first masterpiece of the Egyptian cinema—*The Will* (al-'Azima, Kamal Selim, 1939).⁶⁷⁰ By then Rushdi had already gone down as the greatest leading lady of the Egyptian stage, dubbed "Sarah Bernhardt of the East" after her very first lead performance in the Ramses.⁶⁷¹ She led one of the leading troupes in the country, the only one to compete with Ramses in drama, as recognized by the Ministry of Education in 1931, when it awarded Rushdi's troupe an amount nearing the top award it had

⁶⁶⁷ See the segment titled "Harakat al-sinematografia fi Misr" (The cinematographic Movement in Egypt) in Yunan Labib Rizk, *Register of Modern Life, vol. 17* (Cairo: Ahram History Center, 2007), 101-102, and Samir Farid, "Women Directors of the Cinema in Egypt: From 'Aziza Amir to Inas El-Degheidy" in *The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema* (Cairo: al-Hilal Publishing, 2016), 56.

⁶⁶⁸ Look under "Cast: Movie—The Bedouin Leila—1944," el-cinema, <https://elcinema.com/en/work/1001281/cast>

⁶⁶⁹ Fatima Rushdi, *Fatima Rushdi: bayn al-hub wa al-fan* [Fatima Rushdi: Between Love and Art] (Cairo: Sa'di Washdi Publishers, 1971), 2.

⁶⁷⁰ *Fatima Rushdi: Between Love and Art*, 113-116. The memoir is rather short, at around 150 pages.

⁶⁷¹ See Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 166. See Samir Farid, "Mukhrijat al-sinima fi Misr: min 'Aziza Amir ila Inas El-Degheidy" (Women Directors of the Cinema in Egypt: From 'Aziza Amir to Inas El-Degheidy), in his *Aflam al-mukhrijat fi al-sinima al-'Arabiya* [The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema] (Cairo: al-Hilal Publishing, 2016), 55.

granted Ramses among five troupes recognized in the first case of Egyptian government subvention of theatrical troupes.⁶⁷²

Rushdi gained more than renown and operational knowhow during her time with Ramses. She won the esteem of Ramses's playwright and occasional actor since founding `Aziz `Eid, who left Ramses to join Rushdi's newly formed troupe in a similar capacity in 1926. Rushdi had joined Ramses in the year of the troupe's founding at the age of sixteen.⁶⁷³ She bided her time until prima donna Rose al-Youssef left in 1925 then maneuvered to take lead female roles, but was fired when Wahby failed to reign in the actor he described as a "chili pepper."⁶⁷⁴ Rushdi put her all into managing and performing in her troupe. She secured financing from cotton mogul Eli al-Dir`i, who had been secretly married to Rushdi's onetime colleague in Ramses `Aziza Amir.⁶⁷⁵ By the early 1930s, debts had amassed and Rushdi's personal life had suffered mightily in having abandoned her spouse and infant daughter to dedicate herself to her theatre. She lost her troupe's male lead and was then forced to dissolve it when al-Diri`i withdrew his financial backing.

Rushdi had already entered the field of film production several years earlier when she performed the lead role in the Lama Brothers *Catastrophe atop the Pyramids* (Faji`a fawq al-haram, 1928). Rushdi had also led the failed production of *Under Egypt's Sky* (That sama' Misr) in the same year, one that had possibly turned her away from film work.⁶⁷⁶ That was until Fatima

⁶⁷² The other three were al-Rihani's and al-Kassar's troupes, both comedic, and one led by Victoria Musa, which was awarded the least by far and about whom I have encountered no other reference. See "Alam al-tamthil: l`anat al-firaq wa mumathiliha" (Acting World: Subvention of Troupes and Their Actors), *al-Musawar*, Apr 24, 1931, 16, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁶⁷³ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 157.

⁶⁷⁴ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 165-166.

⁶⁷⁵ Rawiya Rashid, *Youssef Wahby: Years of Glory and Tears*, 157.

⁶⁷⁶ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 268-282.

Rushdi turned back to cinema in 1932, following the demise of her troupe. Rushdi reported that she had amassed a budget of seven thousand Egyptian pounds (\$24,500) for her next picture *Marriage* (al-Zawaj, 1933). Rushdi shot the film in France and Spain as well as in Egypt, a film which her Fatima Rushdi Films produced, whose script she had written, and whose lead role she performed. *Marriage* was the first Egyptian narrative feature directed entirely by a woman.⁶⁷⁷ It also stood for the sole directorial outing by Rushdi, who did not produce or write for film again, which may not come as a surprise when looking at the results of the above mentioned readers' poll of the best Egyptian film of the 1932-1933 season in *Screen Art*. *Marriage* placed last among the five films in competition; receiving an abysmal 0% of the vote.⁶⁷⁸ Ultimately, Fatima Rushdi would be remembered for what she did best—acting.

A Unique Moment for Women in Egypt's Cinema

As argued, the early industrial field of film production in Egypt was such that women could penetrate and lead it. Ramses Theatre and its proprietor and star Youssef Wahby were instrumental in conditioning the noted ambitious women practitioners, the field of film production, and the population at large to permit for a unique industrial moment. Between the year concluding this study of 1934 and the early 1980s only two Egyptian narrative films were directed by women, both performed in the lead by its director. The first of these was *Teita Wong* (1937), a film with a paltry budget that its maker Amina Mohamed stretched by doing as much as she could herself, by willing it into existence as had the women film pioneers who may well

⁶⁷⁷ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 358-359.

⁶⁷⁸ "Natijat musabaqat al-aflam al-misriya: "indama tuhib al-mar'a," yafuz bimidalayat jama'at al-nuqqad al-sinema'iyin" (Result of the Egyptian Film Competition: *When a Woman Loves Wins* the Cineaste Critics Group's Medal), *Screen Art* [Fan al-Sinema], Nov 12, 1933, 31.

have inspired her.⁶⁷⁹ Muhammad did not make *Teita Wong* during the period of my study, nor before the era of industrial growth achieved after the founding of Studio Misr. Consequently, Muhammad does not qualify as a pioneer per se, although her accomplishment in helming *Wong* impresses all the more in its having been made after 1934. Curiously, it was in 1934 that theatre actor and dancer Amina Muhammad launched her film career by appearing in two films—*Ghost of the Past* (Shabah al-madi), a Lama Brothers film,⁶⁸⁰ and *Night in a Lifetime* (Layla fi al-`Umr), a film never completed by one Mohamed Bayoumi, as explored in the segment following.

2. Comedy: Bayoumi's Stuff of Farce

Unlike the previous and following segments, I here discuss industrial conditions of the comedic form restrictively, for several reasons. First, the history of comedic theatre is discussed in the previous segment, as relates to perceptions of the theatre's propriety, and is discussed in the segment to follow, because comedic theatre was often coupled with music, as in the case of revue, practiced especially by Najib al-Rihani.

Second, a recent biography of al-Rihani, the most successful and influential comedic performer of the era under study, has persuasively argued that his popular and widely referenced memoir is a forgery. Published by the dominant al-Hilal in 1959, having already been serialized in the early 1950s, despite its author's having passed away in 1948, the fraudulent document is a sendup of al-Rihani's actual memoir published in the same year of his passing, but which fast went out of print, a memoir that Sha`ban Youssef's *Najib al-Rihani: The Unknown Memoir*

⁶⁷⁹ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 273-277. Also see Samir Farid, "Women Directors of the Cinema in Egypt: From `Aziza Amir to Inas El-Degheidy" in *The Films of Women Directors in the Arab Cinema* (Cairo: al-Hilal Publishing, 2016), 57.

⁶⁸⁰ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 149.

reprints. Particularly disturbing is Youssef's suggestion of al-Hilal's deliberate distortion not only of the history of the memoir, having claimed that Rihani himself handed the disputed memoir to the publisher, but also of the authentic memoir's content, so as to agree with the political imperatives and whims of the authoritative government discourse in newly republican Egypt, following the 1952 Officers Coup. This implication of distortion of a comedian's memoir to accord with a national narrative endorsed and enclosed by the new regime itself begs for the sort of primary document driven historicism of modern Egypt in which this very study of the early years of the cinema in Egypt engages. Youssef himself contemplates the possible implications of declaring his disturbing find: "I realize that was a risk of mine. And perhaps the matter has to do with many memoirs that have been forged for different personal, artistic, cultural, or political reasons."⁶⁸¹ This alarming find of al-Rahiani's heretofore definitive and, as it turns out, counterfeit memoir casts a pall over much scholarship about not only Rihani but also the Egyptian comedic theatre and cinema in the first half of the twentieth century, such that referencing secondary sources relating would require, for the sake of rigor, checking for direct or indirect reference to al-Rihani's counterfeit memoir.

The third reason for containing the discussion herewith of industrial conditions relating to the early history of comedic theatre and cinema is methodological. This segment offered an opportunity to realize an aim of this chapter discussed at its outset, namely to augment and complement earlier explorations in pursuit of greater cohesion in this study; Bayoumi's comedies readily offered such an opportunity in that their analysis would round out that of Bayoumi's

⁶⁸¹ Youssef's significant book is recent, so I expect its effects to gradually correct the resultantly distorted history noted, 10. I had read al-Rihani's al-Hilal published memoir and had determined that it lacked for veracity, for its repeated exaggeration of events and over-editorialized tone. Having read the 1948 memoir published in Sha`ban's work, the resemblance and patterns of distortion emerge readily

nonfiction films presented in the previous chapter. Since Bayoumi's life and career are discussed in the previous chapter, I have determined to link screen analysis of his fiction films, yet to be written about collectively, to the previous chapter's discussion, including its screen (or textual) analysis of Bayoumi's nonfiction films, not least since I have located press notices of his theatrical work preceding his cinema career, work that informed his filmmaking, as soon discussed.

Notable Comedians of Theater and Cinema

Before turning to Bayoumi's comedic work, itself linking the Egyptian theatre and cinema, I wish to elaborate on the fourth reason for not engaging in an extensive accounting of the political economy of the comedic performance industry in the country, namely that the comedic theatre developed decades after the dramatic and a decade after the signing theatre, as below discussed, so that its exponents all made films in the early years of narrative feature production that refashioned to various degrees their established theatre characters and plays for the screen. Leader of the theatrical troupe Dar al-Salam Fawzi al-Jazayirly brought on his troupe that included family when employed by an Italian Egyptian production team in Alexandria to perform in the short *Madam Loretta* (1919).⁶⁸² Al-Jazayirly's small troupe operated out of the Bosphuras Theatre and in the 1920s competed to stage plays based on the unequally popular character of Kishkish Bey.⁶⁸³ Fawzi Al-Jazayirly likely had his son Fouad and daughter Ihsan perform in the lost *Madam Loretta*, which is what he did in the Togo Mizrahi's 1934 production

⁶⁸² Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 145-146.

⁶⁸³ Other troupes that adopted Kishkish were Fawzi Munib's—see Sayid `Ali Isma`il, *Masrah `Ali al-Kassar, al-juz' al-thani* [`Ali al-Kassar's Theatre, part II] (Cairo: Hindawi Press, 2017), 62—as well as Amin `Atalla, as discussed below.

The Two Delegates (al-Manduban), a talker that would propel Fouad and Ihsan's careers in the cinema.⁶⁸⁴

The next comedian of the stage to make the transition to screen the very next year was `Ali al-Kassar, in the *American Aunt* (al-Khala al-amrikaniya, 1920). Al-Kassar ran a troupe under his name that arguably competed best with the standard setting al-Rihani. Similar to *Madam Loretta*, this film was made by an Italian residing in Egypt with a background in the field of cinema. Al-Kassar would return to the screen, like al-Jazayirly, over a decade later, after synchronized sound cinema's emergence, in *The Building Doorkeeper* (Bawab al-'amara, 1935). Al-Kassar's theatre had relied on musical comedy, which may not describe his screen comedies, wherein he performed the part of the "innocent" nincompoop.⁶⁸⁵ His filmic characterization was tailored in the fashion of Shalom, perhaps the most notable of the comedic actors of the early industrial era not to emerge from the theatre, by the leading maker of comedies of the era, Togo Mizrahi, who produced several films starring both al-Kassar and Shalom.⁶⁸⁶ Mizrahi made several films featuring the eponymous character Shalom, the second installment of which was the aforementioned *The Two Delegates* (al-Manduban, 1934), costarring Fawzi al-Jazayirli. Shalom's career before acting for the screen is unknown, but it is unlikely he performed in Egypt's Arabic theatre.⁶⁸⁷ Mizrahi must have had an idea of Shalom's comedic talent, which Mizrahi would begin to tap with his second production *5001* (1932),⁶⁸⁸ having cast Shalom in his

⁶⁸⁴ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 146-147.

⁶⁸⁵ See Mahmoud Qasim, *al-Komidia wa al-ghina` fi al-film al-misri, al-juz' al-awal* [Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I] (Cairo: Egyptian Film Center, 1999), 47-48.

⁶⁸⁶ Mahmoud Qasim, *Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I*, 17, 47.

⁶⁸⁷ Mahmoud Qasim, *Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I*, 17-19.

⁶⁸⁸ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 39-41.

first film as helmer, a grave capsule entitled *The Abyss* (aka *Cocaine*, al-Hawiya or al-Kokain, 1930).⁶⁸⁹

Most comedians of the Egyptian movies of the early industrial era came from the theatre, but there were comedians beside Shalom who did not. Specifically, the comedic tandem of Isma'il Zaki and Khalid Shawqi who respectively performed the title characters in *Juha and Abu Nawas* (1932) were not even actors. Rather, they were selected by the film's screenwriter who had been hired to write a piece for the screen based on his own comic strip "Juha and Abu Nawas" that he published in *Humor* (al-Fukahha) magazine, from al-Hilal group. The comics artist `Ali Rifki was tasked by the production company East Films to select two colleagues of his from al-Hilal who struck Rifki as suitable to play the two characters based on his comic strip.⁶⁹⁰ The two performers did well enough to have another go with *Juha and Abu Nawas Photographed* (1933), and might have continued had Khalid Shawqi not died a month after the premiere of his second film.⁶⁹¹

Attempting to outdo his competitor `Ali al-Kassar was Fawzi Munib, who in addition to performing al-Kassar's most successful character al-Barbari on his own stage,⁶⁹² followed al-Kassar's foray into filmmaking when Munib himself signed his troupe to appear in *Soliman's Ring* (Khatam Suleiman, 1922), photographed, produced, and directed by Italian Egyptians, like the two earlier narrative shorts discussed above *Madam Loretta* and the *American Aunt*,

⁶⁸⁹ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 368.

⁶⁹⁰ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 52-53.

⁶⁹¹ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 97-98.

⁶⁹² See Sayid `Ali Isma`il, *`Ali al-Kassar's Theatre, Part I* (Cairo: Hindawi Press, 2017) 69, as well as Sayid `Ali Isma`il, *`Ali al-Kassar's Theatre, Part II*, 22.

signaling that comedy presented itself to earliest narrative filmmakers in Egypt as the worthiest investment among genres then established in the imported cinema.

Munib's troupe, like al-Kassar's, engaged family members, so that it is likely that Fawzi's then partner in work and in marriage Mary Munib also appeared in *Soliman's Ring*.⁶⁹³ Mary Munib went on to forge a unique comedic character in the Egyptian cinema and to enjoy a long and productive career, apart from and more accomplished than Fawzi Munib's.⁶⁹⁴ Mary Munib appeared in the indistinct secondary role of a lead character's mother in the closing year of this study, in the film *Son of the People* (Ibn al-Sha`b, 1934), a part she would rehash repeatedly for over a decade.⁶⁹⁵ It was in playing mother-in-law characters in the latter part of her career, however, that she would make an incomparable and enduring mark, in both theatre and cinema for decades to come.⁶⁹⁶

The next comedian to make a foray into cinema was Amin `Atalla, a comedy troupe leader and performer that trained in `Aziz `Eid's troupe in the mid-1910s, as did Najib al-Rihani around that time, a history touched on below. Further, `Atalla's first filmic role was in a Mohamed Bayoumi's written and directed work *The Office Clerk* (al-Bashkatib, 1924), which I discuss below. `Atalla's next and final film project was his own, titled *Why Does the Sea Laugh?* (Huwa al-bark biyidhak leih?, 1928). A typical comedy of errors with the requisite injection of

⁶⁹³ According to Mahmoud Qasim, Fawzi and Mary married about 1920, two years before the making of their first film. See note 47 in *Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I*, 17-68.

⁶⁹⁴ For a careful overview of Mary Munib's career, see Amal `Aryan Fouad, *al-Dahikoun al-Bakoun* [The Weeping Laughters] (Cairo: Arab Press Agency, 2016), 70-71. Mary appeared in nearly 130 films in a career that concluded the year before her passing in 1969, "Mary Munib," <https://elcinema.com/person/1983684/>. Whereas Fawzi appeared in fewer than a handful, the last in 1940, "Fawzi Munib," <https://elcinema.com/person/1066685/>.

⁶⁹⁵ The father of the same character was played by Bishara Wakim, soon discussed. See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 142-143.

⁶⁹⁶ Mahmoud Qasim, *Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I*, 31. Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 249-252.

slapstick, this film was adapted by 'Atalla from a play of his own. *Why Does the Sea Laugh?* Was also produced, directed, and performed in the lead by 'Atalla.⁶⁹⁷

Why Does the Sea Laugh? thus became the first feature length Egyptian comedy, made in the same year that witnessed release of *Su`ad the Gypsie* (1928), a desert melodrama featuring a clown performed by comedian for the stage Muhammad Kamal al-Misri.⁶⁹⁸ Al-Misri appeared in a film that eminent Egyptian film historian Ahmed El Hadary finds to have been berated in the press more than any Egyptian film to date, *Lovers' Depot* (Makhzan al-`ushaq, 1933). Al-Misri had contracted with European cineastes residing in Egypt to adapt a comedic sketch of his for the screen. The resulting film thus featured al-Misri in the lead, in the role of a character with which al-Misri was so strongly associated that it was often printed parenthetically next to his name; that was Sharfantah,⁶⁹⁹ a character that al-Misri had taken to Egyptian stages in the late 1910s.⁷⁰⁰

Standout comedian of the era Najib al-Rihani came into the cinema late, but unlike comedians who worked for Mizrahi—al-Jazayirly, al-Kassar, and Shalom—al-Rihani adapted from his own plays theatrical persona and text for the two films in which he starred in the early industrial cinema era. The first of these was a silent film named after his renowned and much imitated theatrical character of Kishkish Bey, mayor of the imaginary town of Kafr al-Balas, in *His Excellency Kishkish Bey* (1931). Recalling the short comedies from a decade earlier, among the earliest narrative films domestically produced, movies made after European lead technical

⁶⁹⁷ Mahmoud Qasim, *Comedy and Singing in the Egyptian Film, Part I*, 31. Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 263-268.

⁶⁹⁸ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 260.

⁶⁹⁹ Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 100-101.

⁷⁰⁰ In 1919, al-Misri advertised for his troupe under the character name Sharfantah, rather than his own or that of his troupe. See "Sharfantah bek" (Sharfantah Bey), *al-Ahram*, Aug 20, 1919, as well as "Sharfantah bek" (Sharfantah Bey), *al-Manbar*, Sep 7, 1919, 3, both reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 149 and 188 respectively.

creatives proposed to Egyptian talent to perform in their projects, *His Excellency's* project development and production initiative suggests that in production, certain industrial trends continued to check against the Egyptianizing achieved in years later after native Egyptians had trained in such technical production work as directing, photographing, sound recording, and editing.

His Excellency Kishkish Bey was a humble production, like many films made in Egypt of the era, notable for its having been released a silent film then re-released two years later augmented with a dialog soundtrack and additional scenes, as discussed in this chapter's segment to follow.⁷⁰¹ In the final year of this study, al-Rihani was contracted to make a film in Paris by East Films, the company that had launched and backed the *Juha and Abu Nawas* films discussed above. His second film *Yaqut* (1934) was shot in Paris, including in the Gaumont lot. Less successful than his first work, *Yaqut* is best remembered for al-Rihani's having shed his Kishkish persona for it, startling audiences as cleanshaven and in a suit.⁷⁰²

One more comedian notably made the transition from stage to screen examined; Bishara Wakim's first performance to make it to a cinema screen was when he played the father to Mary Munib's mother in the above mentioned *Son of the People* (Ibn al-Sha`b, 1934). However, this was the third film project on which Wakim had worked in the early industrial production era, only that the his previous two were never publicly screened. Wakim had performed a secondary part in the ill-fated, earlier discussed Fatima Rushdi project *Under Egypt's Sky* (1928), a film that she reportedly destroyed before it ever saw the light.⁷⁰³ Before then, he had worked on the

⁷⁰¹ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 102-103. Also see Sha`ban Youssef's *Najib al-Rihani: Unknown Memoir*, 135-136.

⁷⁰² See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 142. Also see Sha`ban Youssef's *Najib al-Rihani: Unknown Memoir*, 161-163.

⁷⁰³ See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 281-283.

first narrative Egyptian production to be directed and photographed by a “native” Egyptian, *Barsoum Looks for a Job*, a Mohamed Bayoumi comedy discussed at length in the latter part of this segment. Moreover, prior to entering the field of the cinema, Wakim had worked in the theatre, in partnership with Bayoumi, as discussed below.

A Brief History of Comedic Performance in Egypt

If comedic theatre in the modern sense had existed in Egypt prior to the Great War, then it has made a good historical escape. Historians have linked the emergence of a comedic, primarily French influenced theatre in Egypt to the wartime amusement economy, which appealed to primal impulses, unlike the relatively sanitary dramatic theatre of the prewar era.⁷⁰⁴ A contemporary wrote in 1917 a studied article that links Classic Greek comedy to the modern Egyptian incarnation of the theatrical genre, which he dates to 1915.⁷⁰⁵ This was the year that saw a short-lived but consequential troupe in which a sparkling young talent united with an established one; `Aziz `Eid, the founder of Egyptian vaudeville, was joined by Najib al-Rihani, the performer who would achieve unmatched popularity with his own brand of French-inspired and inflected vaudeville, replete with sharply observed and socially critical Egyptian characterizations and situations.⁷⁰⁶ Although neither (melo)drama nor musical theatre fared well before the 1920s for reasons relating to economy and public perception discussed in the previous segment, comedy was downright repudiated in the press, as earlier uncovered. Student and teacher committees formed in Cairo and elsewhere retaliated constructively by assembling

⁷⁰⁴ Yunan Labib Rizk, *Register of Modern Life*, vol. 12, 72.

⁷⁰⁵ “al-Tamthil al kumidi wa al-hazali” (Comical or Farcical Acting), *al-Afkar* newspaper, Sep 12, 1917, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 161-163.

⁷⁰⁶ Jacob Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, 85-91.

theatrical troupes for the purpose of producing a sophisticated comedic theatre, by wrapping comedic writing around historical morality plays.⁷⁰⁷

Writing for *al-Manbar* newspaper a commentator by the moniker of Hamdan articulated the assault vaudeville then suffered. Hamad wrote to express his support for censorship but not for closure of vaudeville houses.⁷⁰⁸ Hamdan then wrote to celebrate the demise in vaudeville's appeal, which he attributed to the campaign launched against the comedic practice in the Arabic press, and which compelled Najib al-Rihani, who by 1917 was directing and leading his own troupe, to abandon his "Franco-Arab" form of vaudeville, in favor of a form more respectful of the Arabic language dubbed "operetta comic."⁷⁰⁹ The following year, esteemed novelist Muhammad Taymour published a sophisticated criticism of Rahani's work, arguing that what Rihani had adopted after audiences' had turned their backs on his own performances compelling him to abandon his Franco-Arab theatre was not an operetta, but more of a revue, an alternative form that turned out as morally low as his earlier approach. Yet, Taymour does acknowledge Rihani's positive influence on other performers of the theatre, specifically George Abyad.⁷¹⁰

Two years after al-Rihani's publicized and discussed generic turn, he was still announcing it to audiences as if it had not already taken place, in the very periodical that had targeted his vaudeville theatre no less, *al-Manbar*: "Soon al-Rihani appears in a new appearance

⁷⁰⁷ See `Ali Fahmi, *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 25.

⁷⁰⁸ "al-Tamthil al-'arabi fi Misr" (Arab Acting in Egypt), *al-Manbar*, Mar 11, 1917, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 82-87.

⁷⁰⁹ Commentators used the terms *opéra comique* and operetta, European musical theatrical genres distinct, especially in France, but not so in the Egyptian case. Hamdan here jumbles the two terms. "Hadith al-masarih" (Talk of Theatres), *al-Manbar*, Apr 15, 1917, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 119-120.

⁷¹⁰ "Khawatir tamthiliya: 1) al-Rihani bayn ansaruh wa khusumuh" (Notions of Acting: 1) al-Rihani between his Champions and Opponents), *al-Manbar*, Aug 26, 1918, 1, reprinted in Lutfi `Abd al-Wahab, *The Egyptian Theater: 1917-1918 Season*, 269-273.

in a new kind of acting, opéra comique—moral analysis—innovation in composition—full new-fashioned orchestra—continual comical laughs...”⁷¹¹ al-Rihani’s wholesome turn was not an original marketing move, for it dated to a theatre management and marketing strategy adopted by American vaudeville theatre companies no later than the 1880s, long before al-Rihani had sanitized his performances. The introduction of “polite vaudeville” in the United States as articulated by Frank Cullen speaks to the industrial and public conditions of its adoption by al-Rihani and competitors of his to follow: “To court family patronage, neutralize censors and encourage favorable press, it was critical to set apart vaudeville from the common and coarse entertainment of the concert saloons... The goal was to provide a respectable place and decent entertainment that families could patronize without damage to their reputation.”⁷¹² In Egypt of the 1910s, even single men and certainly single women would have been concerned about vaudeville’s reputation. Al-Rihani’s alerting readers to his troupe’s having switched to a “moral” performance model two years after its having taken “polite vaudeville” up would puzzle were it not for evidence that the backlash from his impolitic vaudeville had outlasted its actuation, at least in the provinces, so that two years after abandoning his scandalous act, al-Rihani’s troupe was run out of three towns, including Tanta where students greeted his troupe in the train station and summarily sent them off.⁷¹³

It is also possible that al-Rihani wished to participate in the good will expressed in the papers toward his competitors who had adopted opéra comique since he had introduced it to Egyptian audiences. *Al-Express*, which had waded into the public debate over vaudeville,

⁷¹¹ Advert under “al-Rihani Troupe—Egyptian Theatre,” Sep 19, 1919, 206, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 206.

⁷¹² See “Vaudeville History,” in *Vaudeville Old & New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performances in America* (New York: Routledge, 2007), xviii.

⁷¹³ See “al-Tamthil al-hazali: muqaratun bayn Misr wa al-aqalim” (Farcical Acting: A Comparison between Cairo and the provinces), Aug 30, 1919, 2, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 174-175.

covered in glowing terms the performance in the genre given by the “genius” Amin `Atalla troupe:

It is a kind of sophisticated farcical acting in which the viewer finds delight, cheers, and happiness, especially since he has defied other troupes in naming his plays Kishkish Bey, that mayor to whom attributions of the daft and foolish they exaggerated and portrayed him as unrestrained, dimwitted, wasteful, profligate. The mayor was replaced with a young aristocratic heir who scoff in his delectations and squander his fortune. And the evidence to all people’s contentment is their turnout and appreciation for what it has performed... In sum, Effendi Amin has succeeded this time brilliantly and gained everybody’s satisfaction...”⁷¹⁴

`Atalla had not only borrowed al-Rihani’s original Egyptianized opéra comique but had also filched the name of the most popular character in the Egyptian theatre of the day! `Atalla had actually done more than to employ a Rihani-righted generic approach and character to infuse his performance with presumed appeal: `Atallah took advantage of al-Rihani’s branding of opéra comique as relatively proper comedy to engender good will for his own troupe.

Enters Bayoumi

`Atalla’s was not the only troupe to try to capitalize on the wave of good will directed toward a comedic theatre sanitized for consumption by the dignified. Actor Bishara Wakim teamed up with one Mohamed Bayoumi to form the Nile Valley troupe in Alexandria, in 1919, to perform such a comedy. As expected, not everyone was convinced of the value of vaudeville’s righteous turn, because some suspected comedic theatre *a priori*, as evidenced by a reader’s letter to the press remarking on the Nile Valley Troupe’s performance of *Excuse me* (La mu’akhza). The

⁷¹⁴ “al-oberet komik” (The Comic Operetta), *al-Express*, June 15, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 105.

reader qualified that Wakim would have been better served in continuing to perform tragic characters, such as those he performed when in George Abyad's troupe in Cairo,⁷¹⁵ which lends proof to Wakim's experience in dramatic theatre preceding his transition into comedic acting, the generic form that would constitute the bread of butter of his career.

The above observer's assessment notwithstanding, the Nile Valley Troupe had split the difference between tragedy and bluish comedy as noted by a blurb about its founding in the same month as the above notice, under the title "Farcical Acting":

Farcical acting when done well and if free of imperfections has a big effect in rectifying behavior and combating vices. Europeans have known this which is why they have frequented it and placed it in high standing, if not the highest among all forms of acting. And if some have complained of what they have seen in some farcical plays performed in some of the theatres then this is not to impugn acting itself, but the plays performed or the qualification of their writers. For this we are pleased that a group of educated young men have taken it upon themselves to raise farcical acting, for which they have formed an acting troupe and it is "The Nile Valley Troupe," under the management of Ahmed Mohamed Bayoumi and Bishara Wakim. In forming this troupe, they wish to earn the attendance of those familiar with farcical acting, so that if they succeed in this current pursuit of theirs, they will have found the opportunity that enables them to present to the people their literary, moral, and critical plays of useful meaning in that acceptable humorous dress, free of all that molests virtue...⁷¹⁶

Bayoumi's comedic works analyzed below demonstrate his bend to inclusive and accessible content, in terms of characterization, narration, and staging. Such a predilection seems in keeping with the comedic pitch delivered by his early career theatrical troupe.

⁷¹⁵ Ilyas `Abdu, "al-Tamthil al-hazali: firqat Wadi al-Nil—La mu'akhda" (Farcical Acting: The Nile Valley Troupe—Excuse Me), *al-Basir*, Aug 8, 1919, 2, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 136.

⁷¹⁶ This notice is unattributed, typical to Egyptian press of the day, but reads as if penned by an editor, in *al-Ahali*, Aug 31, 1919, reprinted in *The Egyptian Theater: 1919-1920 Season*, 176.

Bayoumi, artistically inclined since youth and on the heels of intensive involvement in the Popular Revolution of 1919, must have sought out Wakim, since unlike himself, Wakim was an established actor who had performed with the most serious Arabic troupe of all, that of Abyad's. It was Bayoumi who signed the contract to rent the Rashid Park Theatre in Alexandria in July of 1919, the month preceding that of the publication of the newspaper notices discussed above.⁷¹⁷ Their partnership did not last long when Bayoumi abruptly picked up and moved to Europe for a few years, but their relationship must not have been the worst for it, since Bayoumi and Wakim reunited after the former's return to Egypt in 1923 to make *Barsoum Looks for a Job*,⁷¹⁸ the first of four comedies that Bayoumi made, projects that constitute the entirety of his narrative oeuvre, over the course of a decade or so, as discussed in the closing part of this chapter's second segment.

Barsoum Looks for a Job (Barsoum yabhath `an wadhifa, December 1923):

This one-reeler was completed at the end of a momentous year, in which the new nation's constitution was written and its first parliamentary elections held. In this first narrative work of Bayoumi's, the principle character Barsoum is Christian, as identified by his crossing himself in his home, to a backdrop sign that reads "Long Live the Attachment," referring to the British administrative relationship with Egypt, which persisted well past the country's nominal independence. Another character named Sheikh Mitwalli, obviously a Muslim, apprehends a boy who has stolen a loaf of bread from Barsoum's home, while the latter sleeps. Instead of returning the loaf to Barsoum, Mitwalli consumes it. Sheikh Mitwalli whose home boasts a photo of Sa'd

⁷¹⁷ The contract is reprinted among a collection of documents belonging to Bayoumi, included in his biography as authored by the film scholar and documentarist who discovered Bayoumi's films Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: al-ra'id al-awal lil-sinema al-misriya* [Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian Cinema] (Cairo: The Public Organization for Books, 2009), 131.

⁷¹⁸ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 15-19.

Zaghloul, Egypt's first prime minister, on behalf of the Wafd, as well as the Egyptian flag, is seen reading *al-Balagh* newspaper, mouthpiece of the Wafd,⁷¹⁹ the sovereignty-centric party that had resoundingly won the election earlier in that year of 1923. Mitwalli helps Barsoum out by pointing to him a job vacancy in the newspaper he collects after its having been trashed by his neighbor.

Later, when they both visit the job location, they mistakenly think that the job is in a bank, rather than in the saddlery adjacent. The bank is run by the Brothers Shamhourish, Jewish as indicated by their name and later by one brother's spouse's attire. The selectively generous banker, presented in heavy, swarth-face makeup suggesting villainy, invites them in a chauffeur driven motorcar to his home, where the Jewish couple and their daughter share a meal with the two indigents. All goes well until Barsoum shows the job posting in the paper to Shamhourish, who rages against the presumption of himself as whip maker. The banker then chases the two men out of his home and by film's end Barsoum and Mitwalli are satiated and napping virtually atop each other on a city pavement.

Bayoumi, who had married and by then had parented children with an Austrian, is decidedly celebrating coexistence among Egyptians of varied religious backgrounds in *Barsoum Looks for a Job*.⁷²⁰ This is evident in the textual exposition on the religious signifiers of its principle players noted above. Bayoumi compels his audience to mind his call for religious coexistence in having cast Jewish actor Victor Cohen, who plays the Jewish banker

⁷¹⁹ See Najwa Kamil and `Awatif `Abdulrahman, *Tarikh al-sahafa al-misriya: dirasa tarikhia wa mu`asira* [History of the Egyptian Press: An Historical and Contemporary Study] (Cairo: Arab Nahda Press, 2009), 156-157

⁷²⁰ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 16.

Shamhourish, Muslim actor Abd al-Hamid Zaki in the role of Christian Barsoum, and Christian actor and once comedic theatre troupe do-director Bishara Wakim in the role of Sheikh Mitwalli.

Bishara Wakim's slapstick turn in *Barsoum Looks for a Job* points to the narrative and stylistic origins of this film—vaudeville. Bayoumi who scarcely discusses his or any cinema in his unpublished memoir and other collected papers, let alone to reveal his influences,⁷²¹ must have been exposed to the ways of vaudeville, because the short lived Alexandrian Nile Valley troupe that he ran with Bishara Wakim in 1919 had promoted itself as a “polite vaudeville” of sorts. Bishara Wakim's character Mitwalli performs using exaggerated and jerky body movements, as does Victor Cohen's Shamhourish, whose makeup and behavior mark him as an auguste, the madcap character in the vaudevillian tradition.⁷²² Mitwalli is battier and clumsier than Shamhourish, but unlike the latter does not appear as if he has just walked off a stage. Vaudeville's influence on *Barsoum Looks for a Job* also shows in Barsoum's smirking to the camera, in the manner of the cinema of attractions of the early 20th century, a performance practice borrowed from vaudeville and abjured by the classical industrial cinema then emergent.⁷²³ It was therefore not a surprise that the completed *Barsoum Looks for a Job* never saw the projector's light in a public screening. Egyptian audiences had witnessed a taming of vaudevillian performance in films imported from America and Europe for years and by 1923 had

⁷²¹ Bayoumi relates about the cinema in no more than two out of 110 total pages or so. See Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 35-37.

⁷²² See under “Augustes and Clowns,” in Frank Cullen, *Vaudeville Old & New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performances in America*, 46-47.

⁷²³ Kristine Brunofska Karnick and Henry Jenkins, “Introduction: Funny Stories,” in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, eds. Kristine Brunofska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), 64.

seen and raved about Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921).⁷²⁴ Bayoumi's urban picaresque by comparison was outmoded.⁷²⁵

The Office Clerk (al-Bashkatib, January 1924):

The door to what seems like a restaurant appears, judging from the aprons of the two people closest to the screen and the cap of the person behind them, all white. A stylish woman comes out of the door to the restaurant with the two men. One of the two has a long beard and is seen to follow the woman when she turns to walk down the pavement. He then grabs her, pulling her back. The bearded man points to us.

That is all that remains of *The Office Clerk*, a single shot! Not for naught, however, is what remains, since this film, like its narrative predecessor integrates direct address from a character. Only that in the case of *The Office Clerk*, such a staging practice is within its original context, vaudevillian theatre, since this film was not intended as a standalone work, but part-and-parcel of a theatrical performance. According to Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, the film was to serve as an act within a theatrical performance, recalling a similar practice earlier mentioned taking place in the Ramses Theatre. Al-Qalyoubi has it that Ramses followed Amin `Atalla's troupe in this regard, since the former took up the amalgamated performance in 1927, three years after *The Office Clerk* was staged. Curiously, al-Qalyoubi identifies the Ramses play in question as *The Defence* (al-Difa`) and the maker of the film segment, which in this case served as an introduction to the play, as one Mohamed Karim, who would in 1930 write and make *Zaynab* for Youssef Wahby.⁷²⁶ Al-Qalyoubi does not cite this history, which, had he looked Ahmed El

⁷²⁴ This assessment stems from my thorough examination of a survey of readers' favorite films conducted by the Egyptian film magazine *Motion Pictures* (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika) in 1923, year of *Barsoum's* release.

⁷²⁵ A final note, this film's cards include the Amon seal, which means that Amon as a moniker was not intended to refer to a newsreel exclusively.

⁷²⁶ See Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 35-37.

Hadary's *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, disagrees in dating and detail with El Hadary's cited and more elaborate history relating Wahby's Ramses theatre's integration of filmic screenings.⁷²⁷

Fiancé No. 13 (al-Khatib nimra 13, 1933):

This fifty-minute film is notable for its being Bayoumi's only film for which evidence exists of a public, designated cinema screening.⁷²⁸ *Fiancé No. 13* was also markedly longer than any film he had previously completed and accordingly stages a much longer narrative than his previous complete narrative film *Barsoum Looks for a Job* and one more complex. Most impressive is the evident auteurist, reflexive interest in the film's making. Mohamed al-Qalyoubi shrewdly observes that this film is a sequel of sorts to *Barsoum*, that it could be tagged as "Za'tar Looks for a Job," in that like its prequel it follows the misadventures of an indigent looking in good faith to turn his misfortune around; that is Za'tar, with the guidance of younger brother and companion Zazu.⁷²⁹ As in *Barsoum Looks for a job*, one is "straight" and one is auguste, only that the generic character assignment is switched in the sequel so that the character looking for a job is madcap. Whereas Sheikh Mitwalli performed a host of exaggerated gestures and gesticulations, actor Helmi Farag restrains his eccentricity to a tongue he cannot stop wagging!

Bayoumi links *Barsoum Looks for a Job* and *Fiancé No. 13* in two more distinct ways. As al-Qalyoubi notes, a slogan from the first film reappears in the latter.⁷³⁰ In *Barsoum* the adage is

⁷²⁷ The article that El Hadaray cites dating Ramses Theatre's first use of projected film within performances to 1923 itself dates to 1933, but was published in *Rose al-Youssef* magazine, published by a woman who was a member of Ramses's troupe from the outset, as earlier discussed. Moreover, a decade-old reference does better than no reference! See Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 26-27.

⁷²⁸ An advert for the film's screening in Cinema Radium is reprinted in Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 150.

⁷²⁹ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 77.

⁷³⁰ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 75-76.

presented in a title card—“a human for rent even by the bite,” equivalent to “will work for food”—whereas in *Fiancé No. 13* it is presented three times: in a title card as before, on a sign that Za`tar hangs outside his home, then edited as “Dear human for rent” in the salutation of a letter that ultimately leads to the economic break for which both characters had yearned. A more intrinsic connection between the two works obtains in Bayoumi’s rewriting of the part of Shamhourish for *Fiancé No. 13*. To amplify the reprisal, Bayoumi cast himself to play the aged, but still explosive banker, whose daughter ends up marrying Za`tar and who himself takes in the boy Zazu, to fill the void left by his newly married daughter’s departure. Unlike Shamhourish of the earlier film who incinerated Barsoum and Mitwalli’s expectations upon learning of their reason for meeting him, here the Jewish banker saves the day and rescues the brothers from abjectness.

Bayoumi stretched his occupational portfolio on *Fiancé no. 13*. Beside acting in his sole performance for the screen Bayoumi directed, produced, photographed, and edited the movie. Bayoumi wrote the film’s screenplay and undertook its production design. He even developed the resulting footage and printed it.⁷³¹ The film also showcases Bayoumi’s talent for caricature, liberally used in the film’s title cards to complement language or to convey meaning independently.⁷³² Nevertheless, it is the case that *Fiancé No. 13* is photographed so as to induce hair loss!

A final note about *Fiancé No. 13* is that the part of Zazu was played by Mohamed Bayoumi’s daughter Dawlat. According to al-Qalyoubi, Bayoumi publicly communicated his intent to fashion a film after Chaplin’s *The Kid* (1921) in making the project that would become

⁷³¹ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 25, 75.

⁷³² Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 78.

Fiancé No. 13, and that his daughter Dawlat was to represent an Egyptian equivalent of Jackie Coogan, in what is Bayoumi's only reported case of filmic influence or inspiration.

Crossdressing had been standard practice in the Arabic Egyptian theatre of the late 19th century as discussed in the previous segment, but was also practiced in Egypt's comedic cinema well into the post-Studio Misr era. Bayoumi had nothing to say about his daughter's sex when he announced *The Kid* as a model for his upcoming film, a comedy made over a decade after the Chaplin classic suggesting the singular popularity that it enjoyed in Egypt, as I have observed over the course of my research. However, fashioning in 1933 a silent *Fiancé No. 13* after a silent twelve-year-old film, no matter how popular and enduring, points to a decided lack of currency, which may have contributed to the stagnation of Bayoumi's career in the cinema.

Night in a Lifetime (Layla fi al-'umr, December 1933)⁷³³:

Bayoumi's final production made under commission in early in 1934 was the documentary-newsfilm hybrid titled *The Inauguration of Al-Said Club in Alexandria*. The wages earned from this final film outing must not have assuaged disappointment over a decade-old career hardly advanced and a recent attempt at making the turn to the relatively expensive sound film, as the market had come to demand, into which he had sunk his own money and not been reimbursed by the project's originator, the earlier discussed film actor Amina Muhammad, according to a handwritten contract signed by her included among Bayoumi's uncovered papers.⁷³⁴ I have determined that *Night in a Lifetime* was intended as a talkie, likely one whose dialogue would be looped in postproduction, judging from the duration of dialogue in many of the film's shots. The soundtrack was likely never recorded because *Night in a Lifetime* was never realized.

⁷³³ See al-Qalyoubi's dating in *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 25.

⁷³⁴ Mohamed al-Qalyoubi, *Mohamed Bayoumi: First Pioneer of the Egyptian*, 151.

Night in a Lifetime's incompleteness is regrettable I find because, as al-Qalyoubi has pointed out, the work demonstrates a noticeable advance in Bayoumi's technical competency. In a first, he integrates expressive Soviet style close-up shots of people laughing. More noticeable and impressive is that Bayoumi shoots moving vehicles, managing to steadily keep up with them, and shoots from moving vehicles, such as from the tram. The film's story seems to involve a romantic couple from the Nile Delta provinces, like Bayoumi himself, who travel to Alexandria, as he had before adopting it as his hometown. The couple's predictable unacquaintance with the ways of city life is demonstrated principally in their exposure to rapid movement, of cars, trains, trams, and even horse drawn carriages.

Despite its incompleteness, *Lifetime* enables the researcher to learn more about Bayoumi's creative thinking because as his third fictive project, certain trends and bends of narrative become clear. Bayoumi's approach injects slapstick into a comedy of errors owing to socioeconomic variance, that between destitution and opulence in the case of *Barsoum Looks for a Job* and *Fiancé No. 13*, and that between the countryside and the city in *Night in a Lifetime*. All three of these films propel their narratives in the picaresque tradition, urban bound in the case of the first two films, and from country to city in the case of the third. Bayoumi had tuned his formula but too little too late it seems. He may have had plans to integrate dance sequences, what with the casting of a professional and celebrated dancer in the lead, that would add appeal to *Night in a Lifetime* that his previous works could not have enjoyed, but existing Bayoumi papers and footage betray nothing of this interest. Nevertheless, the popularity of song and dance among Egyptian cinema audiences was unquestionable by the concluding year of this study, the year in which *Night in a Lifetime* would have been released, as revealed in the concluding segment of this chapter.

3. The Singing Cinema: Synchronized sound and the reception by press and audiences to singing films in Egypt, 1907-1934

“The cinema uttered in order to sing”⁷³⁵

Although motion pictures with synchronized sound first screened in Egypt in 1906, Gaumont’s chronophone exhibition was short lived and took place in a single Alexandrian venue; the device could not synchronize dependably and sustainably. Talkies would arrive permanently in Egyptian cinemas in 1928, with the screening of three musicals in Alexandria--*Miss Venus* (1922), *Das Mädel von Pontecuculi* (1924) and *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Soon, Egyptian cinemas were being built or refurbished to integrate sound reproduction systems. This conversion began with first run cinemas in the major cities and spread to smaller locales and lower run venues.

The first Egyptian talkies would appear in 1932. Despite longstanding and varied grievances about the talking cinema, by audiences and reviewers alike, Egyptian producers seemed bent on adopting the augmented cinema of new. Egyptian silent films would be produced for a few more years, though the unprecedented success of *The White Rose* (al-Warda al-baida’, 1933) convinced even the naysayers that al-sinema al-natiqa (literally *the uttering cinema*) was here to stay and that the film ghina`i (singing film) had the best potential of appealing to Egyptian audiences.

I first attend to an historical analysis of critical reception of the singing cinema, particularly as an inheritor of the masrah al-gina`i (singing theater). I then turn to a practice

⁷³⁵ Tarek El Shennawi (film critic and scholar) in discussion with the author, May 23, 2018.

largely concurrent with critical reception, namely audience response to singing films, foreign then domestically produced. Having reviewed the singing film's emergence then success in the early years of synchronized sound, I offer explanations for its dominance in exhibition. The goal of this chapter is not merely to present a history of a discursively neglected cinema, but to prove that learning about a cinema such as that of Egypt, particularly during the period of transition from "silence" to synchronized sound, alerts us to the cultural links, national and international, that new mass media technologies engender.

Critical engagement with Singing Films in Egypt

Synchronized sound film was introduced in Egypt long before it was produced industrially. In 1906, Aziz and Dorés announced the opening of their Cinemphone in Alexandria with presentations of Gaumont's chronomegaphone by way of which synchronized sound "scenes" were screened in a program that also included silent scenes.⁷³⁶ Significantly, the synchronized sound offerings were exclusively songs, presented in several languages, likely in order to appeal to as diverse an audience as possible, considering the variety of national backgrounds of residents of Egypt's most cosmopolitan city of Alexandria.⁷³⁷ Here we have proof that the first synchronized sound films to screen in Egypt exhibited song performances and boomed the vocal music through a horn speaker. However, the advertisement does not describe the synchronized sound scenes projected as *singing*, possibly because they do not present (long) stories. Relatedly,

⁷³⁶ Use of the Arabic *mandhar* (scene) is common in the early years of cinema in Egypt, understandably, since most films were no more than several minutes long.

⁷³⁷ Notice of this exhibitor's opening presentation was detailed in a large advertisement in the French Alexandrian newspaper *Le reform*, on November 25, 1906, as appears in the authoritative text on the silent cinema in Egypt, by film critic and scholar Ahmed El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 69-71.

a review of the chronophone in the British the Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly titled “Singing Pictures at the Hippodrome” informs its readers that London’s unique music hall has booked Gaumont’s nearly perfected device to exhibit the company’s own “Gaumont Singing Pictures.”⁷³⁸ Indeed we have it; *signing picture* was used long before *The Jazz Singer* and other Warner Bros musical titles from the late 1920s made it stateside. Thus, in *singing picture* we have proof that a term combining equivalents of *film* and *song* had been put to print in English two decades before the industrialization of synchronized sound film.

Examining the exhibition of musical pictures in the 1920s and 30s evinces two impressions: These films were commercially successful in Egypt, but were criticized in the cinema press by tastemakers who found musical—specifically, singing—pictures to manifest the very aspects of theatre that did not accord with effective filmmaking. Singing plays were well known to Egyptians by the time the first narrative musicals screened in the country in 1928. Beside the Arabic singing theatre, with its instrumentalization of local stories and local dialects, operas and operettas had been staples of Egyptian cultural life, targeting the Egyptian cultural elite and non-Egyptian residents of the country. The first dedicated singing theatre in Egypt was the Opera House, established in 1869. Its first presentation was of Verdi’s *Aida*, an opera commissioned by Khedive Ismail I, in 1871. Numerous renowned opera singers performed in the Opera House over the decades since, but only three acts in Arabic earned the privilege, including Salama Hijazi, one of the founders of singing theatre in Egypt.⁷³⁹ Two other theatres specialized

⁷³⁸ This review, dated Sep 5, 1907, followed that in *Le reform* in under a year’s time. It appears in a film history book entirely composed of early cinema press clippings. Stephen Herbert, *A History of Early Film, Volume 2* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 4. It describes the Chronomegaphone as a “more impressive title” than the chronophone, “used to indicate a specially loud model for use in large halls.”

⁷³⁹ Under regular feature “Ma`loumat fannia: al-Masarih fi Misr wa kaif nasha`at” (Artistic Information: Theaters in Egypt and How They Developed), *al-Sabah*, Oct 8, 1928, private collection, Cairo.

in singing, Azbakiya Park Theater and the Carousel, the latter offering music hall performances, operas and operettas.

In a 1923 issue of *Moving Pictures* (al-Suwar al-mutaharrika) magazine's special report on the theater, typically unattributed, the author admits that the magazine thought not to set aside the matter of (theatrical) acting in Egypt due to its "vitality and magnitude." Before producing a personal take on acting in Egypt, the author issues a proviso that the magazine's bias is only toward the imperative of perfection, a perfection attainable only through criticism, which in itself cannot effect improvement if the criticized is unreceptive. Criticism is not surprisingly the next order of the piece; what is surprising is its target—the Arab Acting Advancement Company, a theatre company that the piece identifies as operating out of the theatre in Azbakiya Park, the largest in Cairo, one that has been operating for two years the piece tells, as if to suggest that it has existed long enough to produce professional work. The article then posits the Society of Theatre Devotees' Arab Acting Advancement Company as a fraudulent misnomer and its most recent production of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, a lavish and well-publicized piece, as "pure tosh"! A litany of criticisms follows, beginning with that the production, a musical, used western music that does not appeal to the Egyptian masses. The harangue goes on to describe the ill-suited tragic additions to an operetta, a form that does not typically integrate tragedy, as "deformed and disfigured."⁷⁴⁰ Otherwise, the review finds that music and Arabic speech were poorly matched to the particular emotional thrust of scenes, in a play which "had its author made its subject modern the novel might have been tragic." The Indian costumes were unnecessary the author opines, before questioning the historical authenticity of Indian women's dressing in

⁷⁴⁰ Here, the author makes it known that he is acquainted with the western theatrical tradition, well enough to notice an aberration of form.

European wear. The most elaborate assault, however, is saved for the acting. Exonerating but a single performer, though not without citation of inadequacy, a `Abdalla whose last name is not mentioned, the piece names the two principle culprits, Zaki `Ukasha and Fatima Sirri, two eminent performers of the Egyptian theatre of the day: they moved about excessively, so as to exhaust the viewers eyesight; their romantic chemistry was off; and they sang sonorously in moments that called for a whisper, and vice versa. Worst of all, however, was these two's committing the "most heinous error an actor can make"—to address the audience directly.⁷⁴¹

The relatively short-lived cinema magazine *Screen Art* (Fan al-sinima) lent interest to music in film, particularly singing, and tended to suspect the theatrical imposition of the form when adapted for the cinema. A special feature incisively titled "The Musical Film has yet to Be Born" analyzes musical integration into a filmic text, distinguishing between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Describing diegetic music as that "considered part of the story," the author adduces the operetta as the most marked example of this persuasion, before describing such an approach, barren of realism⁷⁴² as it is, as "faulty at its foundation." The author continues:

For operettas we see today do not transcend being ordinary filmic stories, into whose folds have been stuffed musical parts and dance numbers with an opportunity to use music. So how silly is it to see in a dramatic moment the hero or heroine unexpectedly grab a lute or to sit at the piano and begin playing and singing, whereas the rest of the film's characters, as they listen, transform into still, beautiful statues, while movement is paralyzed—and [movement] is film's first rule—for several minutes, until the player or singer has done his part.

⁷⁴¹ "Ma`rad al-masarih" (Theatre Exhibit) was not a regular feature of the magazine, published in this case on May 31, 1923, 23.

⁷⁴² The author, writing in an Arabic boosting publication, puts the term *realism* in English, and in Roman letters, following the Arabic *waqi`* (reality).

The author adduces two exceptions to the general inability to marry diegetic music, including singing, with movement. The first is Rouben Mamoulian's *Love Me Tonight* (1932), particularly because of the director's fine stroke of having the song "Mimi... Mimi..." sung by Maurice Chevalier then by the other characters of the film.

The author dubs non-diegetic music as *accompanying* (*mulazima*) then traces it to silent cinema:

... In any case, music of silent cinema lacked an organic link to the film's substance to which it is played. No better proof of this than that we listened to pieces by Beethoven and other played on all occasions, even with police films! Then companies began lending interest to this matter and thereby tasked composers to write music especially. Yet it was simple in its melodies and it was taken care that it passed through the ears of the viewer without distracting him from watching projected scenes... Whereas in the uttering film its effect is deeper. And here is an opportunity for the director and the composer to collaborate in creating music appropriate for the film, which may now be considered as something organic and foundational in the construction of a film.

This critical opinion piece appeared in late 1933.⁷⁴³ Whereas cinemagoers and cinephiles a couple of years earlier had hotly debated the uttering cinema's worth compared to the silent,⁷⁴⁴ the author here seems to have acknowledged that sound was here to stay and that the task at hand was to conform it to the essentially visual art form that the cinema is.

⁷⁴³ The piece appears as a special feature, under "Mousiqa al-film" (Film Music), *Fan al-sinima* [Screen Art], November 26, 1933, 15, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁷⁴⁴ See Hasan Sharif al-Rashidi, "Mu`jizat al-film al-natiq" (Miracle of the Uttering Film), *al-Ma`rifa* [Knowledge], May 1, 1932, 545-549, <http://archive.sakhrit.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=3117931&ISSUEID=18873&AID=427007>, as well as two articles by arguably the most accomplished film critic of the era, al-Sayid Hasan Jum`a, who also edited *Motion Pictures* and *Screen Art* magazine, both publications essential to this study: "al-Natiqa: madiha hadiruha wa mustqbaluha" (Uttering Cinema: Its past, present, and future al-Sinima), *al-Hilal*, Dec 1, 1929, 219-222, <http://archive.sakhrit.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=1081894&ISSUEID=13218&AID=261600>, as well as "al-Sinima al-natiqa: madha qaddamathu ilayna wa madha haramatna minhu" (Uttering Cinema: What Has It presented Us with and What Has It Denied Us), *al-Hilal*, Nov 1, 1930, 97-104, <http://archive.sakhrit.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=1083076&ISSUEID=13227&AID=261984>

Screen Art was not the only film magazine that recognized the challenge of putting song to moving images. The very short-lived *Cinema Planets* (*Kawakib al-sinima*) questioned the aptness of the opera/opera as film well into 1934. Under the heading “Between the theatre and the cinema,” entitled “Will the Opera Succeed upon the Silver Screen?” the author acknowledges the astounding reception to *The Loves of Carmen* (silent, 1927) in America. Further, the author notes the marked domestic success of the film versions of *La Boheme* (silent, 1926) and *The Merry Widow* (1934). Yet, the critic qualifies an essential problem with adapting a play to film: Much of the dialogue, which is the joy of a theatrical musical, cannot be enacted on film, because the dialogue would last longer than the filmic scenes containing them. This disparity, argues the author, would pose a problem for audiences, especially those in Egypt who would have to read subtitles to understand the dialog. The author attributes success of opera films to the “violent, exciting scenes and strange incidents that always conclude with a miserable tragedy that draws torrential tears from our eyes.” The piece concludes with an abrupt assertion: “The theatrical film shall not succeed regardless of their devotion and efforts. For the theater has its path and the cinema has its.”⁷⁴⁵

Music was not the only sound component that *Screen Art* contributors believed the uttering film had not yet got right; dialog itself was an obstacle. With a title like “Enemy of the Uttering Film: Dialogue,” what could be left to the imagination! Its author argues that focus on dialogue has shifted the essentially pictographic art away from its focus on imagery, that literature, of which dialog is constituent, is too potent a form to satisfactorily permit for equal prominence of another form to operate alongside it. The author argues that dialog has been

⁷⁴⁵ This article appears in the second of a mere three-issue run. Oct 1, 1934, 3, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

misused in two ways. Firstly, it has been integrated often superfluously, so that it conveys ideas similar to those conveyed by imagery. Secondly, dialogue is often undertaken for the eye, not the ear, in that actors are made to be seen as their lips move so that dialog seems declarative to the audience. The author faults French films especially for this.⁷⁴⁶

French films were not uniquely subjected to *Screen Art*'s wrath. A review of the British musical *Say It with Music* (1932) laments the photography, examples of whose incompetence it offers, including the lack of fetching camera angles employed in shooting the performance sequences—unlike American performance films. The review speculates, that the principles behind *Say It with Music* sought to showcase the music of the Jack Payne band, “considered the best in England,” while lending the music a limited role in the story.⁷⁴⁷ As such, the film’s principles decidedly opted not to venture to present singing in a way integral to the plot, but then failed to even fetchingly showcase the music for whose sake the narrative had been undermined.

Audience Reception and Receptiveness to the Singing Film

By the early 1930s cinemagoers in Egypt seemed to agree with Egyptian art and film critics’ tastes in terms of what they paid to see. What they wanted to see were American films and, as few as there were, Egyptian films. They also wanted to see musicals from abroad and celebrity Egyptian singers perform on the silver screen. As noted at the outset of this essay the first synchronized sound films screened in Egypt after the industrialization of the technology were musicals, though the films predate this industrialization. The first two films screened, both in

⁷⁴⁶ Under the heading “Fan al-sinema” (*Screen Art*), a title, pp. 18, Dec 9, 1933, microfilm, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁷⁴⁷ The review appears in the weekly feature “Madha `ala al-shasha al-fidiya?” (What is on the Silver Screen?), Feb 3, 1934, 23.

Alexandria, were in fact German, using the relatively advanced Notofilm synchronized sound system, patently a “music film system”: The first was *The Girl from Pontecaculi* (1924), which screened on March 14, 1928. The second was the older, originally more successful, *Miss Venus* (1922), which screened three days later. In October of the same year, *The Jazz Singer* screened in Alexandria as well.⁷⁴⁸

With the screening of the films above in Cinema al-Hamra and the American Cosmograph in Alexandria, Egyptian cinemas had begun converting the projection systems to play synchronized sound films. The installation of systems was carried out at such a pace that by the end of 1932 fifty seven cinemas in Cairo and its suburbs, Alexandria, and Port Said had been converted to sound out of a total of around eighty cinemas in the country.⁷⁴⁹ There also seems to have been a race to produce the first Egyptian synchronized sound narrative film, as well as the first Egyptian singing film, to the extent that even in the case of the silent film *Zaynab* (1930), a musical score was recorded to be played on records, in accompaniment to segments of the film—not synchronized. This score was written by the film’s lead actor Behidja Hafez, a musician by training without acting experience, who would become a vital, versatile figure in the Egyptian

⁷⁴⁸ These exhibitions are noted in Ahmed El Hadary’s *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I from the beginning of 1896 to the end of 1930*, 284. I should note that El Hadary inaccurately transliterates *The Girl from Pontecaculi* and reports that it along with *Miss Venus* are American. This essay is the first work on the cinema in Egypt to identify these two titles correctly. The German titles are documented and historicized in Michael Wedel, “Messter’s ‘Silent’ Heirs: Sync Systems of the German Music Film 1914-1929,” *Film History*, 11, no. 4 (1999): 470-472

⁷⁴⁹ The United States Department of Commerce representative in Egypt communicated notes about the cinema in Egypt regularly back to home office, beginning around 1932, year of the exhibition of the first Egyptian synchronized sound film. Its listing of cinemas that had converted to sound projection systems is the most comprehensive I have encountered. George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Questionnaire—Egypt, 1932,” January 13, 1933, special report # 20, 2, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché’s Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland. As for the number of cinemas in the country that I have estimated at eighty by the end of 1932, it is based on the number of cinemas documented around a year later at eighty-nine. George Lewis Jones, “Motion Picture Notes: Two new Motion Picture Houses in Egypt in 1933,” November 2, 1933, # 162, 1-2, Box 193.

cinema of the 1930s. In addition to lead acting in several films, Hafez went on to direct, produce, write and compose for Egyptian films, as discussed earlier in this chapter.⁷⁵⁰

Egyptian films were by 1930 projected in accompaniment to dedicated music; Egyptian producers and makers raced to deliver the first Egyptian uttering film, better yet a singing one. The prestige of delivering on this inevitability to the Egyptian public was such that two Egyptian films soon after the exhibition of *Zaynab* did similar by playing music, including songs, in manual accompaniment to designated projected scenes. These two titles were each falsely advertised, however, as the first Egyptian uttering, singing film: one was *The Miracle of Love* (*Mu`jitaz al-hub*, 1930),⁷⁵¹ the other *His Excellency Kishkish Bey* (*Sahib al-sa`ada Kishkish beh*, 1931).⁷⁵²

It is quite established that the first Egyptian synchronized sound film to screen in Egypt was *Sons of the Aristocrats* (*Awlad al-dhawat*, 1932). What is not well known is that it integrated a “singing, uttering piece”—a song.⁷⁵³ Soon thereafter, the second Egyptian synchronized sound production *Song of Cardia* (*Unshudat al-fouad*, 1932) was released, the first putative singing film according to synchronized sound. Its sound sequences, including singing, were recorded in Paris, like *Aristocrats*. Their singer Nadira had acted in Egyptian silent films and previously had

⁷⁵⁰ See A. Mahmoud Qasim and Ya`qoub Wahby, *Dalil al-mumathil al-arabi fi sinima al-qarn al-`ishrin* [*Guide to Arab Actors in the 20th Century*] (Cairo: Arab Nile Group, 1999), 37. For details about Hafez’s scoring assignment for the film *Zainab*, see the memoir by its renowned and pioneering director Muhammad Karim that makes up all but the intro of *Mudhakkirat Muhammad Karim fi tarikh al-sinima al-misriya* [Muhammad Karim’s Memoir in the History of the Egyptian Cinema], ed. Mahmoud `Ali (Cairo: Academy of Arts, 1993), 148. A notice of Hafez’s musical score for the synchronized sound film *al-Ittihad* [The Accusation, 1933] tells the reader that it is Hafez’s first uttering film, that it will be “100% uttering,” (likely because Egyptian films were being released for exhibition that were only talking in parts), and that Hafidh is slated to record musical pieces for the film. “Bahija Hafidh fi al-sharit al-natiq ‘al-ittihad” (Behidja Hafez in Uttering Reel *The Accusation*), *Screen Art*, Oct 15, 1933, 19.

⁷⁵¹ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 381.

⁷⁵² See “‘Alam al-tamthil: khulasat al-haraka al-tamthilia” (Acting World: Summary of the Acting Movement), under a column “Fi usbou” (In a week), *al-Musawar*, May 8, 1931, 16, Main Library, American University in Cairo.

⁷⁵³ See “‘alam al-tamthil” (Acting World), *Al-Musawar*, Oct 2, 1934, 16. Regrettably, *Sons of the Aristocrats*, like all Egyptian silent narrative features and most early uttering films, is lost.

performed in Theatre Ramses, where she had become a sensation. The movie's press book lends more space to showcasing Nadira's photograph and her songs, two of whose lyrics are printed, than to the film's other performers, including the male lead, theatre star George Abyad. The pressbook makes it clear that the film's songs and their singer are the centerpiece of the work. *Song of Cardia* became the first Egyptian film to open in Cairo and Alexandria at once.⁷⁵⁴

Song of Cardia featured a prominent singer in a lead role and integrated *song* in its title. Yet, with merely three songs integral, could a film be considered a singing picture?⁷⁵⁵ It is important at this point to note "singing" was in effect a sonic offering, often advertised along with ascriptions such as *talking* (mutakallim), *sounded*, as in "with sound effect" (sawti), and even *musical* [mousiqi]. Singing film did not promise audiences songs from start to finish or even throughout. Nor did singing film suggest that crooning was central to the film's action or utterance. In the same year of *Cardia*'s release, the film *Under the Moonlight* (Taht Dou' al-Qamar) previously released as a silent film in 1930 was re-released after adding uttering segments to it, including songs.⁷⁵⁶ Behidja Hafez and other principals behind *al-Dhahiya* (*The Victims*, 1932)—a family and romantic drama, like most Egyptian films of these years, but injected with crime and intrigue—found it opportune to introduce Layla Murad to the silver screen,⁷⁵⁷ the singer/actress who would over the next two decades become Egyptian cinema's top female star in this regard. The 1933 film *Lovers' Depot* (Makhzan al-'ushaq) cast two singers.

⁷⁵⁴ Pressbook to *Song of Cardia*, designated sheet music, and an interview with its star in an unidentified magazine are part of early narrative Egyptian cinema press and publicity materials collected and collated by film scholar Faridah Mar'i in Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

⁷⁵⁵ Two of the three songs appear in the movie press book. El Hadary identifies these two and one more song in his second volume of his history of Egypt's cinema tandem, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 44.

⁷⁵⁶ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 49.

⁷⁵⁷ The film pressbook includes a pamphlet in French, which aside from the name of the production company, the film star Behidja Hafez and the film title announces *parlant* and *chantant*—*talking* and *singing*, respectively. Find in Egyptian early narrative feature film press and publicity collection, Special Collections Library, American University in Cairo.

And the film *Son of the People* (Ibn al-Sha`b, 1934) was described as an “uttering, speaking” production, ahead of its release.⁷⁵⁸ As if to raise the ante, the Lama brothers, established and relatively prolific since the silent cinema era, made *Ghost of the Past* (Shabah al-madi, 1934) as a generic love and intrigue drama infused with their staple action and suspense. Nevertheless, the Lamas made room for five songs by Nadira, the singer/actor who had starred in the first Egyptian singing film, *Song of Cardia*. Only that herein her song lyrics were written by renowned author and poet Mahmoud Mustafa al-`Aqqad.⁷⁵⁹ The Lama brothers—director, actor, and production company owners—were obviously trying to infuse the film with ingredients they believed would draw domestic audiences, ingredients that had contributed to the most successful and best received Egyptian singing film of the era—*The White Rose*.

The appeal of Egyptian singing films was evident and stemmed from four factors that I have identified. Firstly, the Egyptian singing theatre had flourished in the 1920s and early 1930s, even without government support extended to dramatic Egyptian theatre.⁷⁶⁰ This theater acquainted Egyptian audiences with the performative amalgamation of song and acting. Any review of popular culture magazines, such as *al-Sabah* or *al-Musawar* from this era will locate tens of plays named. Secondly, several singers rose to bona fide stardom, in part because of their performance within musical plays or in conjunction with them. Among such singers Nadira was mentioned above and Mohammed Abdel Wahab will soon be. Beyond the year 1934, which concludes the study herein, legendary singer Munira al-Mahdiya performed her single filmic role

⁷⁵⁸ Find under “al-sinema fi Misr wa al-kharij” (Cinema in Egypt and Abroad), *Screen Art*, Jan 6, 1934, 4.

⁷⁵⁹ See “Risalatayn min Ibrahim Lama-Badr Lama-Abdalla Lama: wa al-film al-jadid ‘Shabah al-madi’” (Two letters from Ibrahim Lama-Badr Lama-Abdalla Lama: and the new film *Ghost of the Past*), *Cinema Planets*, Oct 1, 1934, 19.

⁷⁶⁰ See under “Munira al-Mahdiya: al-Hukuma wa al-tamthil al-ghina’i” (Munira al-Mahdiya: The Government and Singing Acting), *al-Sabah*, Nov 19, 1928, 9. For a sample of the troupes that did receive assistance, see “‘Alam al-tamthil: i`anat al-firaq wa mumathliha” (Acting World: Supporting Troupes and their Actors), *al-Musawar*, April 24, 1931, 16.

al-Ghandoura (1935), including as singer, and Um Kulthoum, arguably the greatest singer in Arabic of the modern era, acted and certainly sang in her first of several films, *Widad* (1936). The third explanation for the success of singing films is the proliferation of recorded music, which made star singers household names for many who did not or could not attend these singers' live performances.⁷⁶¹ Fourthly, many of these well-known singers performed outside of Egypt, particularly in Syria, Palestine and Iraq, including Munira al-Mahdia, Um Kulthoum, and Mohammed Abdel Wahab (twice).⁷⁶² This exposure abroad enhanced the appeal of films in which they appeared to audiences outside of Egypt and promised revenues from foreign exhibition.

Only one of the star singers named above, however, wrote music for his songs. Only one had written an opera⁷⁶³ and only one was male—Mohammed Abdel Wahab. Egyptian films did good business on the whole, as they regularly got booked in first run cinemas then into second run houses.⁷⁶⁴ Yet, only one could compete with the near dominance of American films on Egyptian screens beginning in the early 1930s,⁷⁶⁵ a dominance that benefitted in part from the

⁷⁶¹ *Al-Sabah* reported on Abdel Wahab's recorded music in the weekly feature "Madha fi al-malahi wa al-masarih?: Mohammed Abdel Wahab" (What's in the amusements and theaters? : Mohammed Abdel Wahab) on September 10, 1928, 12, and on Um Kulthoum's the following week under "Ma'loumat wa mulahadhat: Um Kalthoum wa Mansour `Awad" (Information and Notices: Um Kalthoum and Mansour `Awad), September 17, 1928, 9. For more about the proliferation of an expansive record sales industry in Egypt see the section "The Mass Media: Commercial Recording" in the chapter on the Arab Middle East in Pater Manuel, *Popular Musics of the Non-Western World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 145-147.

⁷⁶² See in the feature "'Alam al-tamthil: `an rihlat Um Kulthoum" (Acting World: About Um Kulthoum's Trip), *al-Musaww*, September 4, 1931, 12.

⁷⁶³ The opera was *Cleopatra and Mark Anthony*, as reported by Salah Husein Abd al-`adhim, "al-Mousiqqa fi Misr" (Music in Egypt), *Cinema Planets*, October 8, 1934, 18-19.

⁷⁶⁴ See George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Pictures Excellent in Egypt in 1933," April 23, 1934, 2, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁶⁵ American films accounted for 75% of films screened in Egypt in 1933. By 1936, with the exception of two or three cinemas in Alexandria and Cairo that specialized in French films, 90% of films screened in the all-important first run cinemas were American. For statistics about 1933, see George Lewis Jones, "Egyptian Market for American Pictures Excellent in Egypt in 1933," April 23, 1934, 1, Box 194, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports. For the comparative assessment for 1935, see Lays A France, "Motion Picture Notes—Egypt," November 18, 1935,

American cinema's "universal appeal of action and music."⁷⁶⁶ This film was *The White Rose*, one of only three non-American films to top the earners list in Egypt for 1933.⁷⁶⁷

The White Rose drew some of the most favorable reviews of an Egyptian film to date and was popular enough to screen at a first run cinema (Royal),⁷⁶⁸ a second run cinema (Fouad)⁷⁶⁹ and, perhaps without precedent at a third run house in Cinema Olympia.⁷⁷⁰ *The White Rose* integrated eight songs, performed by Abdel Wahab, more than any other Egyptian film of the period. Moreover, the song lyrics and musical arrangements seemed to stand above all other elements of the film, particularly in their delicacy and refinement, including the song "Nile," whose lyrics were written for Abdel Wahab in colloquial Arabic, an exceptional act by legendary poet Ahmad Shawqi.⁷⁷¹

Mohammed Abdel Wahab may not have had typical movie leading man looks, but he performed with an air of dignified civility, while wearing a tarboush, the headwear of Egyptian gentry and Egyptian nationalists. Abdel Wahab's character, as the man himself, deliberately and considerately amalgamated "western" and "eastern." The music to his songs was decidedly Middle Eastern *tarab* but beat and tempo to "His eyelashes Taught Flirtation" (Jafnuhu `allam al-

2, Box 195, Records Relating to Acting Commercial Attaché's Reports. Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. The National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

⁷⁶⁶ George Lewis Jones, "Motion Picture Notes: Good Business for American Pictures in Egypt," # 99, September 29, 1933, 1, Box 193, Records Relating to Commercial Attaché's Reports.

⁷⁶⁷ The other two were British productions, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and *The Rise of Catherine the Great* (1934), and signature pictures of Alexander Korda, who would go on to become one of the most successful and powerful British filmmakers of his time. Other years' top earner lists likely would not have included two British films.

⁷⁶⁸ An advert denoting "Cinema Royal" on the page inside the front cover, *Screen Art*, November 12, 1933, 2.

⁷⁶⁹ A two-page advertisement in *Screen Art*, January 20, 1934, 16-17.

⁷⁷⁰ See the notice in "Cinema in Egypt an Abroad" (al-Sinima fi Misr wa al-kharij), *Screen Art*, February 17, 1934, 4.

⁷⁷¹ See the second part of a three-part, extensive review of *The White Rose* in "What's on the Silver Screen?" *Cinema Art*, December 23, 1933, 27-28.

ghazal) sound European.⁷⁷² Further, Abdel Wahab alternates between singing in colloquial and standard Arabic. Abdel Wahab in *The White Rose* thus embodies the versatile, grounded Egyptian, selectively borrowing from abroad, but assimilating such imported culture into a persona that is unquestionably Egyptian. *The White Rose* stood for what Egypt could produce as it strove to rise to the ranks of the world's most advanced nations, nations with whose films nationalist Egyptian cinemagoers hoped their own would compete in quality and in profitability.

Three genres of Theatre and Cinema: Two Discrete, One Complementary

Although fewer than twenty films, narrative or otherwise, appear to have survived the silent era, among tens produced domestically over the several decades of my study, enough primary materials relating have survived to know of the stories of the narrative features. Examining reviews and assessments of such filmic texts lends a relatively clear idea about the formal and generic providence the theatre lent the country's cinema. Notable about such aliment is that as had been the case with the country's theatre industry, (melo)drama and comedy were served up as complete texts, whereas singing was mostly treated as an offering complementary or variegating of the other two. In a way that recalls the treatment of spectacular location scenery, song—and its trusted accompaniments music and dance—punctuated and interrupted the narrative comedic or dramatic flow of Egyptian early synchronized sound films, whatever a

⁷⁷² Egyptian film critic Tarek El Shennawi caused a stir in Egypt when he criticized the legacy of hitherto hardly touchable Abdel Wahab, including for having excerpted over forty musical arrangements without citation or acknowledgment. See *Huna al-`Asima* (Here Is the Capital), "Tariq al-Shinnawi: `Abd al-Wahab hua sabab ta`yini fi al-naqaba" (Tarek El Shennawi: Abdel Wahab Is the Reason for My Appointment in the Union), presented by Lamis Elhadidy, featuring Iman `Abd al-Ghani and Tarek El Shennawi, aired May 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ccb2-liaK_Y. Indeed, in the case of "His Eyelash Taught Flirtation" an arrangement is clearly pilfered from then international smash hit "The Peanut Vendor" (El Manisero) by the Havana Casino Orchestra.

particular film's genre may be. If comedy or (melodrama) were served to Egyptians as main courses, then singing was promised and delivered as delectable sides.

Conclusion

The Burden of Nationalism

The cinema in Egypt was nationalist long before it was national. The first instance of governmental support of a domestic activity thereof was Sultan Hussein-Kamal's (a "nonnative" Egyptian) commissioning Pascal Prosperi (a "nonnative", possibly Egyptian) to make *The Sultanic Guard* (al-Haras al-sultani) in 1916. By then, domestic actualities and newsfilms had for two decades expressed nationalist predilections, beginning with the earliest works of Edward de La Grange, also "nonnative." All of this activity took place before the founding of the nominally postcolonial nation state of Egypt. These films could not be national Egyptian films because no independent Egyptian state existed to be extolled. However, they could be and as I have argued were nationalist Egyptian films, because an Egyptian nation had existed for millennia.

Even following independence, non-Egyptian and non-native Egyptian institutions and persons continued to exert the most influence and wield the most power in the domain of collective activity in the country that I have elaborated in this study. Yet, even such identifiers as *Egyptian*, *native*, and *foreign* were in flux, as Assia Dagher's case best illustrates. Dagher had lived in Egypt a mere six year or so before she took a leading role in producing *Delicate Young Woman of the Desert* (Ghadat al-Sahra', 1929). The Bedouin melodrama was complemented for the fidelity of its art and costume design, but lambasted for its writing and direction, functions performed by the oft ill-fated Wedad Orfi whose obsession with Rudolph Valentino was linked by at least one critic to his failure.⁷⁷³ Dagher who had played lead in *Delicate Young Woman...* and produced the picture had more reason to dispense with Orfi's services than the latter's

⁷⁷³ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part I*, 315-322.

incompetence. Dagher likely realized that the Turkish expatriate was not positioned to sufficiently Egyptianize her films to the satisfaction of audiences, expectedly, but also to that of the Egyptian government, which was keenly watching the country's developing film production activity for its potential, not only as a source of revenue, but as a means of yoking nation and state, judging from her engaging personalities and institutions of government in her next film.

For her next film, *A Guilty Conscience* (Wakhz al-Dhamir, 1931), one she produced and in which she performed the leading character, Dagher hired native Egyptian journalist and magazine editor Ahmed Jalal to direct. Jalal was among the class of Egyptian journalists that had displaced Levantine journalists in the country's leading, still Levantine-Egyptian owned publications, such as *al-Hilal* and *al-Ahram*. Dagher went further in Egyptianizing *Conscience* than to put a native Egyptian in charge of the text entailed, as had her fellow Levantine Egyptian publishers mentioned; she sought Egyptian state involvement variedly as to arguably render *A Guilty Conscience* the most national film made in Egypt since the aforementioned *Sultanic Guard*. Cairo's mayor lent Dagher carte blanche access to his palaces, grounds, and gardens as locations for her production; the minister of education did similar. Furthermore, the Egyptian government issued complimentary first-class train tickets for the production to travel from Cairo to Luxor, Aswan, and Edfu and it unprecedentedly permitted the production to film in the Egyptian Museum.⁷⁷⁴ Antiquities in Aswan, Edfu, and Luxor stood for the Egyptian nation, as did those housed in the Egyptian Museum, but the structure of the museum as well as the palaces, grounds and gardens mentioned—all depicted in the film as reported—signified the Egyptian state.

⁷⁷⁴ El Hadary, *History of the Cinema in Egypt, Part II*, 16-21.

Dagher's *A Guilty Conscience* was overt in its nationalist signification as to be criticized for it by *al-Sabah* magazine: "The screenwriter has made it his whole concern showcasing the largest number of Egyptian antiquities possible, so that at the film's beginning the viewer is made to imagine that he is watching a newspaper not a story, and this falls on the director's thinking that these antiquities may stir the nationalist sentiment within us, but is at the same time an heinous artistic blunder."⁷⁷⁵ Dagher's production was thus accused of inordinate nationalism and of "nation-bating."

Contrarily, as discussed in this study's second chapter, the Egyptian government was impressed enough with *Conscience* that it bought foreign distribution rights to it then heaped a financial award atop these royalties. Dagher then acquired Egyptian citizenship following the Council of Ministers' constitutionally required review of her application, in 1933. A decade following her immigration to Egypt, Dagher had become Egyptian legally, but was she Egyptian "actually," according to her fellow Levantine Egyptian Emile Zaydan's critical qualifications? Rather than reply I would criticize the question. Egyptianess should not require qualification binarily but fluidly. More useful than Zaydan's "Are you actually Egyptian?" is "How Egyptian are you?" in the manner that "How Egyptian is this film?" is more generative than "Is this film actually Egyptian?"

Dagher certainly was more Egyptian in 1933 than she had been upon arriving in Alexandria in 1923, an Egyptianess she sought to affirm two years after earning Egyptian

⁷⁷⁵ Mahmoud al-Zibawi, "al-Mar'a al-khatira Asia Dagher sayidat al-intaj al-rafi" (The Dangerous Woman Assia Dagher: Master of Fine Production [as if a powerful woman is a dangerous one]), *al-Nahar* May 1, 2015, <https://newspaper.annahar.com/article/233434-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A3%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A2%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B9>.

nationality in producing the first domestic narrative film to tackle Egyptian history *Shajarat al-dur* (1935). Dagher performed the lead character, as typical during the early part of her career, that of the eponymous Shajarat al-Dur, Egypt's lone official woman ruler since Cleopatra.⁷⁷⁶ Like Dagher, who had come to Egypt with little and within a decade had become a powerful leader in Egypt's cinema industry of the day, Sultana Shajarat al-Dur had been brought to Egypt as a Turkish slave (Mamluk) to later have her name, along with that of her co-ruling second husband, pronounced in Friday sermons and minted on coins, the "two indisputable criteria of sovereignty in Islam."⁷⁷⁷ Like Sultana Shajarat al-Dur, Dagher had indefatigably maneuvered in oppressive and hostile surroundings in her successful pursuit of power.

Dagher Egyptianized as she continued to live and work in Egypt for decades, through the final chapter in the life of the centuries-old Levantine-Egyptian community, concluding in the mid-1970s, as documented by Thomas Philipp.⁷⁷⁸ Dagher produced her final film, her forty-ninth overall, in 1971, as executive producer precisely, as she had her forty-eighth and forty-seventh films, for the nationalized General Cinema Organization, where she worked until her passing in 1986.⁷⁷⁹ Notable is that toward the end of her career Dagher worked for the Egyptian state, in the latter's apparatus for cultural production and propagation. Dagher's most famous works had been

⁷⁷⁶ Tom Verde, "Malika III: Shajarat Al-Durr," *Aramco World* July/August 2016, <https://www.aramcoworld.com/Articles/July-2016/Malika-III-Shajarat-al-Durr>.

⁷⁷⁷ See Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 71. See also under "Mamluk Sultanas," 89-99.

⁷⁷⁸ *The Syrians in Egypt: 1725-1975*, 143-158.

⁷⁷⁹ See `Atif al-Nimr, "Assia wa Na`ima `Akif: raidatan bihudur baq" (Assia and Naima Akif: Two Pioneers with a Lingering Presence) cited earlier, as well as Muhammad Youssef al-Sharif, "Asia Dagher.. awaal fatah libnaniya tadhhar fi al-sinema al-misriya.. tabannat ibnataha litastamir fi al-fan" (Assia Dagher, the First Lebanese Girl to Appear in the Egyptian Cinema, Adopted her Daughter to Continue in the Arts), *al-Ahram* Jan 12, 2020, <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/23482>. A full listing of her works may be found under "Assia Dagher," el-cinema, <https://elcinema.com/en/person/102906943.aspx>.

decidedly nationalist;⁷⁸⁰ her final works were patently national. How much more Egyptian was Dagher after she had been hired by the Egyptian government in the late 1960s than in 1933, year of her “naturalization”? Were her nationalist credentials enhanced by the Egyptian government’s tacit endorsement of her Egyptianess in hiring her for an influential position in its media production arm? In acknowledgement, nationalist may qualify their affirmation, whereas patriots may exclaim it.

In 2014, celebrated filmmaker Mohamed Khan was granted Egyptian citizenship, two years before his passing.⁷⁸¹ Born in Cairo in 1942 to an Egyptian mother and a Pakistani father,⁷⁸² Khan did not acquire citizenship at birth, because Egyptian law withheld it from the children of Egyptian women married to non-Egyptians. The right to citizenship by birth to an Egyptian mother became law in 2004, yet Khan did not acquire his until a decade after promulgation of the law noted. Kahn had mostly lived in Egypt since the 1960s and by 2104, year of his naturalization, had directed all but one of his career-long twenty-nine works in Egypt, a few of which are widely considered among the best to ever come out of its cinema.⁷⁸³

Khan was South Asian by ancestry and British by education, acculturation, and nationality, but was invariably referred to as an Egyptian filmmaker throughout his career, within Egypt and without. More importantly, Khan identified strongly, resolutely with his Egyptianess.

⁷⁸⁰ Dagher’s most esteemed production *Saladin the Victorious* (al-Nasir Salah al-Din) was upon its release in 1963 the most expensive Egyptian film ever produced, too large a budget for her Lotus Films to bear alone, and as such coproduced by the state-run General Cinema Corporation. The film that reportedly bankrupt was such an audacious, egalitarian feat as to have been described by `Atif al-Nimr as a “nationalist venture.” “Assia and Naima Akif: Two Pioneers with a Lingering Presence,” *Jaridat al-funun* [Arts Paper] 3, no. 24 (2003): 7.

⁷⁸¹ Sam Roberts, “Mohamed Khan, Egyptian Filmmaker, Dies at 73,” *New York Times* July 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/27/movies/mohamed-khan-egyptian-filmmaker-dies-at-73.html>.

⁷⁸² Curiously, year of Mohamed Khan’s birth, his father could not have been Pakistani, as reported, by citizenship, since Pakistan did not achieve independence from India until 1947.

⁷⁸³ See Sam Roberts, “Mohamed Khan, Egyptian Filmmaker, Dies at 73.” Also see “Mohamed Khan,” *el-cinema*, <https://elcinema.com/en/person/1040732/>.

Upon acquiring Egyptian citizenship in 2014, delivered to his home by the presidential media adviser, according to a presidential decree, Khan remarked, “The most difficult moment I face is presenting the British passport in Cairo airport. Then the airport employee asks me about my citizenship, so that I do not know what to say and I continue to internally denounce this question, for I am Egyptian, born and raised in the streets of Cairo and its traditional (sha`bi) neighborhoods.”⁷⁸⁴ Indeed, contrary to assumptions of Egyptians who hold western passports and study in western institutions, Khan was born in the working-class district of al-Sakakini.⁷⁸⁵ I recall in watching his first major work *The Street Player* (al-Harrif, 1983) how grittily Cairo’s streets and grimly its alleyways had been depicted in the location production. Khan had refashioned Cairo’s cinematic look, vividly and intimately in a work of thoroughgoing Egyptianess. He would be identified as an exponent of the new realism movement that came to prominence after the death of Anwar Sadat in 1981.⁷⁸⁶

Despite ongoing and incremental endorsement of his Egyptianess over the years, Khan thought his Egyptianess incomplete without state recognition of it by way of citizenship. He sought it from four successive state regimes, beginning with Mubarak’s, because he reportedly wanted universal recognition of his Egyptianess, to be treated as an Egyptian at all times, and as such to have his accomplishments attributed to Egypt. The last of these desires gave me pause. Khan’s films were bound to Egypt in text, financing, location, language, cast, and crew. They

⁷⁸⁴ `Atif `Abd al-Hamid, “al-Mukhrij Muhammad Khan muwatin misri ba`d sanawat min al-israr” (Director Mohamed Khan: An Egyptian Citizen after Years of Persistence), BBC Arabic, Mar23, 2014. https://www.bbc.com/arabic/artandculture/2014/03/140323_mohamed_khan_granted_egyptian_nationality.shtm.

⁷⁸⁵ `Atif `Abd al-Hamid, “Director Mohamed Khan: An Egyptian Citizen after Years of Persistence.” Also see “Egypt grants citizenship to acclaimed filmmaker Mohamed Khan,” *Ahram Online*, Mar 20, 2014, <http://english.ahram.org/NewsContent/5/32/97126/UI/Front/AboutUs.aspx>.

⁷⁸⁶ See Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 142-143.

had traveled the world as Egyptian; only that he had not. Khan for most of his life had not been legally Egyptian. Consequently, his films were made by a Briton, legally speaking.

Social law is governmental, and our world's international laws are neither as binding nor as enforceable as founders of the United Nations, the European Union, or the Gulf Cooperation Council may have wished. It may disappoint but ought not surprise that Khan wished to have his nationalism credentialed by the state. Sovereignty seeking nations have sacrificed to earn independent statehood. Khan had inarguably earned the right to Egyptian citizenship including legally at least a decade before the Egyptian government deigned to bestow it upon him, honorifically, as if not by right. Khan's naturalization is an account I have presented to illustrate how a cinema that has always been global has also continually and variedly interacted with the decades-long solidified yoke that is the nation-state, a significant modern pact unfulfilled, deserving of continual critical assessment, including as disclosed by such a concept as national cinema.

Filmography

Egypt's Domestic Silent Films

Film Title in English	Film Title in Arabic	Year	Film Type	Production Company
1 The Most Beautiful Scenes in Alexandria Opposite al-Sharif Street	أجمل مناظر بالإسكندرية نظير شارع شريف	1906	views/actuality	
2 The Khedival Exchange	البورصة الخديوية	1906	views/actuality	
3 al-Mahmoudiya Canal	ترعة المحمودية	1906	views/actuality	
4 Raml Tramway, Going and Coming	ذهاب وإياب قطار ترمواي الرمل	1906	views/actuality	
5 Visit by His High Excellency to the Scientific Embassy in Sidi Abul-Abbas Mosque	زيارة الجناب العالي للمعهد العلمي في مسجد سيدي أبي العباس	1907		Azizi and Dorès Shop
6 Sporting Holidays in Frere School	الاعياد الرياضية في مدرسة الفريير	1907		Azizi and Dorès Shop
7 Nile Palace Playground in al-Jazeera	ملعب قصر النيل بالجزيرة	1909		
8 Celebration of the funeral for the Late Mustafa Pasha Kamel	الاحتفال بجنائزة المغفور له مصطفى باشا كامل	1909		
9 The Return of His Excellency the Khedive from Mecca	رجوع جناب الخديوي من مكة المكرمة	1910		
10 The Race near House Port	السباق بقرب ميناء هاوس	1911		
11 Worshipers Exiting the Grand Roman Catholic Cathedral in Fajalah	خروج المصلين من الكنيسة الكاثوليكية الكبرى للروم الكاثوليك بالفجالة	1911		

12	Travel of the Honorable Mahram from Egypt	سفر المحمل الشريف من مصر	1912	documentary	
13	The Khedive Receiving of the Crown Prince of Austria in Cairo	إستقبال الخديوي لولي عهد النمسا بالقاهرة	1912	documentary	
14	In the Streets of Alexandria	في شوارع الإسكندرية	1912	newsreel	
15	Flower War in al-Jazeera	حرب الزهور في الجزيرة	1913	documentary	
16	The Solar Engine in Maadi	المحرك الشمسي بالمعادي	1913	documentary	Aziz and Dorès Shop
17	Reception for 'Aziz (Bey) al-Misri	حفلة إستقبال عزيز بك المصري	1914	documentary	Aziz and Dorès Shop
18	Visit to the Animal Hospital Pens in Muharram Bey	زيارة لحظائر مستشفى الرفق بالحيوان في محرم بك	1915	documentary	Aziz and Dorès Shop
19	Film of `Abd al-Rahman Salhin (owner of Egyptian Kloub cinema and hotel)		1915	documentary	
20	Arrival of the Sultan in Alexandria	وصول السلطان إلى الإسكندرية	1915	documentary	
21	The Visit of the Khedive Ismail to al-Mursi Abu al-Abbas Mosque in Alexandria		1915	newsreel	
22	The Bedawin's Honor	شرف البدوي	1917/18 (?)	narrative short	The Egyptian Italian Cinema Company
23	The Deadly Flowers	الزهور القاتلة	1917/18(?)	narrative short	The Egyptian Italian Cinema Company
24	Toward the Abyss	نحو الهاوية	1917/18(?)	narrative short	The Egyptian Italian Cinema Company
25	Madame Loretta	مدام لوريتا	1919	comedy	

26	The American Aunt	الخالة الأمريكية	1920	comedy
27	Race Days in Sporting Club in Alexandria (May 8 race)	ايام السباق في نادي سبورتنج بالإسكندرية (سباق ٨ مايو)	1920	newsreel
28	Review of Egyptian Scouts	إستعراض الكشافة المصرية	1920	newsreel
29	Funeral of Farid Bey in Cairo	جنازة فريد بك في القاهرة	1920	newsreel
30	Race Days in Sporting Club in Alexandria (June 26 race)	ايام السباق في نادي سبورتنج بالإسكندرية (سباق ٢٦ يونيو)	1920	newsreel
31	Visit by Sultan Ahmed Fouad to Damanhur	زيارة السلطان أحمد فؤاد لدمنهور	1920	newsreel
32	The Nation celebrates its new Prime Minister Adli Yakan Pasha in Cairo	الأمة تحتفل برئيس وزرائها الجديد عدلي باشا يكن في القاهرة	1921	newsreel
33	Saad Zaghloul Pasha's Return from Abroad	عودة سعد باشا زغلول من الخارج	1921	newsreel
34	Saad Zaghloul Pasha's Return	عودة سعد باشا زغلول	1921	newsreel
35	Sugarcane	قصب السكر	1921	newsreel
36	Azizi Bey, Anarchist	عزيز بك الفوضوي	1921	comedy
37	Alexandria	الإسكندرية	1922	non-narrative short
38	On the Banks of the Nile	على ضفاف النيل	1922	non-narrative short
39	The Great City in Egypt	المدينة العظيمة في مصر	1922	non-narrative short
40	From Cairo to the Pyramids	من القاهرة إلى الأهرام	1922	non-narrative short
41	Cladding Procession and the Mahmal's Travel	موكب الكسوة وسفر المحمل	1922	non-narrative short
42	King Fouad's Visit to the Azhar Mosque	زيارة الملك فؤاد للجامع الأزهر	1922	non-narrative short

43	Suliman's Ring	خاتم سليمان	1922	comedy
44	In the Land of Tutankhamun	في بلاد توت عنخ آمون	1923	narrative drama/ documentary
45	His Majesty King Fouad I Visit Schools in Cairo	جلالة الملك فؤاد الأول يزور مدارس القاهرة	1923	newsreel
46	His Majesty the King in the Race Party	جلالة الملك في حفلة السباق	1923	newsreel
47	Treasures of Luxor	كنوز الأقصر	1923	newsreel
48	Major annual sports competition in the Lycee Francais in Alexandria	المسابقة الرياضية السنوية الكبرى في الليسيه فرانسيه بالإسكندرية	1923	newsreel
49	Flower Festival and Queen of the Fest	عيد الزهور وملكة العيد	1923	newsreel
50	His Majesty King Fouad I in the Amr Mosque	جلالة الملك فؤاد الأول في جامع عمرو	1923	newsreel
51	The Arrival of the Former Sultan of Turkey to Alexandria	وصول سلطان تركيا السابق إلى الإسكندرية	1923	newsreel
52	The Mahmal Procession and Noble Cladding	موكب المحمل والكسوة الشريفة	1923	newsreel
53	The official reception in the Ras el-Tin Palace	الإستقبال الرسمي في قصر رأس التين	1923	newsreel
54	The official reception in Saraya Abdeen	الاستقبال الرسمي في سراي عابدين	1923	newsreel
55	The Mahmal's Travel	سفر المحمل	1923	newsreel
56	Return of the Mahmal not Having Performed the Hajj	رجوع المحمل بدون تأدية الحج	1923	newsreel
57	Visit by Lord Hadley and his colleagues to Cairo	زيارة اللورد هدلي وزملائه للقاهرة	1923	newsreel
58	Crossing the Gulf	قطع الخليج	1923	newsreel

59	Scene of the Festival's Missiles	منظر صواريخ المهرجان	1923	newsreel	
60	The arrival of Saad Zaghloul Pasha to Alexandria	وصول سعد زغلول باشا إلى الإسكندرية	1923	newsreel	
61	The Forced Marriage of Azizi Bey	الزواج الاضطراري لعزیز بك	1923	comedy	
62	Danger of Spitting	خطر البصق	1923	educational	
63	Barsoum Looks for a Job	برسوم يبحث عن وظيفة	1923	comedy	
64	The Egyptian Nation Welcomes Receiving President Saad Zaghloul Pasha	ترحيب الأمة المصرية باستقبال الرئيس سعد زغلول باشا	1923	newsreel	
65	The Opening of Tutankhamun's Tomb	إفتتاح مقبرة توت عنخ آمون	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
66	The Opening of the Egyptian Parliament	إفتتاح البرلمان المصري	1924	newsreel	Cinema Clipper
67	The Opening of the Egyptian Parliament	إفتتاح البرلمان المصري	1924	newsreel	Cinema American Cosmographe, Alexandria
68	King Fouad's Birthday	عيد ميلاد الملك فؤاد	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
69	Sporting Games in the Ahali Club	الألعاب الرياضية في النادي الأهلي	1924	newsreel	
70	The Egyptian Parliament, a Document from within and Abroad	البرلمان المصري وثيقة من الداخل والخارج	1924	newsreel	
71	Horse Breeding in Egypt	تربية الخيول بمصر	1924	newsreel	
72	The King and Saad Zaghloul in the Last	الملك وسعد زغلول في صلاة الجمعة الأخيرة من رمضان	1924	newsreel	

Friday Prayer of
Ramadan

73 His Majesty the King in Amr Mosque	صاحب الجلالة الملك في جامع عمرو	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
74 King Fouad's Journey from Cairo to Alexandria	رحلة الملك فؤاد من القاهرة إلى الإسكندرية	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
75 Queen of Belgium's Stay in Cairo	إقامة ملكة بلجيكا في القاهرة	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
76 Prince Leopold Climbs the Pyramid of Cheops	الأمير ليوبولد يتسلق هرم خوفو	1924	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
77 A Sports Festival in the Police School in Cairo in the Presence of Saad Zaghloul Pasha	عيد رياضي في مدرسة البوليس بالقاهرة بحضور سعد زغلول باشا	1924	newsreel	
78 Saad Zaghloul Pasha's Visit to the Camps of Egyptian Scouts	زيارة سعد زغلول باشا لمعسكرات الكشافة المصرية	1924	newsreel	
79 Industry in the Egyptian Region	الصناعة في القطر المصري	1924	newsreel	
80 Celebration of the Travel of the Noble Mahmal	الاحتفال بسفر المحمل الشريف	1924	newsreel	
81 The Assault on Saad Zaghloul Pasha 1924	حادثة الاعتداء على سعد زغلول باشا ١٩٢٤	1924	newsreel	
82 The Opening of Tutankhamun's Tomb	إفتتاح مقبرة توت عنخ آمون	1924	newsreel	
83 Amon newsreel: Saad Zaghloul Looks out of Beit el-Umma onto Those Congratulating His Formed Ministerial Cabinet	جريدة آمون: سعد زغلول يطل من بيت الأمة على المهنيين بتأليف وزارته	1924	newsreel	

84 Amon Newspaper: Sports Celebration Set up by the Royal Guard Band on the Occasion of His Majesty the King's Holiday in Akeclaq Abdeen	جريدة آمون: حفلة الألعاب الرياضية التي أقامتها فرقة الحرس الملكي بمناسبة عيد جلاله الملك داخل قشلاق عابدين	1924	newsreel	
85 Amon Newspaper [multiple parts--check synopsis]	جريدة آمون	1924	newsreel	
86 The Office Clerk	الباشكاتب	1924	comedy	
87 The Cinema in Egypt	السينما في مصر	1924	comedy	
88 Football Celebration	حفلة كرة القدم	1925	newsreel	The Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
89 Visit by members of the Geographical Conference to Aque duct Charities	زيارة أعضاء المؤتمر الجغرافي للقناطر الخيرية	1925	newsreel	
90 Placing the Foundation stone for Fouad I's Hospital	وضع حجر الأساس لمستشفى فؤاد الأول	1925	newsreel	Dorès Stores
91 The Oil Industry in Egypt	صناعة البترول في مصر	1925	nonfiction short	
92 Sport Facilities of Police Schools in Abbasiyah	الدور الرياضية لمدارس البوليس بالعباسية	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
93 Gymnastics Competition between Princely Primary Schools in Cairo	مسابقة الجمباز بين المدارس الابتدائية الأميرية بالقاهرة	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
94 Large Arab Fantasia Organized by the Humane Society	فانتازيا عربية كبيرة تنظمها جمعية الرفق بالحيوان	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo

95 The Mahmal Procession	موكب المحمل	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
96 Al-Sharq Paper (1st ed.)	جريدة الشرق (العدد الأول)	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
97 Al-Sharq Paper (2nd ed.)	جريدة الشرق (العدد الثاني)	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
98 Al-Sharq Paper (3rd ed.)	جريدة الشرق (العدد الثالث)	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
99 Al-Sharq Paper (4th ed.)	جريدة الشرق (العدد الرابع)	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
100 Al-Sharq Paper (5th ed.)	جريدة الشرق (العدد الخامس)	1925	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo
101 The Agricultural Exhibition	المعرض الزراعي	1926	newsreel	Egyptian Company for Acting and Cinema
102 Placing the Foundation Stone of the College of St. Mark in Shatbi	وضع حجر الأساس لكلية سان مارك بالشاطبي	1926	newsreel	
103 Arrival of Patriarch Mlatios II to Alexandria	وصول البطريرك ملتايوس الثاني إلى الإسكندرية	1926	newsreel	Dorès Stores
104 Large Sports Festival in Freres of St. Catherine's College in Alexandria	عيد رياضي كبير في كلية الفريير سانت كاترين بالإسكندرية	1926	newsreel	
105 Layla	ليلي	1927	Feature Bedouin Drama	Isis Films
106 The Athlete Abd al-Mun'im Mukhtar Effendi	الرياضي عبد المنعم أفندي مختار	1927	newsreel	Prosperi Oriental Film, Cairo

107	Sporting Games in Egyptian Schools	الألعاب الرياضية بالمدارس المصرية	1927	non-narrative short	Misr Film
108	International Maritime Conference Part I	مؤتمر الملاحة الدولي الجزء الأول	1927	non-narrative short	Misr Film
109	International Maritime Conference Part II	مؤتمر الملاحة الدولي الجزء الثاني	1927	non-narrative short	Misr Film
110	Zoos	حدائق الحيوان	1927	non-narrative short	Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
111	Saad Zaghloul Pasha's Funeral	جنازة سعد زغلول باشا	1927	non-narrative short	
112	The Arrival of King Fuad I to the City of Alexandria	وصول الملك فؤاد الأول إلى مدينة الإسكندرية	1927	non-narrative short	
113	His Majesty King Fouad's Parade in Cairo and Alexandria	موكب جلالة الملك فؤاد في القاهرة والإسكندرية	1927	non-narrative short	
114	Kiss in the Desert	قبلة في الصحراء	1928	Feature Bedouin drama	Condor Film
115	Suad the Roma	سعاد العجرية	1928	narrative feature	The Egyptian Art Film (Italian Amadeo Puccini and Frenchman Jacques Schutz co.)
116	The Sea Laughs	البحر بيضحك	1928	feature comedy	
117	Tragedy atop the Pyramid	فاجعة فوق الهرم	1928	feature drama	Condor Film (Lama Bros. co) & Kawkab Misr (Fatimah Rushdi's co)
118	Under the Egyptian Sky	تحت سماء مصر	1928		

119	The Victim	الضحية	1928		Sawsan Film
120	The Sabot Maker	صانع القباقيب	1928	feature comedy	
121	Daughter of the Nile	بنت النيل	1929	narrative feature	Isis Film
122	Desert Camelia	غادة الصحراء	1929	narrative feature	Arab Film Co.
123	The Tragedy of Life	مأساة الحياة	1929	narrative feature	Oriental
124	Goha	جحا	1929	narrative feature	The Egyptian Art Film
125	Silk Weaving in Damietta	نسيج الحرير في دمياط	1929	documentary short	Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
126	Sports in Primary Schools	ألعاب رياضية في المدارس الأولية	1929	documentary short	Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
127	The Island Party	حفلة الجزيرة	1929	documentary short	Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
128	Fishing in the Red Sea	صيد الأسماك في البحر الأحمر	1929	documentary short	Misr Company for Acting and Cinema
129	Tourism to the Delta	سياحة للدلتا	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
130	The Pyramids	الأهرامات	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
131	Sphinx	أبو الهول	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
132	Cairo City	مدينة القاهرة	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
133	Cairo	القاهرة	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
134	Luxor	الأقصر	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
135	Taibah	طيبة	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education

136 Dandarah and Aswan	دندرة وأسوان	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
137 Vilah Island	جزيرة فيلا	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
138 Luxor and Karnak	الأقصر والكرنك	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
139 Edfu	إدفو	1929	documentary short	The Ministry of Education
140 Royal Trip to Siwa and the Desert	الرحلة الملكية إلى سيوة والصحراء	1929		
141 Battle of the Flowers on the Island	معركة الزهور في الجزيرة	1929		
142 Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks's Visit to Cairo and Alexandria	زيارة ماري بكفورد ودوجلاس فيربانكس إلى الإسكندرية والقاهرة	1929		
143 The Opening of the Alexandria Stadium	إفتتاح استاد الإسكندرية	1929		
144 The Athlete Ab al-Halim Mahmoud & Sons	الرياضي عبد الحليم محمود وأولاده	1929	comedy	
145 Narcotics	المخدرات	1929		Hakimdariyat al-Qahirah
146 Zaynab	زينب	1930	feature drama	Ramsis Film
147 Midnight Felony	جناية نصف الليل	1930	sporting comedy	Nile Film Co.
148 Under the Moonlight	تحت ضوء القمر	1930	narrative feature	Nahdat Masr Film
149 The Abyss (Cocaine)	الهاوية (الكوكايين)	1930	feature drama	
150 The Miracle of Love	معجزة الحب	1930	narrative feature	Condor Film
151 Opening Khalil Agha School in Cairo	إفتتاح مدرسة خليل آغا بالقاهرة	1930	newsreel	

152	Celebration by the Wafd delegation in Alexandria of the Reception and Farewell of the Official Delegation of the Official Commission for Negotiations, Headed by His Excellency al-Nahas Pasha	إحتفال لجنة الوفد بالإسكندرية باستقبال وتوديع الوفد الرسمي للمفاوضة برئاسة دولة النحاس باشا	1930		
153	His Excellency Kishkish Bey	صاحب السعادة كشكش بك	1931		Najib al-Reihani Films
154	The Qualm	وخز الضمير	1931	narrative feature	Lotus Film
155	The Great Rejoicing in the Celebration of King Fouad's Ascent to the Egyptian Throne	الإبتهاج العظيم بعيد جلوس الملك فؤاد على عرش مصر	1931	newsreel	
156	The Victims	الضحايا	1932	narrative feature	

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