Narrative Transformation from Text to Screen

A Study of the Adaptation of the Novel in Arabic Cinema

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To my father; for his enduring support.

To my mother.

To my stepmother; for doing her best.

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own work.

13/11/2009.

Jaffar Mahajar Date

Abstract

The Arabic novel has been a valuable source for a large proportion of feature films in the cinemas of the Arabic speaking world. In fact, the rise of cinema in the Arab world in the last one hundred years has been parallel to the rise and development of the novel in Arabic culture. From its inception, Arabic cinema resorted to making films of highly appreciated literary texts, to provide films with respectability and relevance. This helped to root cinema in the culture of this region. Early narrative films evolved in parallel to the historical moment at which the Arabic novel was beginning to acquire its autonomy from other narrative forms.

The thesis focuses on five works of literature from across the Arab world and studies the process of their adaptation to the cinema, in order to evaluate the extent of success or failure that the filmmakers encounter in the interaction between the two narrative media. Due to the leading and pioneering position of Egyptian cinema in the context of the Arab world and the wider Middle East and Asia, two Egyptian film adaptations have been selected for analysis, and the remaining three case studies were selected from Syria, Iraq and Algeria, in a manner that provides the study with a comparative perspective, covers different cinema genres, and deals with varied approaches to adaptation.

The study concludes with a discussion of differences and similarities between these adaptations and endeavours to draw a general thesis regarding the interplay between text and context on the one hand and theme and medium on the other.

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The late Iraqi novelist Fu'ād al-Takarlī most generously invested a part of the precious little time he had on a visit to Iraq in 2002 to source a VHS copy of the film adaptation of *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār*. I thank him and wish his family solace.

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Introduction

Narration and Techniques of its Transformation

Since the publication of his seminal book *Novels into Film*,[1] over half a century ago, George Bluestone's thesis that where the novel described and gave space for thought, film showed, has gone through a series of tests and challenges. The challenges and queries are in many instances derived from theses and debates that pre-date the publication of his work and have disparate theoretical and technical backgrounds; Frank McConnell made a great attempt at condensing into a few sentences the difference between writing and film:

> WRITING, beginning with a technology at once highly associative and highly personal, strives toward the fulfilment of its own projected reality in an ideally objective, depersonalized world, while
> FILM, beginning with a technology at once highly objective and highly depersonalized, strives toward the fulfilment of its own projected reality in an ideally associative, personal world.[2]

He goes on to give a summary of the foundations of the debate surrounding the difference between the two narrative media of the novel and film respectively by pointing to the starting point of a literary narrative as being the 'perception of the individual, the suffering, passionate, isolated consciousness, in reaction against the outer universes of both society and unthinking, inhuman physical reality.'[3] In other words, written narrative is seen as inherently perceptual where 'we begin with the consciousness of the hero and have to construct out of that

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[1] George Bluestone, *Novels into Film* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957 - reprinted in 2003)
[2] Frank D. McConnell, *Storytelling and Mythmaking: images from film and literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 5
[3] *Ibid.*

consciousness the social and physical world the hero inhabits.'[4] The argument is echoed by the late Iraqi novelist Fu'ād al-Takarlī who spoke of the disparity in the portfolio of tools available to the filmmaker in comparison with the novelist - narrative writer - who only has his 'use of language and the imagination and memory of the reader.'[5]

In order to explore the different, as well as overlapping, sets of tools available to the novelist and the filmmaker, respectively, in addition to looking at influencing factors in the process of adaptation that are beyond the strict remit of filmmaking and fiction-writing per se, this introduction will be divided into two sections: firstly, for investigating those elements that are intrinsic to the two media; and secondly, extrinsic dynamics influencing the adaptation process.

Intrinsic factors

Bluestone provides the classic and often reiterated position towards literary adaptations:

> Where the novel discourses, the film must picture. [...] Perceptual knowledge is not necessarily different in strength; it is necessarily different in kind. The rendition of mental states – memory, dream, imagination - cannot be adequately represented by film as by language. If the film has difficulty presenting streams of consciousness, it has even more difficulty presenting states of mind which are defined precisely by the absence in them of the visible world.

Adding, 'the film, by arranging external signs of our visual perception, or by presenting us with dialogue, can lead us to infer thought. But it cannot show us thought directly.'[6] Where Bluestone emphasises the difference in the act of consuming a book and the process of viewing a film, Brian McFarlane points to the process of interacting with the communal memory of a work arrived at previously through a conceptual method - reading - and replacing it with a new memory that is arrived at perceptually - by watching and listening, and, at

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[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Fu'ād al-Takarlī, *Azzaman* Newspaper, March 12th, 2008. Available online at: http://www.azzaman.com/index.asp?fname=20080303-12698.htm&storytitle=%DA%E4%20%C7%E1%E3%DA%C7%ED%D4%C9%20%E6%20%C7%E1%E3%CE%ED%E1%C9. My translation.

[6] Bluestone, *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48, emphasis in original.

times, reading [road and street signs, newspaper headlines etc.].[7] Further, the act of reading a novel involves the imagination of the reader, and utilizes a verbal sign system. Watching a film, argues McFarlane, relies on the simultaneous use of visual, aural, and - as stated above - verbal signifiers. The act of reading is characterized by its 'low iconicity and high symbolic function', and works conceptually. The act of watching a film, on the other hand, deals with a cinematic language that is iconic and appreciated 'perceptually'.[8]

This point is linked to the written nature of the narrative and its dependence on the ability of the reader to attach images and meanings to the written form of communication where, as underlined by the work of the practice of semiotics, words and names do not necessarily correspond to their images. In alphabet-based written form of languages, the word 'horse', for example, does not correspond in its shape and appearance on the page to the image of the animal. Through cultural and social codes accumulated over time, the reader constructs this universe through the written text. In film, on the other hand, the situation, as McConnell states, is, 'essentially and significantly, reversed,' for film can 'show us only objects, only things, only, indeed, people as things.' He finally adds, 'our activity in watching a filmed narrative is to infer, to construct the selfhood of the hero who might inhabit the objective world film so overwhelmingly gives us.'[9]

In comparing the novel to film, and the written form of narrative to the screen, a point is often made of the absence of a choice of tenses in film narrative. Where a novelist can render a scene in the past to the present by simply deploying the past perfect, the argument goes, a filmmaker is left with a situation where the image on the screen is forever in the present tense. The argument is derived from the simple fact that when looking at an image, unlike the written word, there is no indication as to the time-frame and tense of this image, although

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[7] Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film: an introduction to the theory of adaptation* (New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 26
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 27
[9] *Ibid.*, emphasis in original.

there obviously are indications of the epoch or historical moment in which it was taken. Bluestone categorises the passage of time in the novel as determined through the act of reading to three states: chronological duration of the reading; chronological duration of the narrator's time; and chronological span of the narrative events. In film, on the other hand, Bluestone contends, 'Since the camera is always the narrator, we need concern ourselves only with the chronological duration of the viewing and the time-span of the narrative events.'[10] The latter assertion is preceded by a crucial medium-specific point: 'The novel has three tenses [past, present, future]; the film has only one [the present tense]. From this follows almost everything else one can say about time in both media.'[11] As Sarah Cardwell shows in her study of the issue, the well-established and regularly repeated Bluestone assertion appears to disregard the difference between an 'isolated image, extracted from its narrative, and divorced from any explanatory voice-over, in comparison with the word - the verb - which has been isolated from its text in the same way.'[12] Cardwell goes on to make a spirited argument for describing images not as being in the present but as 'tenseless'.[13]

The nature of the passage of time also throws into relief the perceptual and conceptual aspects of the two media; what can be described by the author in the novel, and yet retain a certain lack of specificity, needs to be presented and shown offering choices made by the filmmaker. This in turn affects the passage of time in the respective media. For example, when the author decides to describe the clothes of a character, or a panoramic view as a backdrop for a given scene, he/she is effectively halting the story time, while the discourse time is being consumed with this description. In film, on the other hand, as Seymour Chatman confirms, 'we can never be sure, for all its close-ups, camera-prowls, synthetic editing, and so forth, that the cinema intends a time-arrested

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[10] Bluestone, *Ibid.*, p. 49

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 48

[12] Sarah Cardwell, "About Time: Theorizing Adaptation, Temporality, and Tense," *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2003, p. 86

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 87

description rather than an ongoing narration.' The only time, according to Chatman, that the discourse time in film stops is when the freeze frame is used.[14]

Narrator

In addition to the question of time, the narrator is one of the more salient characteristics of the novel that more often than not go through a transformation in the journey from page to screen. Where the novel can provide us with an all-knowing omnipresent narrator without needing to explain his/her identity, film needs to make a conscious decision as to reveal, off or on-screen, a narrator. In rhetorically charged narratives, such as crowd-rousing British productions during the Second World War, or indeed Egyptian films made directly after the Free Officers toppled the monarchy in 1952, the often politically charged exposition voiced by the anonymous narrator serves to underline further the rhetorical nature of the film. The fact that the audience is unaware of the identity of the narrator arguably serves to throw into relief the façade and the structure of the film narrative. The anonymity of the narrator, per se, would arguably not produce the same effect in a novel. The reasoning rests in the filmmaker's need to present a narrator with a distinct voice, and thereby vocal characteristics.

Presenting 'a consistent psychological viewpoint derived from one character' is the issue at hand.[15] The voice-over or oral narration can be seen as the film equivalent to the novel's first-person-narrator. As Edward Branigan confirms, the issue often raised in relation to the use of this device is the difficulty of sustaining what is effectively a non-diegetic element continually throughout the film without making the audience aware of the superimposition of this voice over the images which 'necessarily take on an objective life of their own', and so reduce the first-person-narrative effect on the reader of seeing the world

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[14] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 221

[15] Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film*, (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 146

through the eyes of a single protagonist.16 Moreover, when looking at the omniscient narrator in a novel, it becomes somewhat more difficult to find parallels between the page and the screen. In the former, the reader is aware of a distinction between the words and comments of a narrator, and those of a character. The narrator has a higher position in terms of knowledge in comparison with the characters within the world of the text. In film, Colin MacCabe argues,

> The narrative prose achieves its position of dominance because it is in the position of knowledge and this function of knowledge is taken up in the cinema by the narration of events. Through the knowledge we gain from the narrative we can split the discourses of the various characters from their situation and compare what is said in those discourses with what has been revealed to us through narrative.

Adding, 'the camera shows us what happens - it tells the truth against which we must measure the discourse.'[17]

With the help of Norman Friedman's categorisation of types of narrator,[18] this thesis will address a long-standing unease in the film medium with the concept of an extra-diegetical narrator who would replicate the freedom of movement between characters and locales in the diegesis to explore, inform and elucidate for the benefit of the narratee and implied reader. Friedman charts the journey the author takes with his narrator in what he calls the 'the course of surrender', one by one, just like 'the concentric rings of an onion' being peeled, 'the author's channels of information and his possible vantage points are given up. As he denied himself personal commentary in moving from editorial to neutral omniscience, so in moving to the "I" as witness he hands his job completely over to another.'[19] The following stop along the path of the transaction between the author of a work and its consumer, according to Chatman, is the implied reader. This is the reader implied or presupposed by the narrative. He/she is there to provide the ideal understanding of the narrative, as hoped by the author.

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses", *Screen* 15/2 (Summer 1974), p. 10

[18] Norman Friedman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1975)

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 150

The same set of links can be seen in the world of film production and consumption. Films start on paper written by a screenwriter or a studio committee. However, unlike a novel, screenplays are not written or presented with the final consumer of the work, the film audience, in mind. They are almost a short-hand, a description, a technical document for the benefit of film professionals who would turn the work into a film. These screenplays are consequently acted out before a camera with the help of actors, and a team of technicians and extras, under the guidance of a director. However, the implied author will remain our point of departure. This is the construct that the audience will provide in the very act of watching a film. Christian Metz offers a helpful take on the implied author in film:

> The spectator perceives images which have obviously been selected (they could have been other images) and arranged (their order could have been different). In a sense, he is leafing through an album of predetermined pictures, and it is not he who is turning the pages but some "master of ceremonies," some "grand image-maker"...or more precisely a sort of "potential linguistic focus" [...] situated somewhere behind the film, and representing the basis that makes the film possible.[20]

The character's consciousness is part of the tapestry of the fictional world, for this 'is the standard entrée to his point of view, the usual and quickest means by which we come to identify with him. Learning his thoughts insures an intimate connection.' [21] A character's consciousness is related at some level to how he/she perceives the world; his point of view. An overall summary of points of view in narrative is supplied by James Monaco who argues that the difference in point of view in novels and in film is that while in the former we see and hear what the author wants us to see and hear, in films, on the other hand, while still told by an author, we get to see and hear far more than the director necessarily wishes us to. Moreover, he continues, 'whatever the novelist describes is filtered through his language, his prejudices, and his point of view. With films

[20] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, translated by Celia Britton et al (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 21
[21] Chatman, p. 157

we have a certain amount of freedom to choose, to select one detail rather than another.'[22]

Character

Keeping in mind McConnell's point on a character's consciousness forming a major point of contact with the reader, a central issue will be addressed in the following studies as to how to transform into the film medium the tools utilised in the written narrative to convey the thoughts and feelings and state of mind of a given character. Without exception, all the novels dealt with here have characters with internal voices that either are shared with the reader through the filter of the narrator, or are allowed the space to express their views directly to the reader with some help from the narrator. The choices the filmmakers make as to whether to include this internal diegetic voice are interesting in view of the specifically film tools that are at their disposal to externalise that which was stated via the inner diegetic voice in the novel. For, as Bela Balazs has argued, film is endowed with a portfolio of tools and aesthetic choices that can convey the inner thoughts and being of a character. Balazs underpins his argument by referring to the ability of a close-up of a character's face and features to convey what he terms a 'silent soliloquy':

> The film, especially the sound film, can separate the words of a character talking to others from the mute play of features by means of which, in the middle of such a conversation we are made to overhear a mute soliloquy and realize the difference between this soliloquy and the audible conversation.[23]

Therefore, the decision of the filmmaker to include the audible inner voice of a character is as much an attempt to replicate the novel as an intentional choice. Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf in *al-Qāhirah 30* / Cairo '30 (Egypt, 1966) makes an informed choice in bestowing a diegetic internal voice upon the character of Maḥjūb, with an outcome that serves to privilege the character with a solitary channel of communication with the implied audience, while simultaneously isolating the individual within the group. This isolation frees the character to express more

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[22] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History and Theory of Film and Media* (New York: Putnam, 1977), pp. 29-30

[23] Bela Balazs, *Theory of the Film* (*Character and Growth of a New Art*) (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1952), p. 63

socially controversial views, such as his willingness to give all in return for worldly goods and comfort. It also allows the character in the film to share with the audience his thoughts about characters to whom he is respectful in appearance. For example, in the first encounter with an acquaintance from university, who has since become a high ranking official, Maḥjūb's inner diegetic voice serves to both mock this acquaintance and also to help explain the history of their acquaintanceship. This happens while on the surface both men are exchanging greetings at the train station. Therefore, 'Abū Sayf's treatment of this literary tool will be shown to have acquired a new dimension thanks to the sound track that accompanies the image. The fact that audiences are not normally accustomed to the use of the inner voice of the character in mainstream cinema, with some notable exceptions, including, for example, the work of Martin Scorsese and Otto Preminger, it could be argued to have added more poignancy to the deployment of the device in *al-Qāhirah 30*, which will be analysed below.

On the other hand, Yūsuf Shāhīn demonstrates how discarding a character's inner voice does not limit the access of the audience to the thoughts and inner being of the character in question. The pangs of jealousy 'Abd al-Hādī suffers in the film adaptation of *al-'Arḍ* / Egyptian Earth[24] are as bitter and painful as those in the novel, despite the absence of an actual monologue directed solely at the audience. The close-up shots of him looking at the object of his love, Waṣīfah, serve to convey his passion, protectiveness and sense of fear over her from his arch rival Muḥmmad 'Afandī. Through the use of camera movement, shot size, space allotted to a particular character in the frame as well as his/her placement within the frame and within their surroundings, in addition to dialogue, music and other aspects of *mise-en-scène*, the filmmakers excel in characterisation in a manner that at times surpasses the novel's reliance on, among many tools, description, narrator commentary and focalisation. A most

[24] 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, *al-'Arḍ* (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī Lilṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr, 1968); 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, *Egyptian Earth*, translated by Desmond Stewart (London: Saqi Books, 1990)

illuminating example is an expressionist use of light and darkness to differentiate between the forces of good and evil in *al-'Aswār* / The Walls (Dir. Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl, Iraq, 1979), where the corrupt merchant is shown to emerge from a darkened part of the room to deliver a particularly malevolent speech against a character with whom we have been encouraged to empathise through the above tools.

The manner in which action is staged for the camera also will be shown to help with characterisation. The classic visual methods of underlining dominance and subservience will be revealed to have been utilised extensively in the five case studies below. For example, the weakness and desperate state of Maḥjūb, in *al-Qāhirah 30*, as he looks for work is underscored in the way the filmmaker chooses to place him at one side of a particularly wide and large desk, while the high ranking official is sat on the other side signing and initialling paperwork held for his inspection by an assistant. The same strategy is used in Nabīl al-Māliḥ's depiction of an encounter between a land usurper and 'Ibrāhīm in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* / Fragments of Memory (Dir. Nabīl al-Māliḥ, Syria, 1979),[25] the latter is made to stand hovering above the former who is forced to look up to 'Ibrāhīm. The body language also serves to further accentuate the respective positions of the two characters.

Structure:

The formation of a new architecture, autonomous to varying degrees from that of the adapted novel, in the process of creating a screenplay is a crucial stepping stone in the journey of the text to the screen. Being a technical, almost short-hand, plan for the film, screenplays by their very nature are less prone to exposition and more focussed on action. They tend to have in mind a reader who is familiar with the filmmaking process, and are therefore more attuned to dialogue, time and space - the very elements that will be transposed to screen.

25 Ḥannā Mīnāh, *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ādāb, 1990); Ḥannā Mīnāh, *Fragments of Memory*, translated by Olive Kenny and Lorne Kenny (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1993)

This difference in the formatting and the expectations from readers of screenplays, as opposed to novels, is reflected in the manner in which screenwriters and the directors with whom they work have a tendency to read the novel, absorb the chronology of the story, and go about projecting their imagination of the narrative on to the screen with scant attention to the methodology deployed by the novelist in imparting the story to the reader. In other words, the filmmaker is absorbed with the fabula gleaned through the act of reading the sjuzhet of the novel. Coined by Russian Formalists, a fabula refers to the narrative events of the story as they happened in chronological order and realistic duration, whereas a sjuzhet refers to the order and the manner in which these events of the story are arranged and presented in the narrative through the use of the plot with its changing emphasis and narrative duration. The fabula can only be gleaned through interacting with the sjuzhet. In other words, as Chatman states,

> To the Formalists, fable is "the set of events tied together which are communicated to us in the course of the work"... plot is "how the reader becomes aware of what happened...the order of the appearance (of the events) in the work itself..."[26]

This dynamic is most evident in Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's treatment of the Najīb Maḥfūẓ text, *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah / Modern Cairo*,[27] where the order of events, the moment at which the film ends, not to mention the parts of the *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdha* depicted in the adaptation, talk volumes of the filmmaker applying his envisioning of the story of the novel on the film adaptation in the light of a clear awareness of the limitations and advantages of the film medium in narration. Therefore, certain events in the novel do not survive the adaptation, and chronology is added to events that were imparted retrospectively in the novel. Similarly, the progress of the story in Yūsuf Shāhīn's adaptation of *al-'Arḍ* is subjected to his visualization of a narrative that is more focused in terms of plot and story. Consequently, those parts of the narrative of the novel that dealt with the minor events in the grand scheme of the narrative are discarded in

[26] Boris Tomashevsky, *Teorija Literatury* (Poetika) (Leningrad, 1925), quoted in Chatman, p. 20
[27] First published in Arabic in Cairo in 1946.

the adaptation. Conversely, some events that were assigned a subplot status in the novel, such as the visit of a villager to the capital, are emphasised and provided with narrative time and space.

The same approach to sjuzhet and fabula is evident in Nabīl al-Māliḥ's rendition of Ḥannā Mīnāh's *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, where the filmmaker abandons the framing narrative of the novel to focus solely on the enframed story. The result is a focus on a single time plain and a set of events that acquire in the process a chronology that was less crystallised in the novel, due to commentary from the framing level of the narrative on events unfolding in the enframed story. Moreover, the film adaptation also creatively adjusts the chronology of events that survive the adaptation. This includes the point at which the rape of the neighbour takes place; the point at which the narrative ends, and indeed the number of locales to which the family moves before settling at the last village. The changes in chronology serve to insert these events into a coherent dramatic structure so that they become points of culmination for the story, as opposed to being episodes from the past reminisced at different levels of the narrative of the novel.

Bluestone addresses these strategies in negotiating the journey from one medium to another by stating that when a filmmaker – or 'filmist', in Bluestone's terminology- adapts a novel,

> … [H]e does not convert the novel at all. What he adapts is a kind of paraphrase of the novel – the novel viewed as raw material. He looks not to the organic novel, whose language is inseparable from its theme, but to characters and incidents which have somehow detached themselves from language and, like the heroes of folk legends, have achieved a mythic life of their own.[28]

Relating his journey in adapting The English Patient,[29] the late Anthony Minghella talked of how he avoided having the novel to hand when writing the screenplay adaptation. This helped him remember the story unhindered by the

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[28] Bluestone, p. 62

[29] Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient* (London: Bloomsbury, 1992). The film adaptation: *The English Patient* (Dir. Anthony Minghella, UK-USA, 1996), adapted for the screen by Anthony Minghella.

writerly aspects of the novel. In the adaptation process, Minghella would apply the "topography" and architecture of "film" narrative to the story of the novel.[30]

Attempts have been made to provide a schemata dissecting the manner in which this process unfolds, and the type of journey a filmmaker takes in bringing a novel to the screen. between the novel and film. Geoffrey Wagner stands out among those who have provided a succinct set of categories. He lists three types of 'transition of fiction into film': a. transposition; b. commentary; and c. analogy.[31] In transposition, the novel is 'directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference,' states Wagner.[32] Arguably, some of the attempts to put Shakespeare on the screen fall into this category. In the commentary type of transition, an 'original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect.'[33] The wide scope for this category throws it wide open for the number and types of examples that can be given. Wagner gives the example of Visconti's Death in Venice, which provides some sort of a creative restoration of the adapted work. From the cinema of the Arab world, Qāsim Ḥawal's adaptation of Ghassān Kanafānī's *'Ā'id 'Ilā Ḥayfā* / A Return to Haifa[34] would fall into this category, with the filmmaker paying a heavy price for his attempt to transpose all the novel to the screen; his characters appear self-absorbed, lacking in human warmth towards those closest to them by virtue of the long-winded political monologues they deliver within a social or family setting, appearing disinterested in the opinion of those present. Where, in the novel, these long speeches were delivered as a stream of consciousness, the filmmaker chooses to impart them as a monologue by the main character, with the consequent negative effect on dramatic impetus and audience affinity with the character. The commentary type of transition varies

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[30] Interviewed on Open Book, Radio 4, BBC, broadcast on 21st of December 2003.
[31] Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Ruthford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975),
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 223
[34] Ghassān Kanafānī, *'Ā'id 'ilā Ḥayfā* / A Return to Ḥayfā, first published in 1969, republished as part of the complete works of Kanafānī: Ghassān Kanafānī, *al-'Āthār al-Kāmilah* /The Complete Legacy (Bayrūt: M'assasat al-'Abḥāth al-'Arabiyyah 1986 / Beirut: The Arab Research Foundation 1986). Film adaptation directed by Kāsim Ḥawal, *'Ā'id 'ilā Ḥayfā* / A Return to Haifa (Syria, 1982)

depending on the director, continues Wagner. Finally, analogy would be in films 'that shift a fiction forward into the present, and make a duplicate story.' Obviously, analogy can apply to transitions that deal with aspects beyond the sole choice of time-frame. However, Wagner gives the example of Wolf Mankowitz's 'loose use of Gogol's *The Overcoat* to characterise British Jewry.'[35] Wagner applies the above categories to the James Bond genre of films: '(a) transposition - *Dr. No, Goldfinger, On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; (b) commentary - *From Russia with Love, Thunderball*; (c) analogy - *You Only Live Twice, Diamonds Are Forever.*'[36]

The one issue that the above schemata of adaptation types implicitly ignore is a point of debate ubiquitous in high and low brow discussions alike of film adaptations the world over; namely, what Dudley Andrew in his seminal essay, "Adaptation", called 'the most frequent and most tiresome discussion of adaptation', the 'fidelity and transformation' in the journey from text to screen.[37] After arguing vehemently for anchoring narrative codes at the 'level of implication or connotation [and hence] they are potentially comparable in a novel and in a film,' Andrew echoes the above Proppian and formalist separation between fabula and sjuzhet when he argues that the 'story can be the same if the narrative units (characters, events, motivations, consequences, context, viewpoint, imagery and so on) are produced equally in two works.'[38] He then goes on to conclude that 'the analysis of adaptation, then, must point to the achievement of equivalent narrative units in the absolutely different semiotic system available to both and derivable from both.'[39] In essence, Andrew argues for judging the adaptation by criteria of storytelling and aesthetic shared between the two media, but also unique to each. He ends his essay with the plea: 'Let us use it [the study of adaptations] not to fight battles

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 226
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 231
[37] Dudley Andrew, "Adaptation", in Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), reprinted in James Naremore (Ed.), Film Adaptation, (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), pp. 28-37
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 35
[39] *Ibid.*

over the essence of the media or the inviolability of individual artworks. Let us use it as we use all cultural practices, to understand the world from which it comes and the one towards which it points.'[40]

Mise-en-scène

Without exception, all the filmmakers dealt with here have shown a tendency to create a physical geography through which the narrative unfolds. The choice in the size - expanse - and location of the setting is as much to do with the adaptation's technical film requirements, such as the limitations imposed by budget, availability of locations and so forth, as with the context of the film adaptation. The role of the actual physical setting in conveying the story cinematically has been shown to be crucial. The size of the space within which the characters move, the relationship of one space to another within the diegesis, and also the manner in which the filmmaker chooses to film the space, all have a great bearing on adapted film texts. For example, in order to convey a sense of the emptiness and loneliness of the life of the character of Nafisah in *Rīḥ al-Junūb* / Wind From the South (Algeria, 1975), Muḥammad Riyāḍ chooses as a location for the house in which she resides an isolated building in the village. The isolation of the house is further accentuated by its location in the shadow of a mountain. The choice in location and the manner of its filming serve to externalise the sense of mental and emotional repression which Nafisah feels and experiences.

The use of space is also crucial in adding a national angle to a community meeting in Yūsuf Shāhīn's choice of the room in which the men of the village of *al-'Arḍ* gather to debate whether and how to oppose the threat of the new road being built by the central government. The windows of the room overlooking the village, with the men passionately airing viscerally opposing views, act as reminders of that which is in danger, the village, and the nation, as seen through those windows. The nation stretched in the horizon is also all too present in the

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 37

compositional choices Nabīl al-Māliḥ makes in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* where the man-of-the-land connotations of the character of the uncle are externalised at the moment of his introduction in the narrative through the simple act of ploughing the land at the edge of a picaresque valley that stretches beyond the snow capped mountains forming the deep edge of the frame. At some level, the hardship and injustice endured by the villagers in *al-'Arḍ* and the family in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* become part of a national narrative partly through the filmmaker imposed *mise-en-scène*.

Extrinsic factors

The two worlds in the area of our interest, the Arabic speaking Middle East and North Africa, have witnessed a progressive development in film, albeit uneven in its rapidity. Indeed, given the almost hand in hand, parallel, development of the novel and filmmaking in the Arab world, it is no wonder the two began to unite in film adaptations early in the twentieth century. It is of no further wonder either that such development should have taken hold on the whole in Egypt before moving on to other parts of the Middle East and North Africa. The cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic international nature of cities such as Cairo and Alexandria helped this process. This pre-eminence in Egyptian film industry will be addressed by looking at two Egyptian film adaptations, followed by an adapted work from Iraq, Syria and Algeria respectively. The thesis will analyse the film adaptations of two works from Egypt: the first is 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī's *al-'Arḍ* / Egyptian Earth, and the second is Najīb Maḥfūẓ's *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* / *Modern Cairo*, made into *al-Qāhirah 30* / Cairo '30 by Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf. Interestingly, the above novels cover the period before the coup of the Free Officers of 1952, and yet they both were adapted after the regime change. This temporal and political gap between the time-frame covered in the respective diegesis of the novels, along with the difference in the circumstances that surrounded the production of each film to those of the writing of the respective novels, will be shown to have left their shadows on the direction taken by the two filmmakers in their adaptations. This is evident in characterisation and the decisions to focus on certain parts of the adapted text

as opposed to others. Both novels were adapted to the screen by two of Egypt's most prominent filmmakers, Shāhīn and 'Abū Sayf. For a variety of reasons, their two film adaptations have become major stepping-stones in the development of Egyptian and Arab cinema. While *al-'Arḍ* took on the symbolism of the land and its importance to the Egyptian people as a source of culture, pride and an economic resource, 'Abū Sayf's *al-Qāhirah 30* stands tall as an essay in style in Egyptian and Arab cinema. Audiences fell in love with the black and white close-ups of Su'ād Ḥusnī, the 'Cinderella' of Arab Cinema, as she succumbs to the forces of poverty, parental control and the wealth of the corrupt elite.

The corrupt elite of the past is a theme shared with the Iraqi novel *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* / The Moon and the Walls, by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubay'ī. A theme that is shared with its film adaptation by the Iraqi director Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl under the title of *al-'Aswār* (Dir. Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl, Iraq, 1979). Written within an Arab Socialist Ba'thist state, and published by its ministry of information, *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* strikes the reader as more of a propaganda piece of literature attempting to settle scores with erstwhile political opponents who no longer exist, yet are needed to justify the current regime's policies. This aspect of the novel, the most salient, is taken on board by the director in an adaptation that revels in examining the language of cinema, whilst adhering to the need of producing a work of propaganda for the regime, which provides the finance for its production.

From Syria, *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* / Fragments of Memory, Ḥannā Mīnāh's meditation and reflection on memory and the act of remembering, is adapted to the screen under the same title (*Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, Syria, 1979) by Nabīl al-Māliḥ who like Jamīl has to square the film's message with that of the governing regime in Syria at the time of the film's production. This need arguably takes the film into a direction at odds with the novel's focus on the boundaries between history of the individual and that of the group. Instead, the group and the nation are narrated in the adaptation along a schemata that would sit comfortably with the

discourse of the ruling Ba'th Party in Syria. The influence of the present on the narration and depiction of the past is a theme that is tangible in Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ's adaptation of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Haddūjah's *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, for like the other works discussed in this thesis, it is a work produced by a post-revolution or post-coup state. Despite the fact that the film narrative unfolds at a fictional time contemporaneous to the present of the audience, the past is all too prevailing in shaping this present, which in turn leaves its shadows on how the past is imagined.

Subversion

With all the films discussed here having received state funding for their making, it is interesting to explore the extent to which the filmmakers weave an undercurrent in these films that subverts part of the message for the delivery of which each film respectively received its state funding. The filmmakers are working within the very time and under the very type of post-independence regime that are projected as a salvation from a corrupt and rich elite in *al-Qāhirah 30*, lawlessness, poverty and the brutal rule of landowners in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* and the subservience of the monarchist government to Western powers in *al-'Aswār*. Despite their obvious acceptance of the ideals for which their respective governments stand, the three filmmakers are all too aware of the shortcomings of the reality of post-independence government. This awareness is highlighted from the way in which there is a yearning for a better life and better government that is projected into the present of the audience and the filmmaker, as is the case with 'Iḥsān's speech in *al-Qāhirah 30*, which may as well be delivered in the Egypt of 1966, with its emphasis on the practical - away from rhetoric and crowd -rousing socialist and Pan-Arab pronouncements. Similarly, the nature of the audience at whom Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl's Ba'thist and Pan-Arab declarations are directed in *al-'Aswār* serves to further question the extent to which the present in the Iraq at the end of 1970s lives up to the ideal state projected from the film.

Nabīl al-Mālih's camera in *Baqāyā Şuwar* ponders the faces of the villagers as they witness the brutal beating of a woman by her husband. His camera seems to hold the culture of these villagers, which is that of Syria both present and past, partly responsible for the attack on the woman. In *al-'Arḍ*, Shāhīn investigates the reasons for the 1967 defeat and points the finger at certain parts of the ruling regime which is funding the film. The manner through which the villagers arrive at the best solution to fight the imposed road construction, and the overwhelmingly brutal force with which they are then repelled serves to both call for action against Israeli occupation of Arab land, and at the same time acknowledge the failures and the lofty nature of some of the ideals of Pan-Arabism. In a sense, the film is a love poem to a version of Pan-Arabism and Egyptian patriotism that has been moulded through the bitterness of experience and defeat.

Bitterness of experience is all too present in Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ's *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, as indicated by the character of Mālik and his obvious confusion and bewilderment at a world lacking the clear-cut certainties of good and evil of the war for liberation. While working within official rhetoric, the filmmaker does throw the shadows of doubt over the seemingly happy ending: the success of Nafīsah in escaping her father is underlined with a freeze frame that both underlines her achievement and also to throws into relief the moment of euphoria that could easily turn into disillusion once she has to face her reality in the capital, and once Rābiḥ, her companion, arrives at the model village nearby. Furthermore, to paraphrase Debbie Cox, 'by presenting a fictional account based on fact,' all the above filmmakers draw 'attention to the creation of fictions inherent in the telling of history. The effect is to throw into question the series of fictions which the state discourse presents as fact.'[41] The point is aptly demonstrated in the elliptical and flashback straddled structure which Jamīl imposes on *al-'Aswār*. The result is a narrative that is reflexive and draws

[41] Debbie Cox, *Politics, Language, and Gender in the Algerian Arabic Novel*, (London: The Edwin Mallen Press Ltd., 2002), p. 91

attention to its structure; a structure that contains a version of history approved by the government.

A final concluding point; the case studies dealt with here will demonstrate that far from the transformation of the written text to screen imposing limitations that undermine the aesthetic and narrational features of the novels in question, film will be shown to bring advantages and characteristics that in certain cases have enhanced the narration and interaction of the narrative with the audience.

The socio-historical context

Some of the extrinsic elements influencing the voyage from one medium to another rests in the manner in which film adaptations are influenced by the historical moment at which the adaptation is attempted. This historical moment will be explored with a view to revealing the extent to which it plays an influencing role in the creation of the schemata devised by the respective filmmakers to adapt their texts to the screen, but also in the very choice of these works for adaptation. The choice of these particular novels for adaptation, in view of the historical moment of the production of the films, will also be investigated with a view to exposing any ideological, political, as well as aesthetic choices made by the filmmaker. This will also be linked to the nation as a narrative and as an imagined community, in the Benedict Anderson sense of the concept, as the novels are set at a point in time to the past of their reading, and indeed producing and viewing the film. The fact that four of these films are set during the period invariably viewed negatively by the regimes ruling the states providing the financial support, and one - *Rīḥ al-Junūb* - addresses the repercussions of the struggle against the pre-independence colonial power, will also be studied in relation to the respective treatments and strategies developed for navigating the journey from page to screen.

While the interest of a government in funding a film production that negatively depicts the previous rulers of the country is only too obvious, the role of the

respective filmmakers in choosing these particular texts is crucial in the making of these films. With the exception of Egypt, the three Arab countries respectively behind the production of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, Syria, *al-'Aswār*, Iraq, and *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, Algeria, have not been able to construct a consistent national cinema industry with regular and considerable volume of output. Under such a dearth of national film production, the choice of literary texts, which are predominantly set in the past, or are in a time frame influenced by the past, for adaptation to the screen with the financial support of the state becomes in itself a political act. In case of Egypt, which has a healthy private sector film production sector, the same argument applies as to the number and type of films produced by the public sector, not to mention the political impetus of the works produced, which will be shown as influencing factors in the choice of the 'Abd al-Raḥmn al-Sharqāwī and Najīb Maḥfūẓ texts. Indeed, as elucidated above, the respective senses of triumph and defeat that permeated the making of *al-Qāhirah 30* and *al-'Arḍ* partly explain the choice of the two novels for adaptation at those two crucial points in Egyptian and wider Arab history. In the case of *al-Qāhirah 30*, based on Maḥfūẓ's *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, the corruption and immoral behaviour of the ruling elite of the 1930s is projected in the adaptation as a contrast to the socialist ideals being implemented by Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir's government at the very height of the euphoria and sense of purpose in the history of post-independence Pan-Arab nationalism. On the other hand, the sense of bewilderment and disillusion that followed the defeat of 1967 are only too palpable in the choice of al-Sharqāwī's *al-'Arḍ*, with its emphasis on the land. The adaptation projects this relationship through an intense and more particular prism of land as nation, connecting the narrative to the present of the audience of late 1960s, early 1970s, Egypt.

Moreover, the choice of texts that are predominantly set in the past, or – in the case of *Rīḥ al-Junūb* - depict events nearer to the present of the audience, and yet are influenced and affected by the past, provides an ideal situation for both the filmmakers and the regimes through whose film production funds the films are made. While the filmmakers are allowed the freedom to address political

issues within a past setting that could have reflection on the present, and which could be affected by the present of the filmmaker at the political, economic and social levels, the regime in question can view the criticism directed at the government in these film adaptations as directed at the past and at its political opponents of days gone by.

These extrinsic factors will further be investigated in terms of their role in the very construction of the story as it goes through the transformation to the screen. The political landscape within each country of production will be explored as an element in the treatment of the parts of the fabula of the novel that survive the adaptation, and where the adapted text begins and ends. For example, the enlarged character of 'Alī Ṭāhā is given the task of heralding the beginning of the end of the monarchist regime in *al-Qāhirah 30*, an ending that acquires a more prominent position in the dramatic structure of the film than the novel's ending. The climax of the novel is present in the film, but is assigned a secondary position in terms of the film's finale it becomes the ending for the strands of the story as opposed to the whole narrative. Therefore, the appearance of Maḥjūb's father in *al-Qāhirah 30* at the very moment when the wife of the minister unceremoniously escorts her husband out of the marital bedroom of Maḥjūb and 'Iḥsān serves to emphasis the final sequence with 'Alī Ṭāhā distributing anti-government leaflets in the Cairo University compound. Similarly, the ending of *al-'Arḍ* befits the film adaptation's cry for the liberation of Egyptian land from Israeli occupation, as opposed to the novel's contemplation of modernity versus tradition and urban versus rural, as signified by the train journey the young narrator takes with his older brother back to the capital at the end of the novel.

The same point is apparent in the upbeat and optimistic ending of *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, where the film is in marked contrast to the novel; the former showing the young heroine succeeding in purging the past and its constraints by escaping to the city, unlike the latter, where she walks confused in the alleys of the village after

witnessing a violent and savage fight between her father and the local young man she hoped would help her escape the village.

Moreover, the historical context of the film production will be shown to have had an influence that equals, or surpasses, that of the paradigmatic choices in the characters that survive the transformation to the screen and, crucially, those who are discarded. This is most evident in the almost total absence of the Islamist Ma'mūn Raḍwān in the adaptation, unlike his counterpart of the novel for whom space is created in the novel for an expansion on his world view and his position within the group of students at the centre of the narrative. The struggle of Pan-Arabism in Egypt with Islamism, as represented by al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimīn [The Muslim Brotherhood] will be revealed as central to the decision to almost eliminate him from the state-funded film adaptation. Similarly, the character of the Iraqi Communist in al-Rubayʿī's *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* is totally expunged from Jamīl's adaptation, in view of the dissolution of the political alliance between the Iraqi Communist Party and the Ba'th Party which was in force at the time of writing the novel.

The political and social agenda of the filmmakers can also be sensed in their respective representations of women in the adapted texts. The film adaptations come together in their projection of strong, politically aware and assertive female characters, in line with the progressive ideals of Pan-Arab ideology. Therefore, 'Iḥsān's submission to the wealth and prestige of the bey in *al-Qāhirah 30* is presented in the adaptation with an awareness of feminist and progressive ideas on women's rights at the time of making the film. Similarly, the women of the alley in *al-'Aswār* acquire the instincts and positions of political animals that are far removed from the alternately vacuous and downtrodden women in the al-Rubayʿī text.

The socio-historical context is also present in the different audiences reading the novels and watching the films respectively. In addition to the gap in time between the point of publishing the novel and the film's production, which in

the case studies below varies between three years and more than two decades, the reading audience in the Arab world has traditionally been exposed to far more taboo-addressing texts; texts that subvert the status quo with less control from the censor. The smaller size of the reading public in the Arab world, as compared to that of the cinema going and film watching audience, has traditionally been a factor in making film production under greater scrutiny from the censor. Therefore, film adaptations of literary texts have been shown to have yet another layer of extrinsic factors which feature in the approach of the filmmaker of the literary text.

Chapter One

Al-Qāhirah 30 / Cairo 30:
Assimilating Text to Screen and Context

Among all the nations in the Arab world, Egypt is the only country with a national film industry that has consistently produced feature films since its dawn in the early 1920s. Unlike countries such as Iraq, Syria or even Algeria, Egypt has been able to weather the onslaught of Hollywood and European film imports, adapt to the changing political, economic and social forces within the county and continue to produce films on a scale that would befit the term, a film industry.[42] The reasons for this sustainability and longevity are varied: there is the historical point at which film was introduced in Egypt, in 1896, at the Zawwānī café in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria.[43] The new form of film narrative was to find a receptive audience in this multi-cultural Mediterranean city that boasted communities ranging from the Greek, to the

[42] The limit imposed on the number of prints of imported films can be argued to have helped the national industry in Egypt; however, this does not appear to have helped in other Arab countries, where the state controls the whole process of importing films, and, in the case of Syria, for example, controls which films are imported. See Jean Alixān, *Tārīkh al-Sīnamā fī Sūriyā* / The History of Cinema in Syria (Dimashq: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1987 / Damascus: Ministry of Culture, 1987), pp. 10-11 for a synopsis of the role of the Syrian government in restricting the number and type of overseas film imports.

[43] Jean Alixān, *al-Sīnamā fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī* / Cinema in the Arab Nation (al-Kuwayt: Silsilat 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah, al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li al-Thaqāfah wa al-Funūn wa al-'Ādāb, 1982 / Kuwait: World of Knowledge Series, The National Council for Culture, the Arts and Literature, 1982), p. 27

Jewish, to the Italian, not to mention other Arab nationalities. The social, economic and cultural interaction between these communities with the native Egyptian, or Egyptianised, population arguably helped the nurturing and spread in Egypt of an art form that was barely finding root in Europe and the rest of the world.[44]

The key role of the cosmopolitan nature of such great metropolises as Alexandria and Cairo in the birth of Egyptian cinema, in addition to the sizeable population which helped create a ticket-buying audience, can be seen in the first two feature films produced in Egypt: *Laylā* / Layla (Egypt, 1927) and *Qublah fī al-Ṣaḥrā'* / A Kiss in the Desert (Egypt, 1927). The first of the two, produced by and starring 'Azīzah 'Amīr, was directed by 'Istifān [Stefan] Rustī,[45] and the second by 'Ibrāhīm Lāmā, a Palestinian who moved to Egypt with his brother, Badr.[46] These productions were preceded by short films and newsreels produced by Egyptians and expatriates alike, notably, Muḥammad Bayyūmī. In addition to newsreels, Bayyūmī made short fiction films that pre-date the making of *Laylā* and *Qublah fī al-Ṣaḥrā'*. These include, *Barsūm Yabḥath 'An Waẓīfah* / Barsūm Searches for Work (Dir. Muḥammad Bayyūmī, Egypt, 1923).

Film production gained pace after the establishment of Studio Maṣr by the Ṭal'at Ḥarb,[47] the industrialist affectionately called by later generations of Egyptian nationalists as the father of the Egyptian economy. More than ten years after Egyptian nationalists finally came to power in 1952, the film industry was nationalised in 1962. The Production Sector produced many artistically achieved features that form major stepping stones in the development of Egyptian and Arab national cinema. Two of these films are

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[44] See Ibrahim Fawal, *Youssef Chahine* (London: BFI 2001), p. 9, and 'Aḥmad al-Hadari, *Tārīkh al-Sīnamā fī Miṣr* / History of Cinema in Egypt, Volume One (al-Qāhirah: Maṭbū'āt al-Sīnamā bi al-Qāhirah, 1989 / Cairo: Cinema Publications in Cairo 1989), pp. 230 - 231 quoted in Fawal p. 9.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 27
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 23

included in this thesis: Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's *al-Qāhirah 30* (1966) and *al-'Arḍ* / The Earth (Dir. Yūsuf Shāhīn, 1969).

The coming together in this adaptation of the novelist Najīb Maḥfūẓ, who would go on to win the Nobel prize for literature in 1988, and Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf, one of the most distinguished filmmakers in Egypt and the Arab world, was preceded by a collaboration of almost two decades. For 'Abū Sayf had gotten in touch with Maḥfūẓ in 1947 with a view to collaborating with him on a screenplay. When Maḥfūẓ declared his ignorance of film and screenwriting, the intermediary had suggested that 'Abū Sayf would teach him.[48] The novelist would later credit 'Abū Sayf with mentoring him in the art screenwriting.[49] The collaboration between the two would continue until 1959 when Maḥfūẓ was made the head of the Ministry of Culture's censorship department.[50] Maḥfūẓ adapted for the screen works by fellow Egyptian novelist 'Iḥsān 'Abd al-Quddūs

The relationship of Maḥfūẓ with the state and its apparatus would be mirrored in 'Abū Sayf becoming part of the three-member committee in charge of one of the two productions companies that the post-1952 nationalist government formed. The formation of the two companies, Filmintāj / Film Production – headed by 'Abū Sayf and others, and al-Qāhirah li al-Sīnamā / Cairo Cinema (Co.),[51] came as a result of the nationalization of the film industry in Egypt in 1963. By the time of making *al-Qāhirah 30 / Cairo '30*, the working relationship between the two artists had ceased due to Maḥfūẓ's conviction that as a head of the censorship department he should not be associated with the films and screenplays that are presented to his department for approval before going into production or before distribution.[52]

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[48] Rajā' al-Naqqāsh, *Najīb Maḥfūẓ* (al-Qāhirah: Markaz al-'Ahrām li al-Nashr wa al-Tarjamah 1998 / Cairo: al-'Ahrām Centre for Publishing and Translation 1998), p. 113
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 114
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Interview with Egyptian film producer Wajh Riyāḍ in "al-'Adasah al-'Arabiyyah: al-Sīnamā al-Miṣriyyah / Magic Lens: Egyptian Cinema," part two, al-Jazeera Channel, 2008
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-116

The prestige of a film based on a novel by one of the more prominent writers at the time and directed by the "master of realism" in Egyptian cinema,[53] was supplemented by the project being produced by Jamāl al-Laythī, the head of the second state-owned film production company, al-Qāhirah li al-Sīnamā.[54]

The Novel

Published in 1945, *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* / *Modern Cairo*[55] is an exposition of the political, social and economic circumstances that formed life in Egypt in the 1930s. In order to bring to the fore the complex class and ethnic structure of Cairo under the rule of the monarchy, Najīb Maḥfūẓ finds the university in Cairo and its students as the canvas on which to assemble his characters and their disparate backgrounds. The university, with its representation of Egypt's strife to break free from its backward and poor economy, an attempt that had born crucial developments in the standards of living of the urban populations from the mid eighteenth century, was as useful a setting to bring together the different classes and social groups of Egypt as, for example, the Cairo central railway station, which would be used later by Yūsuf Shāhīn in his film masterpiece *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* / Central Station (Egypt, 1958).

The months between the beginning of the academic year of 1933-4 to the end of summer holidays and the start of the following academic year not only form the duration of the narrative of the novel, but also are a major factor in the formation of the characters and their world view. For the period in question was one of world economic recession, a stagnation in the Egyptian economy, and a political leadership, represented by Ḥizb al-Sha'b and the premier Ṣidqī Pāshā,

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[53] The term has long been associated with 'Abū Sayf. See for example 'Ibrāhīm al-'Arīs, "The Legacy of Salah Abu Seif", *al-Jadid*, Vol. 3, No. 15 (February 1997), translated from Arabic by Elie Chalala.

[54] See interview with Wajīh Riyāḍ in "al-'Adasah al-'Arabiyyah: al-Sīnamā al-Miṣriyyah / Magic Lens: Egyptian Cinema," part two, al-Jazeera Channel, 2008

[55] Najīb Maḥfūẓ, *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, originally published in Cairo in 1945. Edition studied in the thesis was published in Beirut by Dār al-Qalam in 1971. Translation: Naguib Mahfouz, *Cairo Modern: An Arabic Novel*, translated by William M. Hutchins (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008). In view of the publication of the translation having taken place long after the commencement of the work in this thesis, all translations from the novel, as well as its film adaptation, are mine.

viewed with suspicion by the pro-independence movements led by such leaders as Sa'd Zaghlūl.[56]

The Film

Made in 1966, Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's adaptation of *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* was made at the mid point of a decade that had seen the rise of Pan-Arab Nationalism, the unification of Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic, and before the onslaught of a series of disasters that would culminate a year later in the 1967 war.

The adaptation, released under the title *al-Qāhirah 30* / Cairo 30, was by no means the first work adapted by the director to the big screen. 'Abū Sayf had had a fruitful period of filmmaking based on the novels of Iḥsān 'Abd al-Quddūs, an impressive eight in total.[57] More closely related to the work at hand, 'Abū Sayf had adapted the first Maḥfūẓ novel to make the journey to the screen, Bidāyah wa Nihāyah / A Beginning and an End (1960). *Al-Qāhirah 30* was the second 'Abū Sayf work based on the writings of Maḥfūẓ, and almost twenty years after the publication of the novel and 'Abū Sayf's first reading of it. According to Hāshim al-Naḥḥās, 'Abū Sayf had made four separate attempts to make the film adaptation of the novel before the coup of the Free Officers in 1952, and was only granted the go ahead on his fifth attempt in 1964, some twelve years after the coup.[58]

Adaptation Strategy

The contrast and difference in the respective contexts of the publication of the novel and the making of the film undoubtedly have a bearing on the strategy deployed by the filmmaker in adapting the text to the screen. The film was

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[56] See J. C. B. Richmond, *Egypt, 1798 – 1952: Her advance towards a modern identity* (London: Mathuen, 1977); P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991) and other historical texts of modern Egypt.
[57] Hāshim al-Naḥḥās: "Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf and the Cultivation of Realism and Enlightenment in Egyptian Cinema", *Alif* 15 (1995), pp. 6-22
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 16

funded by the film arm of the state, and headed by the prominent producer Jamāl al-Laythī. The interest of the Nāṣir government in helping fund a film criticising the period preceding the arrival of the Free Officers to power in Egypt is obvious, for the present of Egypt of the 1960s would fair better in comparison with a period depicted as corrupt in governance and rule. As with any attempt at giving an account of a historical moment, it is inevitable that shadows of the present should declare their long presence on the narration and the depiction. Where Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf stands out as a filmmaker subjecting a historical period to a fictional treatment is his mastery of the film medium and his panache in infusing the political narrative with layers of symbolism and allegory that allow reading of his film adaptation at many levels, and by different audiences, beyond the parameters envisaged by the Egyptian government in funding the film.

As will be shown below, the most apparent aspect of the film adaptation is the manner in which the filmmaker negotiates a sjuzhet more suited to his agenda of providing a new text authored by him and open to audiences not entirely familiar with the text of the novel. The fabula of the novel, on the other hand survives the film treatment almost intact. Where the novel had utilised the flashback and the voice of the narrator to provide exposition and character history, the filmmaker relies on dialogue, *mise-en-scène* and, where necessary, the invention of new scenes.

The voice of the narrator of the novel is another issue that the filmmaker needs to negotiate; for the narrator shows, respectively, a clear appreciation for a few characters and contempt for others. This can be seen in the narrator's effusive description of the demeanour and physical attributes of Ma'mūn Raḍwān as opposed to the negative light in which Maḥjūb 'Abd al-Dāyim is drawn. The filmmaker's probing camera lazily ponders the faces and appearances of characters and their reaction to their surroundings, in order to provide a visual rendition of the character description. The *mise-en-scène* and the position of the

character within the frame provide more meaning and expository information on the characters.

Echoing the starting point of the sjuzhet of the novel, the film begins with a montage of static shots of the Cairo University complex, its dome and clock tower. These shots are in keeping with the novel. There, the narrator describes the warm January sun as it hangs over the dome of the university building, in a sense providing a literary equivalent of a wide panoramic shot of the setting of the scene. Then the narrator homes in on a group of male students discussing the presence of female students at the University, before following another group of young men as they pass the first group. Again, the narrator provides here the literary equivalent of a tracking shot moving the camera from one set of subjects to another and following them, appearing in the process like a news journalist in search of a scoop. In the film, the director decides to use the appearance of the second group of students, that of the main protagonists in the narrative, as the beginning of the scene. This helps avoid the issue of the inclusion of women in higher education that is probed by the first group of students in the novel. The purging of the topic in the adaptation is in keeping with the outwardly progressive and socialist agenda of the Nāṣir government that is reflected in the agenda of the filmmaker; women's presence in the campus is presented as a non-issue. Unlike the novel, the group consists of only three characters: Maḥjūb, 'Alī Ṭāhā and 'Aḥmad Bidayr. The character of Ma'mūn Raḍwān, whose counterpart of the novel is drawn, with his religious beliefs, as an ideological counterpoint to 'Alī Ṭāhā's secular socialism, is done away with altogether for the duration of this expository scene. Ma'mūn of the novel follows the classic line that Islam has its own form of socialism and system of fair distribution of wealth. His absence from this scene in the film is thus used to reduce the importance of his position in the narrative. Consequently, we are left with three characters, a driven socialist who wants to change the world, rid Egypt of the British and the monarchy; another who is not occupied by such abstract issues and is wholly consumed by his perennial

financial troubles; and in between the two a working journalist who accepts the present system as a given.

The perennial concerns and occupations of the group, along with those of the young woman 'Iḥsān Shaḥādah and the high flying official, Sāmī al-'Ikhshīdī, are presented through a series of scenes and conversations that include instances in which the filmmaker fuses exposition imparted by the narrator of the novel to create totally new scenes and dialogue between characters. To this end, the chronology of events is manipulated and characters that might not have had a word to say in the novel are given lines of dialogue and an appearance in the film. This strategy is most evident from the outset of the film when the introduction of the character of 'Iḥsān is helped by a chorus of male voyeurs explaining to one another the history of her mother and, by implication, her own ease of virtue. Effectively, what had been explained in the novel through the voice of the narrator is passed on through characters that in the main stay anonymous in the film, thus adding to their chorus-like status and to the gossip nature of their insinuations. The same technique is used in the introduction of the different financial, political, social concerns of the young men in the student dormitory. A scene is invented by the filmmaker to show the interests and occupations of the young men sharing the same space. The same is true of the use of the porter of the dormitory to convey to Maḥjūb the information contained in a letter from his parents; unlike the novel where he had received and read the letter, the film shows him being told that he needs to return to his village as a matter of urgency, thus doing away with the need to contrive a way for the character to either read the letter aloud, rely on a close up of the contents of the letter, or indeed create a scene in which Maḥjūb explains to his companions the reason for his sudden departure.

Characterisation

Due to the historical moment at which it was made and the need for it to focus on fewer characters in order to help it provide the rhetorically amenable structure of binary oppositions in point of view and ideology, *al-Qāhirah 30* is

marked by a notable reduction in the number of characters. The reduction can be explained in two parts: firstly, there are characters that are dropped and scenes purged in order to avoid diluting the attention of the narrative away from the main characters; secondly, in one instance, a character's importance is reduced in the adaptation due to the political ideology for which the said character stands and this ideology's incompatibility with Pan-Arab Socialism. The character in question is the very Ma'mūn Raḍwān of whom the narrator of the novel was so fond. Ma'mūn's ideology is that of an Islamist who sees the salvation of the nation through a return to religion. The issues that the Nāṣir regime had with the Muslim Brotherhood and with such Islamist luminaries as Sayyid Quṭub make giving the character of Ma'mūn Raḍwān the same space and position as given him in the novel complex and problematic for a film supported by the Pan-Arab Nāṣir government, known for its pragmatism towards religion.

The implication of this decision by the filmmaker is evident in the casting for the character; the physical appearances are used in a similar way to that of the novel to shed light on the character and his position within the narrative. Therefore, the almost total absence of any real role for the character of Ma'mūn Raḍwān, and in view of the position of the film narrative towards the ideological position of the character in the novel, the only scene in which he makes an appearance shows him in his homely gallābiyyah and wearing an unattractive pair of glasses. His religious discourse of the novel is reduced to a mere concern for praying on time. This rendition is at odds with his counterpart of the novel who is tall, fit, with healthy skin and dark black eyes, all signifying virility. The narrator is clearly infatuated with this character, as he is described as being intelligent, focused in his life that he leads with the same honesty and integrity as that of his principles.[59] The filmmaker drives home the message of reducing the importance of the character by using him in a dialogue with 'Aḥmad to further downgrades Ma'mūn's standing in the hierarchy of male characters in the film narrative, and also to provide more exposition of the

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 12

character of 'Aḥmad, denying Ma'mūn in his first appearance in the narrative the exposition and the highlighting of character traits with which the three students where privileged in the previous scene.

With the absence of Ma'mūn, the film begins with three characters outside Cairo University, 'Aḥmad Bidayr, Maḥjūb 'Abd al-Dāyim and 'Alī Ṭāhā. The dress sense of the three characters is used by the filmmaker in what Roland Barthes would see as writing with clothes, or, in this visual instance, denoting and signifying through fashion.[60] Using clothes to shed light on certain aspects of the character, 'Alī Ṭāhā's serious and respectable suit and overcoat, along with a formal looking briefcase, seem to be a reflection of his serious and driven character. Maḥjūb's old suit and unkempt appearance go well with his 'I couldn't care less' motto in the conversation. Between the two, 'Aḥmad Bidayr with his decent clothes appears a more lively and optimistic character; one that is rooted in the world as it is rather in 'Alī Ṭāhā's as it ought to be. The latter's points of reference are August Comte, Saint-Simon, and other luminaries of Western enlightenment. He finds in Egyptian society its own salvation from what he considers its backward and stagnant state. Like his opposite number in the novel, 'Alī Ṭāhā's version of the truth rests in socialism and secularism. What this scene does provide, though, is an emphasis on the gap between the two main characters introduced thus far, 'Alī Ṭāhā and Maḥjūb. The character of 'Aḥmad is the go-between who helps focus more light on the characters, and provide the type of information divulged by the narrator in the novel. Moreover, through his obvious poverty, as shown through his clothing and reply to the plead of beggar, 'give me a piaster so god may raise your status [in heaven]', that 'you give me a piaster and let Him lower my status [in heaven]', Maḥjūb is initially drawn as probably the more realistic and possibly more sympathetic of the three characters. He appears to have genuine day to day concerns, as opposed to the airy attitude of 'Alī Ṭāhā, and the comical presence of 'Aḥmad .

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[60] Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 3-41

The use of *mise-en-scene*, frame composition and juxtaposition of frames and shots along a set of paradigmatic and syntagmatic choices to elucidate, expand, enlarge or undermine a character in *al-Qāhirah 30* make useful an analysis of characterisation through use of *mise-en-scène*. Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's characterisation is far more reliant in this film on cinematic tools than other works examined in this thesis. His command of cinematic tools and the uninhibited flourish with which he deploys them encourage this approach of using the category of *mise-en-scène* to understand character in *al-Qāhirah 30*.

This is a point most effectively demonstrated in the first two scenes in the film, the introduction of characters emerging from the university compound and the following scene at the dormitory. In the latter scene, more of the carefree nature of 'Aḥmad is revealed, as indicated by his light mood and singing, shaving in the bathroom, and following him as he goes through four rooms in the dormitory to find a suitable tie for his interview with a politician that evening. The tracking shot from the bathroom to the living room provides a setting for an expository discussion between 'Aḥmad and three other students getting ready for an evening out. It also provides further redundancy to the gaiety of the character of 'Aḥmad . In the process, 'Aḥmad is projected as a force for harmony between the characters in the dorm. This is achieved by showing him in the tracking shot helping himself to the shoe polish of one of the three young men in one of the rooms that is placed at the front of the frame. From the back of the room, someone reiterates the news that the total number of political prisoners had reached a thousand. A defiant statement from one of the three, and the assertion of his colleague that the Government is supported by both the English and the palace, is broken by 'Aḥmad 's humorous and practical criticism of the poor quality of the shoe polish, and his suggestion that a different make be bought the next time. The position of the characters in relation to the camera, to one another and the space of the room works to provide a parallel to the different viewpoints they hold. In a sense, the room becomes a miniature of the political landscape of Egypt of the 1930s as viewed by the novel and as interpreted by the film. The three characters are the filmic equivalent of a

chorus in a Greek tragedy. *Mise-en-scène*, thus, is used to characterise and as a tool of narration.

'Aḥmad's failure to extract a necktie out of the group in the living room, his patriotic reasons for needing the tie notwithstanding- the interview of a political leader-, lead him to the next room in his section of the dormitory. Here the spectator is acquainted with the torn and poor state of Maḥjūb's sock, thrusting it as he is into the foreground of the frame and screen, leaving the spectator no escape from its simultaneous allusions to poverty and nonchalance on the part of the character. His offer of his necktie to 'Aḥmad draws the latter's disgust at the state of the item, before moving on to the next room. Here, he finds Ma'mūn busy praying, to confirm the earlier assertion in the film that praying was Ma'mūn's sole occupation.

The scene is a further demonstration of the process of adaptation as it is a construct by the filmmaker out of different fragments of dialogue and expository assertions by the narrator of the novel. It serves to further establish the characters in the narrative and shed light on their daily occupations and concerns. The use of the tracking shot also pays dividends, for its underlining of the lack of a threatening or overpowering machismo in the character of 'Aḥmad is used to throw its shadow on his intrusion into the romantic conversation, conducted by sign language, between 'Alī Ṭāhā and 'Iḥsān Shaḥādah. He is not viewed by 'Alī, nor the audience, as a rival for the attention of this beautiful young woman. The reaction of 'Alī to 'Aḥmad's playful suggestion that what 'Iḥsān was in fact saying through sign language was, 'let your friend 'Aḥmad come to meet me on the rendezvous', is treated with a smile as opposed to any feeling of jealousy or a defensive attitude by one man against another's interest in the object of his love.

'Aḥmad is presented in both novel and film as a citizen who engages the status quo in Egypt of the 1930s. He believes in power being attainable through elections under the parliamentary system as it stands. His position as a

journalist writing for opposition publications and his meetings with politicians from all sides of the political spectrum gives him a vantage point of the struggle for power and social position amongst the higher echelons of the society of Cairo. His presence in the narrative of the novel is precisely to carry the role of a bridge between the different ideologies and ideas simmering amongst the youth of Egypt and the ruling classes and their respective ways of life. At certain junctures in the narrative, he informs the characters of the latest developments in the political landscape. His role is carried through into the adaptation, and so is his comical mannerism. The filmmaker, however, adds an extra layer to the character by using his fear of the 'secret police' to set in motion the highly political trajectory and ending of the sjuzhet of the adaptation. This is evident from the first appearance of the character outside the university where he cautions 'Alī Ṭāhā against discussing socialist ideology in public. In the very next scene he also warns 'Alī against leaving socialist textbooks unattended on his desk, alerting him to the presence of the secret police in the area.

This very police service does make an appearance in the second half of the film narrative in order to arrest 'Alī Ṭāhā. In an implicit criticism by the filmmaker of non-revolutionary journalism, 'Aḥmad is allowed by the police to leave unharmed. The intervention of the police thus becomes a fulfilment of the fears of 'Aḥmad and sets in motion the final scene in the film where the secret police attempt to assassinate 'Alī Ṭāhā.

This comical and light-hearted character of both narratives is given a moment to reflect on the hypocrisy and corruption of the ruling elite. This takes place in the charity party held by the socialite 'Ikrām Hānim Nayrūz. In addition to conducting his role of the bridge between this class and that of the poor, represented by Maḥjūb, in what comes across in the film as a stream of consciousness 'Aḥmad shares with Maḥjūb a remarkable critique of the higher strata of Egyptian society. For whereas in the novel he had poured scorn on the behaviour of those present, mocking the wife of a wealthy man for her attempts

to acquire the title of Pāshā for her husband, and her willingness to entertain and make herself available to those in power in order to achieve this end, and commenting on the empty promises in the speech of 'Ikrām Hānim Nayrūz and her lack of command of the Arabic language, the film version's character monologue is accompanied by the pitch and sorrowful voice of the actor that adds poignancy and a rare moment of self-reflection on the part of 'Aḥmad .

This rare moment of reflection is a norm when both texts deal with 'Alī Ṭāhā. Egypt and her people figure prominently in his thoughts and idealism in the novel and the film adaptation. In the former, he is described by the narrator as astute in his belief in noble ideals, as charismatic, as eloquent and of quick wit. He does not believe in the metaphysical reasoning for the world that is adhered to by Ma'mūn Raḍwān. He believes in matter and its interpretation of the universe. His doubts about the basis of his morals now that he no longer believes in religion are answered by August Comte and his philosophy of society and science. He adopts the motto describing his being as having formerly been 'noble in beliefs through religion and without use of one's head, while presently I am still noble in my beliefs, yet without the use of any myths'.[61] The narrator describes his journey from a believer by birth to a socialist by learning as a journey that had started in Mecca and ended in Moscow.[62]

At one level, 'Aḥmad appears to be an aspect of Egypt that 'Alī wishes to change; for as far as he is concerned the system in its entirety needs to be uprooted, including the press that plays a part in the political and social battles within the ruling elite. In the novel he appears to be interested in changing Egypt beginning with 'Iḥsān, the girl he intends to marry. His ideologically driven discourse seeps into every aspect of his life, including an amorous conversation with 'Iḥsān.[63] The conversation adds a note of aloofness and a

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[61] *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, p. 25
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] *Ibid*, pp. 15-17

somewhat lack of understanding of the everyday concerns of the poor. His position in the narrative of the novel was to provide for a character that had allowed his political ideology to affect his warmth of spirit. This rendition is in keeping with the novel's creation of this character as part of the kaleidoscope of the point of views and budding political awareness of the new class of university educated young Egyptians. This explains the relatively limited narrative space, both at the fabula and sjuzhet levels, that 'Alī is given in the second half of the novel.

The film, on the other hand, having almost totally eliminated the character of Ma'mūn Raḍwān, and the religious ideology he stands for, presents 'Alī Ṭāhā as the character whose views foreshadow those of the Free Officers and Pan-Arab Nationalists ruling the country at the time of making the film. Thus the episode that had been given a mere mention in the novel, namely his launch and publishing of a magazine,[64] becomes a major sub-plot in the second half of the film narrative and is given the prominence of one of the many elements that lead to the end of the ruling regime.

In order for him to be worthy of this position, the filmmaker transforms 'Alī Ṭāhā's magazine into a pamphlet that is confiscated by the secret police, and he himself is subjected to torture and an assassination attempt. His position in the narrative of the film is underlined through an apt use of *mise-en-scène* and framing to compliment and comment upon his social and political discourse.

This is evident in a scene back in the student dormitory that features 'Aḥmad Bidayr's announcement that his sources claim that the opposition parties are planning to form a united front against the Ṣidqī Government. The announcement draws a predictable response from 'Alī Ṭāhā. He does not see the point of optimism in the news that 'Aḥmad Bidayr is so enthralled to share with his friends. After all, he states, the creators of these political parties are non other than the landowners and Pāshās who run the country. There is no

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 178

solution, he continues, other than a total change of the entire system of government in order to create a more egalitarian and just society. 'Alī Ṭāha utters these sentiments in a determined and assured demeanour, looking into the distance as he pronounces his revolutionary ideals.

The scene is in keeping with its counterpart in the novel, although it has the advantage of the *mise-en-scène* that is used to its full potential by the camera of 'Abū Sayf . It frames 'Alī Ṭāhā next to large portraits of 'Urābī Pāshā and Musṭafā Kāmil, Egyptian nationalists to whom 'Aḥmad Bidayr refers as dead along with their ideals. 'Alī Ṭāhā's swift reprimand to Maḥjūb, and 'Aḥmad Bidayr, for their selfish and ignorant attitudes, respectively, is shot in a medium close up that leaves him next to the photographs of the nationalist leaders. The fact that there happens to be an empty wooden portrait frame sitting right next to the photos behind 'Alī Ṭāhā places him in the historical context as the latest link in the long struggle for Egyptian independence. The use of socialist and nationalist pronouncements in the scene makes the present of the spectator - the now of the act of viewing, in 1960s Egypt, a goal striven for in the 1930s. This link between the dreams and goals of 'Alī Ṭāhā and the achievements of the post-Free Officers coup is not as pronounced in the novel. The fact that the novel was written before the coup may not be used as a justification for the liberties taken by the filmmaker, as the novel seems not to actually have a particular solution in its itinerary for the state of Egypt, but rather an informed description.

The character who receives equal footing in the adaptation is Maḥjūb. Out of all the characters in the adaptation, he is privileged with an audible stream of consciousness, an internal voice that allows the filmmaker to give the audience access to the views and share opinions of the character without their candidness negatively affecting the position of the character in the diegesis. This aspect of the character is an echo from the novel: the narrator elucidates the ideology and standpoint of Maḥjūb. He is described as having arrived to his philosophy of life with the maxim, 'to hell with the world and its morals because I am poor and

suffering while others have all,' due to what he sees to be a deluge of bad fortune and lack of generosity in the lot he has been awarded. The narrator alludes to the rough upbringing Maḥjūb had in his village, Qanāṭir, and the depraved nature of the boys with whom he mixed in his childhood. In the city, he had found the vogue of atheism and had followed it. He found the shade in which religion was rendered through the prism of psychology and psychoanalysis appealing. He had been a scoundrel or a vile person, the narrator states, and now he turned into a philosopher. His philosophy held society responsible for labelling particular types of behaviours as good and others as vile. This new understanding of the world made Maḥjūb look with pleasure at his past and with optimism to his future.[65]

It is interesting how little respect the narrator has for his emerging anti-hero. The young man's past, his childhood and teenage years, is of such depravity as far as the narrator is concerned that only such a skewed understanding of the world and moral vacuum would make this young man lose any guilt or shame for his past behaviour. Effectively, the character of Maḥjūb is being set up here for its comeuppance later in the narrative.

His philosophy is expressed in the novel via a mixture of a stream of consciousness and an airing of character opinion by the narrator. The introduction of this unique trait in the character is achieved with élan by the filmmaker: the camera pans across the dormitory's row of windows as the students stare at 'Iḥsān descending the stairs from her home on the other side of the street. Unlike the first two windows, where small groups of students look and talk about her, Maḥjūb stands on his own behind the glass panes of a closed window looking towards 'Iḥsān. The absence of an interlocutor provides two specific aspects to the scene; firstly, as stated above, Maḥjūb is allowed to express his thoughts through an internal diegetic voice; and secondly, he is free to state his exact thoughts about 'Iḥsān with no concern for the opinion of his listener. The decision by the filmmaker to privilege Maḥjūb with an internal

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 27

diegetic voice thus becomes to the detriment of the standing of the character in the narrative.

The use of the internal diegetic voice is made the more poignant with Maḥjūb's nose thrust into the glass pane causing steam to form on the window. The use of the internal diegetic voice removes Maḥjūb to a different level within the diegesis, away from the rest of the characters. His position is highlighted by the rapid reduction to the point of a blackout of the light of the room behind him. The effect is to present Maḥjūb in an almost abstract world removed from his reality, and yet still imprisoned by it through the closed window. Maḥjūb's inscription of his name and signature through the steam on the glass pane serves to further highlight the extent of his isolation from the rest of the world. The signature comes after his declaration that money and wealth can buy all, including love and a respectable position in society. This seems to be the contract that the character signs with fate, an echo of the Faustian deed, a contract that he will have to honour when the moment arrives. The signature is followed by the date, 1933, to both pin down Maḥjūb's declaration to a particular time and place, and also to inform the spectator of the exact year of the action of the narrative without resorting to a non-diegetic method, such as an intertitle, or a contrived dialogue in the diegesis.

The internal voice makes several appearances throughout the narrative to isolate a thought and to underline Maḥjūb's solitary view of life. The instances in the film in which the tool is used are similar to those of the novel. These include the visit Maḥjūb makes to his home town of Qanāṭir. The introduction of one of the characters that will have the most effect on the trajectory followed by Maḥjūb in the narrative is the occasion for an apt use of the internal voice: Sālim al-'Ikhshīdī is introduced at the Qanāṭir train station; his introduction into the film is accompanied by non-diegetic music that adds a comic touch to his sitting on a rail trolley being pushed by a couple of locals in gallābiyyahs along the track towards the station. The dialogue between the two is similar in the film to that of the novel, the warm and effusive appearance of Maḥjūb's part of the

conversation is undermined by his internal voice mocking al-'Ikhshīdī. The satirical plea, 'O Qanāṭir, do distribute good fortune justly between your children,' that Maḥjūb utters in his internal diegetic voice in the film is a direct quote from the novel.[66] Its presence in the adaptation signifies an adherence to the adaptation strategy's critique of corruption in Egypt in the past; Qanāṭir standing here, as in the novel, for Egypt as a nation where those with connections to a corrupt system, and who are willing to compromise their own values, manage to succeed and gain the most from the system.

The almost primal cry, 'the world will pay for the suffering I am going through',[67] uttered by Maḥjūb of the novel is not transferred to the film, perhaps part of the filmmaker's grand scheme of presenting an anti-hero that would not deserve the sympathy of the audience. The scheme bears fruit at the final encounter between Maḥjūb and al-'Ikhshīdī where, on rejecting the latter's plea for a compromise on Maḥjūb's promotion to the position of secretary to the newly appointed minister, Maḥjūb lets out a malevolent laugh that spills his internal voice into the audible world of the diegesis.

Another accomplished use of the internal voice to help illuminate and undercut the dialogue in a scene takes place at al-'Ikhshīdī's office. As with the novel, the latter clears the waiting room of everyone and informs his assistant that he does not wish to be disturbed. Having started with a medium shot of al-'Ikhshīdī greeting Maḥjūb, the camera follows the young man as he moves to seat himself by al-'Ikhshīdī's desk. The entire scene is filmed in three long takes, adding to the importance of the content of the dialogue and the performance of the two actors. The moving nature of the camera, following al-'Ikhshīdī as he moves around Maḥjūb, helps to add to the drama and his bewildered state. The manner in which al-'Ikhshīdī times the inhaling of smoke from his cigarette and the beat that he takes before answering Maḥjūb's questions is an excellent demonstration of acting in harmony with the camera. It

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[66] *Ibid.*, p. 35
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 67

also foreshadows al-'Ikhshīdī's role in affecting the turn of events in the narrative.

The scene acquires an even more layered structure through Maḥjūb's internal diegetic voice. This is evident in Maḥjūb's commentary on the relationship of the Bey to the woman he is to marry. He swiftly picks on the nature of the offer on hand and rejects the moral basis of all his instinctive reservations over the marriage. Maḥjūb's thoughts are shared with the spectator, leaving al-'Ikhshīdī at a disadvantage, and making Maḥjūb's outright rejection of a compromise with the latter at a later point in the narrative understandable from the point of view of the audience.

The absence of an internal diegetic voice in the character of 'Iḥsān of the film is compensated for by the abundant use of *mise-en-scène* and paradigmatic choices in capturing her on the screen to project forth her thoughts. The point is thrown into sharp relief in 'Iḥsān's first appearance in the film; she is depicted using sign language, as opposed to the political and socialist declarations of 'Alī Ṭāhā, the comical attempts of 'Aḥmad Bidayr to quieten the former and the loud expressions of nonchalance by Maḥjūb. Far from reducing from her ability to articulate her feelings and views, her introduction in the film without the aid of dialogue lends emphasis to the visual aspect of her character, her beauty which the camera arrests with a close-up shot that subjects her to the gaze of the audience, the two male characters looking at her from across the street, 'Alī Ṭāhā and 'Aḥmad Bidayr, and between the two groups the filmmaker and the crew, thus demonstrating the Laura Mulvey argument about the patriarchal nature of the cinematic gaze as practiced by certain filmmakers.[68] The *mise-en-scène* also helps capture her for further inspection: she appears through a set of windows that become a frame within the frame.

[68] Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), re-printed in Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism* (USA: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 28-40

The character of 'Iḥsān is presented in the novel as part of the state of Egypt that is in need of contemplation, if not in need of a saviour. In the novel, the character is developed and given a presence partly through her reaction and interaction with members of her own family, most specifically her father. The narrator presents a father who is only too willing to procure his only adult daughter for the highest bidder among his rich clients, and a mother who is described as one of the night workers in Muḥammad 'Alī street, the Cairo night club and entertainment quarter. Indeed, the narrator has very little sympathy or esteem for the parents of 'Iḥsān. They are described as lacking any real appreciation for socially accepted morality. They had, he goes on, been lovers before getting married after the mother had lost her figure and he begun to get old.[69] They have seven more children, along with 'Iḥsān.

The filmmaker follows the novel's use of the parents to shed light on the character of 'Iḥsān; this begins at the first appearance of the young woman in the film narrative where she appears in medium shot framed by the windows of her room though which she converses with 'Alī Ṭāhā across the street through sign language. The mother interrupts the solitary moment between the two by beginning to sing, ridiculing her daughter's relationship with the student who has not shown his affections towards her by buying her an item of clothing or a present of any type. The director in a single shot has placed 'Iḥsān in her physical, family and emotional surroundings. The use of sign language between the two lovers serves to stress the surreptitious nature of the relationship, the frames of the windows and the room in the background show her poverty, while the mother's behaviour explains the reasons behind the use of sign language. The scene is an invention by the filmmaker to dramatically present the descriptive and expository text imparted by the narrator of the novel about the nature of 'Iḥsān's family life and the relationship she has with 'Alī Ṭāhā.

The family is reduced in number in the film adaptation, so that 'Iḥsān has four siblings as opposed to the seven of the novel. The reduction maybe related to

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 20

the 1960s being the years of family planning in Egypt, and so the family composition is affected by the present.

Support for this family is a concern of both the character in the novel and her screen adaptation. Indeed, the justification which the character offers in the novel to explain her submission to the temptation of Qāsim Bey, the wealthy deputy minister, is based on helping her siblings. This rationale is transformed with more force in the screen adaptation. The ragged clothes of the children, torn and dirty, and the lack of food as shown most vividly with a wide shot of them emptying the contents of a small dish of food, all emphasise the poverty of the family and stress 'Iḥsān's need for financial support. The filmmaker does not miss an opportunity to emphasise the point, as when asked by her children for more food, the mother sends them to 'Iḥsān. Similarly, 'Iḥsān's rejection of the approaches of Qāsim Bey is juxtaposed with a wide shot of 'Iḥsān's brother begging for money from a couple of passers by. The fact that the shot is taken from 'Iḥsān's point of view helps stress the effect of the situation on the girl who has just rejected the approaches of a wealthy man. The children are the millstone around the neck of this young woman attempting to abide by society's code of honour, and to abide by her internal equilibrium between right and wrong.

Her rejection of the Bey is preceded by the introduction of the father figure in the film narrative. This helps place him at an appropriate juncture in the narrative to play a decisive role in his daughter's affair with the Bey. 'Abū Sayf presents the viewer with another example of the ability and reliance of the film medium on presenting ideas and thoughts rather than simply thinking them. This happens with the first scene in the film depicting Iḥsān's father, Turkī Shiḥatah, working at his tobacco stall. The stall that her father had retired to from his life of prostituting his good looks in the 'sūq of women'[70] is presented here as a stopover for young men of means for purchase of cigarettes and procurement of women of easy virtue. The information had been related by the

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 20

narrator in the novel as he recounted the attempts of 'Iḥsān's parents to exploit her beauty to subsidize their sole income from the stall. The young man visiting her father is effectively the same character with whom 'Iḥsān of the novel had ended her relationship after seeing him negotiate and haggle over 'her honour'.[71] The filmmaker decides to do away with providing an expository narrative for the situation, and simply presents the event in the present tense. The camera pans with the father as he walks towards the young man seated on a chair on the kerb. There follows a one sided monologue that allegorically explains to the young man and the spectator the nature of the encounter and the reasons for the discussion. The father implies that his daughter is a precious stone that deserves a high price. The nature of the body language of the father leaves little doubt in the mind of the spectator as to the base nature of the plan that is being hatched for 'Iḥsān by her own father.

'Iḥsān's appearance and rejection of the gift from the young man, and her consequent conversation with her mother in the film creates a discrepancy between the father's apparent intentions, and her mother's understanding of the situation. The mother gives the impression that the young man in question is interested in marrying her daughter. The filmmaker abides by the overall characterisation of the parents in the novel: they seek to profit from their daughter.

Mise-en-scène and Music

In any transformation, or transposition, of a text to the screen, the filmmaker needs to add the setting, making choices in the size, the colour, the depth of the space where the action unfolds. There is also the choice of clothes, furniture, and other elements that add verisimilitude and 'realist' touches to the diegesis. The individuality of Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf and his command of his craft comes through the types of choices made and the extent to which they form a dialectic

[71] *Ibid.*

with the text of the original text, be it through working in harmony or through undercutting and undermining the surface of the text.

As stated above, the use of the long takes and deep focus shots places the text firmly in particular school of filmmaking that would sit comfortably with such movements as Italian New Realism. The style can be seen in the manner in which the filmmaker chooses to introduce the three main characters outside the university with a long tracking shot that allows the dialogue, the *mise-en-scène*, as represented by the background of posters, people dressed in clothes reminiscent of the 1930s, the older makes of cars, and the use of voices all serve to acquaint the audience with the time frame, and to shed light on the personalities of the characters. The body language of the three students, the way they are positioned in relation to one another, and the staging, serves to illuminate the power dynamic between the three.

Similarly, Maḥjūb's first visit to al-'Ikhshīdī's office makes full use of the potential for *mise-en-scène*, sound track, and the position of actors in relation to furniture and to camera. The scene is captured in a wide high angle shot that depicts Maḥjūb entering a crowded office with al-'Ikhshīdī speaking on the telephone while signing papers that are being presented to him in succession by an assistant. The subject of the telephone conversation is a summary of what had been narrated in the novel about al-'Ikhshīdī's contacts with people in high places. His duplicitous nature is highlighted through his declaration aloud, 'what a pain this man is', directly after hanging up the telephone at the end of an effusive monologue directed at the person at the other end of the line. Maḥjūb walks to the middle of the room and faces al-'Ikhshīdī, as the camera tilts down and moves forward to make the two men on the opposite edges of the frame. The distance between the two is accentuated by the choice of a particularly large desk for al-'Ikhshīdī across which Maḥjūb has to talk aloud and in full view of all those present. Al-'Ikhshīdī's obvious lack of respect or desire to offer Maḥjūb any semblance of privacy for a dignified conversation is made clear. Unlike the scene in the novel where Maḥjūb is invited to have a seat

after the departure of all of al-'Ikhshīdī visitors,[72] Maḥjūb is forced to make his request for a small loan in full view and hearing distance of everyone in the office. The fact that this whole scene is shot in one long take allows for realism to seep into the humiliation of Maḥjūb and al-'Ikhshīdī's patronizing manner.

Clothes play a great role in illuminating certain aspects of the character in the film. 'Alī Ṭāhā is introduced with a buttoned up overcoat that sits well with the serious nature of his conversation. He continues to appear in formal attire, even in the dormitory where he appears in a respectable dressing gown. Maḥjūb as a poor student and unemployed graduate is contrasted with his new found life as a high ranking official by being shown through the lighter and more complimentary colours of his suits and shirts. The effect of Maḥjūb's failure to provide his parents with any financial support is emphasised through a close-up shot of the worn out and dusty shoes of the father as he visits his son in the last scene of the film. 'Iḥsān's beauty is stressed through her torn socks that expose parts of her flesh for the consumption of the ravenous eyes of the male students in the dormitory opposite her home. Her defensiveness and unease on the night of her wedding to Maḥjūb is emphasised through the cracking sound made by the garment covering her wedding dress, acting like a barrier against intimacy with her groom.

The use of colour is interesting in this black and white film. The director inserts a segment filmed in full colour depicting the charity ball which Maḥjūb attends with 'Aḥmad Bidayr and al-'Ikhshīdī. The colours offer a palpable contrast to the drab and deprived existence which Maḥjūb had led in the previous segments of the film, and signify the different world and sets of rules that govern the life of the rich and powerful in Egypt of the 1930s.

Colour is also present in the depiction of the claustrophobic nature of 'Iḥsān's life and the desperate point at which she makes her choice are emphasised through the dark colours and crowded nature of the home she occupies with her

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 65

family. These dark colours and surroundings give way to the well lit and elegantly furnished apartment of the Bey where 'Iḥsān finally gives in to the Bey. Again, *mise-en-scène* and the juxtaposition of different settings helps project the inner turmoil and questions facing the character of 'Iḥsān in the film. Her acquiescing to board the Bey's car comes directly after the scene of the children asking her for more food. The surrender is total, yet- unlike the novel's- it is nuanced and mitigated by her circumstances of which the viewer is fully acquainted. This is conveyed to the audience by the distraught and confused look of 'Iḥsān as she climbs into the car. The filmmaker shoots the approach of the car, its stopping and her getting into it in a single shot that ends with the departure of the vehicle from the frame, leaving the hot potato vendor arranging the food on his stall, a clear reference to 'Iḥsān being offered for the consumption of the rich man.

The physical union between the two is described by the narrator of the novel from the point-of-view of 'Iḥsān.[73] The phrases, 'loving whispers', the 'knocking on her wrists of magical fingers', and, the 'infiltration of warm breaths through her dress to her bosom and between her breasts',[74] all serve to provide what can be called an elliptical account of the process of her seduction, almost a montage of images that describes the whole scene in brief images that flash in the reader's mind-screen. The effect of the style is both to put the implied reader in the position of 'Iḥsān, experience the seduction from her point-of-view, and also to provide enough information and imagery to allow the reader to elaborate and complete the scene in his or her head. The reader provides the repressed narrative.

'Abū Sayf's take on the episode does the novel's rendition justice. The rich man's seduction of 'Iḥsān is effortless, beginning with the symbolism of the box of luxurious chocolates, through to the abundance of expensive clothes bought in advance for her. The Bey becomes a sort of a teacher figure whose sole object

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 124
[74] *Ibid.*

of interest is 'Iḥsān. She is overwhelmed by the man's lack of interest in the grand issues that overshadowed her meetings with 'Alī Ṭāhā. The actual seduction begins from the moment of 'Iḥsān's entry to the apartment. The montage of 'Iḥsān changing into different dresses and garments in what will later be her marital bedroom is inter-cut in a montage punctuated with rhythmic music that emphasises and almost isolates the meaning of every single gesture of the Bey as he uncorks the bottle of white wine, peels off the skin of an apple and pours one slice after another into the wine glasses. The use of the apple is not lost on the spectator, nor is the finesse and sophistication of the Bey's mannerism as he goes about the ritual of seduction; for there is a well-established link in literature and film between the act of eating and the erotic.[75]

In fact, food plays an important role in anchoring the meaning suggested by *mise-en-scène* and juxtaposition of shots, most notably the use of the hot potato vendor on a couple of occasions in which 'Iḥsān is about to make the choice to succumb to the Bey's persistent offers and invitations. Similarly, the association of the character of 'Aḥmad Bidayr in the film narrative with the status quo of Egypt in the 1930s and his acceptance of the political system as it stands is underlined by the confectionery he keeps in the cupboard of the student dormitory. This is a box of sweets from a well-known establishment with a French brand name. The fact that 'Aḥmad stops eating the first piece of cake taken out of the box due to its obvious dryness is perhaps a commentary by the filmmaker on the character of 'Aḥmad, and the class of petit-bourgeoisie, who aspire to a Westernised life-style, disregarding the incongruities of this desire with the day to day realities of living in a modern Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern society. Food plays a role in underpinning the poverty of Maḥjūb as he is reduced to eating dry, seemingly rotten, sandwiches whilst enduring the rich food-oriented conversation heard in the diegesis between female neighbours debating the quality of the meat bought from the market.

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[75] For the erotic associations of food in Arabic literature see Sabry Hafez, "Food as a Semiotic Code in Arabic Literature", in Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (eds.) *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994)

Similarly, music is used to full effect in the adaptation to work in tandem with the *mise-en-scene*, camera work and editing to underscore, highlight, or undermine a situation. This is most evident in the aforementioned montage of the Bey opening the wine bottle, slicing the apple and 'Iḥsān getting dressed. 'Iḥsān's inner thoughts are exposed in a later scene through an evocative song by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb. The fact that the song accompanies the first moments the bride and groom find themselves on their own is significant, as it demonstrates the melancholic nature of a supposedly happy occasion.

Mise-en-scène is also used by the filmmaker for conveying the type of information that the novel imparted through the agency of the narrator. For example, the letter received by Maḥjūb from his father asking him to visit is done away with and the information is relayed to Maḥjūb by the porter of the dormitory. Thus the staging of the action, and the use of a character absent from the narrative of the novel, act as tools of narration in the adaptation. Similarly, the history of the character of al-'IKhshīdī and how he came to such a prominent position at a relatively young age is relayed to the audience through the creation of a wholly new character in the film who is used as a listener for Maḥjūb's exposition of al-'Ikhshīdī's past. The novel had relied on the narrator to impart the point.

Finally, the filmmaker uses *mise-en-scène* and staging and frame composition to shed light on the René Girard set of overlapping triangles in relationships between the characters: so that Maḥjūb's desire for 'Iḥsān is possibly made the more powerful in view of her relationship with 'Alī Ṭāhā, as revealed through Maḥjūb's pressed face against the pane glass of the window of the dormitory watching 'Iḥsān descend the stairs to meet 'Alī Ṭāhā.[76] The act of pressing his face against the window also serves to project into his deformed nose, due to

[76] For more on René Girard's triangle of desire see James G. Williams (Ed.), *The Girard Reader* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1996), pp. 5-10, and René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965)

the act of pressing it against the window glass, the animal-like desire he harbours towards 'Iḥsān. The point is further underscored by the temporary, and prescient, interchange of the position of 'Alī Ṭāhā with Maḥjūb in relation to 'Iḥsān as Maḥjūb pretends to move 'Iḥsān away from the path of a moving car by folding his arms around her.

The same could be said of the relationship between 'Iḥsān, Maḥjūb and the Bey. The desire for 'Iḥsan on the part of Maḥjūb is arguably intensified in view of her relationship with the wealthy and powerful deputy minister. This desire is also tempered by jealousy which feeds into the desire. Indeed, both renditions of the character of Maḥjūb, in the novel and film, have an irrepressible desire to be in place of the Bey, occupy his seat of power and live by the code of the rich and powerful which would include taking possession of 'Iḥsān and using another man to cover up the act before society. In other words, Maḥjūb is envious and full of admiration for the actions carried out by the Bey which have the consequence of emasculating and undermining his, Maḥjūb's, claim to the rights and position of a respectable married man in society.

Two overlapping triangles are also present in the film adaptation in the scene that first brings together the Bey, his wife, 'Iḥsān and 'Alī Ṭāhā. After exchanging a kiss, 'Iḥsān and 'Alī Ṭāhā walk near a water puddle that is passed over by a moving car, splashing dirty water all over 'Iḥsān's ragged coat. The car stops and from within the spectator notices the distinguished appearance of a man in his late forties or early fifties, played by 'Aḥmad Maẓhar, sitting next to a similarly respectable looking middle-aged woman. The latter looks disapprovingly at her husband's smiling face directed at 'Iḥsan. The way in which the sequence is filmed and cut together is masterly. For when the car splashes the two with water, the medium shot of 'Iḥsan and 'Alī Ṭāhā changes dramatically with 'Alī Ṭāhā's total departure from the frame, as he bends down to wipe 'Iḥsān's overcoat. The next shot, the first of the Bey and his wife, is effectively from 'Iḥsān's point of view. Her reflection is seen in the half open car window, next to the disapproving wife. The next shot of 'Iḥsān shows her

again on her own contemplating with surprise and shock the audacity of the man and his brazen eyes. ‘Alī Ṭāhā reappears in the frame after a second shot of ’Iḥsān reflected in the window with the Bey at the centre of the frame. The visual composition of the shots, and the editing serve to give the encounter a foreshadowing of the interchange between the two men in the life of the young woman. The emphasis is on ’Iḥsān’s point of view. The fact that the car is chauffeur-driven and that the Bey and his wife are in the back-seat highlights the class difference between the two lovers and the man in the car. The two shots of the Bey looking at ’Iḥsān, and her looking at him are an interesting case of making both characters the subject of the gaze of one another. The Bey is obviously looking at ’Iḥsān with the eye of an experienced man in the realm of women, while she looks back at him in a mixture of contempt and surprise. Contempt for his wealth and position that have oppressed her through the splashing of her dress from his passing car, and surprise in noticing directed towards her the look of admiration in the eyes of this wealthy and distinguished looking man.

The triangles of desire are rendered through the framing of the Bey with his wife along with a reflection of ’Iḥsān in his car window, unlike ’Iḥsān who is alone in the frame. The disappearance of ‘Alī from the frame which he shared with ’Iḥsān shows the triangle that is between him, the Bey and ’Iḥsān, in addition to the dynamic between the young woman, the middle–aged woman and the Bey. He has his position in society, as implied through his chauffeur driven car, his immaculate dress and appearance, his distinguished looking wife, while ’Iḥsān has virtually nothing, as implied through her position standing in the street, alone, with shabby clothes splashed with muddy water. The middle-aged woman who already has possession of the wealthy man is all too aware of the slippage of her position in the relationship as she witnesses her husband’s admiring eyes towards the youth of the woman outside the car. Both women have a set of lacks and attributes that are confronted for the benefit of the wealthy man. ‘Alī Ṭāhā is jettisoned out of the scene, through framing and staging, in a foreshadowing of his exit from ’Iḥsān’s life.

The end of the relationship between the two is rendered in the film through what amounts to a cacophony of symbols in the *mise-en-scène*. A new scene created by the filmmaker is added to the narrative consisting of a visit to the theatre by the young lovers. The first shot in the scene is of the great Egyptian film and stage actor Yūsuf Wahbī dressed in an 18th or 19th century European suit with a similarly dressed young woman. The dialogue rapidly reveals itself to be a stage adaptation of Alexander Dumas' Camille. The two characters are those of the heroine of the novel and the father of the young man with whom she is in love. The dialogue is shown to be part of a play initially through the whispering voice of the prompter and then with the widening of the shot as the camera zooms out to reveal the stage and the back of the audience. The retardation in showing the dialogue to be part of a play is intended by the filmmaker to fully use the intertextuality in this instance to foreshadow and articulate the dilemma faced by 'Iḥsān. Her tearful eyes sitting next to 'Alī Ṭāhā in the audience make the nature of the dialogue on stage more resonant to the film audience and serves to explicitly warn of the future that awaits 'Iḥsān. The consequences of this future for 'Iḥsān are uttered by the heroine on stage: 'And so, however the fallen woman may try to rectify her past, she may never rise back in society; for although god may forgive her, society will not'. The scene is yet another example of the film's emphasis on the development of the character of 'Iḥsān further than the novel and is more about her point of view and a self-awareness of her impending downfall.

The next scene outside the theatre is undoubtedly one of the more successful compositions of *mise-en-scène* in Egyptian cinema. After the initial shot of the poster for the play, the camera zooms out while tracking with the moving figures of the two lovers. The zoom reveals an advert for an expensive car looking over what seems to be a boy sitting on the kerb selling pastries. The disparity between the image and the reality is reflected in the dialogue between 'Iḥsān and 'Alī Ṭāhā: she describing the pain of the play's heroine and how the character's beauty had brought misery to her young life; he formulating a

standard left-wing reply blaming society and its lack of protection for the individual that had led to the character's pain. Their conversation continues as they exit the frame, which remains focused on the advert for the expensive car, beneath the poster for the play, above the pastry vendor. The dialogue continues while the camera cuts to another poster of the Egyptian film *'Innī Attahim* / I Accuse (Dir. Ḥassan al-'Imām, Egypt 1960)[77] beneath a painting of a man pointing a finger at the spectator. The appearance of the poster occurs as 'Alī Ṭāhā completes his tirade against society. 'Iḥsān in this instance is more firm and hostile in her reply to 'Alī's idealism. Her heartfelt sentiments at first appealing to 'Alī to climb down to the level of her reality and appreciate her suffering and ending with terminating the relationship. The final part of the dialogue is framed by a huge poster in the background promoting a lottery with the line 'through wealth all dreams can be realized', appearing ironic and cynical in view of the preceding conversation. The two leave the frame while the camera pans down rapidly from the poster to reveal two boys sitting on the kerb in their traditional Egyptian dress sorting what seem to be cigarette ends. After another shot following the two as they put the death knell in their affair, with more wall adverts for films and products that provide a subtext for the conversation between the two, 'Iḥsān leaves 'Alī. The opinionated narrator of the novel is thus replicated by the filmmaker's questioning and doubting the sentiments expressed in the dialogue and in the commercial world of the 1930s.

As if to put flesh on the words of 'Iḥsān and her declaration to 'Alī Ṭāhā that it is the individual, i.e. herself, that needs some attention from him rather than society, the film cuts to a plate of food that is being rapidly emptied by small hands from all directions. The Dickensian feel of the scene, including the clothes of the characters and the state of their living quarters, is emphasized by the Oliver Twist like sentiment of one of the children as she asks for more food.

[77] The year of the production of *'Innī 'Attahim* being 1960, according to Maḥmūd Qāsim, *Dalīl al-'Aflām fī al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn fī Miṣr wa al-'Ālam al-'Arabī* /Film Guide for the 20th Century in Egypt and the Arab World (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat Madbūlī 2002 / Cairo: Madbūlī Bookshop 2002) , p. 326, makes the use of the poster for the film in a narrative set decades before its production problematic.

The scene is a visual rendition of a compilation by the filmmaker from the novel of the thoughts of 'Iḥsān, her interaction with the Bey and her father. In the novel, she assured herself that by giving in to the Bey, she was becoming a martyr for the happiness of others, her siblings and parents.[78] In the novel, unlike the film, the information is imparted in retrospect, thus lessening the focus on her experience as compared with Maḥjūb who is privileged with chronology of experience in the novel.

Conclusion

Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's adaptation of *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* utilises different types of adaptation strategy. These strategies and the choices they imply are informed by the changed trajectory of the adapted text in relation to the novel due to the difference in the historical context of writing the novel and of making the film. Where the novel negotiates between the disparate political and social discourses most salient in Egypt of the 1930s, the film is a celebration, at one level, of the triumph of one of these ideologies and political leanings. This is evident in the greater importance given to the character of 'Alī Ṭāhā in the film adaptation, and the almost total elimination of the religious Ma'mūn Raḍwān. The ending of the film adaptation also attests to this changed trajectory as emphasised by the final freeze frame of the pamphlet being distributed by 'Alī Ṭāhā, and the caption 'The Beginning of the End'.

The clarity of the implication of the caption that occupies the entire space of the screen is such that the audience is left in no doubt as to the beginning that would follow this end; namely, the nationalist government of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and the Free Officers. This overtly political message, presented in a direct address to the audience, is an aberration in a film text that is on the whole far more subtle in its presentation of its political position than the treatment given in other post-1952 films of the period before the fall of King Fārūq, such

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 123

as *'Allāhu Ma'anā* (Dir. 'Aḥmad Badrakhān, Egypt 1955). *Al-Qāhirah 30* relies greatly on symbolism and a rich tapestry of frame composition, music, dialogue, camera movement and staging to convey the story without the aid of the omniscient narrator of the novel.

The strategies followed in the adaptation to the screen of scenes and dialogue fall into two main types: firstly, direct transposition to screen, usually involving dialogue-driven scenes that do not overtly rely on the narrator; secondly, where the narrator is present in the novel, the filmmaker resorts to an array of tools to remove him from the scene. These include the use of added dialogue, added characters and the creation of entire new scenes where necessary.

The scenes and characters that do not survive the adaptation suffer such a fate in the process of investing more weight in those characters that do survive. Therefore, the middle-class and educated Taḥiyyah is absent from the adaptation in order to keep 'Iḥsān as the sole attractive young woman and the only young female object of desire for the competing gazes of the young men in the narrative of the film. This also explains the non-existence of the scene in which Maḥjūb attempts to take advantage of Taḥiyyah.

The absence of Taḥiyyah from the adaptation creates more space for 'Iḥsan's character to develop on the screen. Indeed, Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf's rendition of the character of 'Iḥsān is more sympathetic and imbued with an awareness of feminism fused with socialist and left-wing analysis of the ills of society. He privileges his young heroine with the chronology in the narration of her experiences – a chronology she had been denied in the novel and consequently the extent of her suffering was reduced by the fact of retrospective narration-, making her share the sjuzhet time with Maḥjūb whose experiences are related chronologically in the film, as they had been in the novel. 'Abū Sayf also moulds the characteristics of 'Iḥsān with a view of making her a character that takes a more complex journey than her counterpart of the novel. This is evident in the fact that she is allowed moments of melancholy that are in total

opposition to her counterpart of the novel, as is evident, for example, in her downcast reply in the film to Maḥjūb's question, 'are you happy?'. In the novel she had replied, 'yes', to the same question, at a similar point in the sjuzhet- with what the narrator described as a 'smiling face'.[79] The speech which 'Iḥsān delivers to 'Alī Ṭāhā before ending the relationship also serves to add depth to her character in the film; it allows her to articulate an argument that foreshadows her decision to yield to the pressures of poverty.

In conclusion, the adaptation by Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf stands as a model of transforming the written text into the film medium without the loss of such fascinating aspects in the novel as the internal stream of consciousness that was so crucial in forming the character of Maḥjūb in the novel. The use of such a tool in the adaptation requires a sophisticated degree of harmony between the diegesis and the extra-diegesis so as not to hamper the viewer's involvement and absorption of the sealed world of the narrative.

This absorption and assimilation into the text is achieved through the full use of cinematic tools at the disposal of such an experienced director as Ṣalaḥ 'Abū Sayf. The overtly political message of the film does not stand in the way of appreciating the story, which is changed to fit both the political message and the film medium.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 147

Chapter Two

Al-'Arḍ / Earth
Sanctifying the Land and Iconising Resistance

Having outlined in the chapter on *al-Qāhirah 30* a snapshot of the development of Egyptian film industry, in this preamble to the second adapted work in the thesis from Egypt the focus will be on the director, Yūsuf Shāhīn - commonly spelt as Yousef Chahine - the director of *al-'Arḍ* / The Earth.

Walīd Shmayṭ makes an attempt at summing Shāhīn's object of love and cause of constant concern: "For Yūsuf Shāhin, Egypt is the issue, she is the subject and object, she is the cluster, the essence and the foundation. Egypt as the mother, the earth, the Nile and youth... Egypt the kindly, the downtrodden and the opposition..."[80]

With an oeuvre that was produced over six decades, Shāhīn's work provides a brilliant snapshot of the different facets of Egypt that Shmayt talks of; there is the Fallāḥ, the peasant, the wealthy land-owner, the industrialist, the intellectual, the soldier, the religious scholar, the religious extremist, the bureaucrat, the Muslim, the Christian, the Jew and other faces, ideologies and views of the world that one can expects in a nation as ancient and expansive as Egypt. The images that Shāhīn draws of Egypt are not sycophantic, nor harsh,

[80] Walīd Shmayṭ, *Yūsuf Shāhīn: Ḥayāt lil-Sīnama* / Yūsuf Shāhīn: Life for Cinema (Bayrūt: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis , 2001 / Beirut: Riad El-Rayyis Books, 2001), p. 11. My translation

but simply emanating from boundless love and passion for the country, the people, and culture, including the positive as well as the negative that are inherent in its formation.

Whether the issue at hand is a man's attempt to woo an attractive woman, as in *Bāb al-Ḥadīd* / Cairo Central Station (1958), or to establish the culprit behind a murder, as in *al-'Ikhtiyār* / The Choice (1970), or reasons for the absence and return of a wealthy family's son, as in *'Awdat al-'Ibn al-Ḍāl* / The Return of the Prodigal Son (1976), or many of the other narrative and plot devices present in his work, Shāhīn's films have at their heart an attempt to understand, to untangle, almost to make clear to Shāhīn himself "why" it is life, history, the nation and culture have taken this particular turn. This is evident in the analysis his films attempt of the ingredients of failure, of corruption, of injustice, and other themes in his work, where the probing lens inspects the many layers of society involved in what the director views to be contributing factors in those aspects of national life that are flawed.

This flawed aspect of the culture and the nation is also present in the more personal narratives that he put to film. These are dominated by the quartet of films which were in parts densely autobiographical, and in parts more loosely based on his life growing up in Alexandria and experiencing life in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural city, living through the Second World War and the presence of British troops in large numbers, travelling to study in the United States, coming back to Egypt, through to moments of joy in his life, such as winning prizes at festivals. The titles of the films speak volumes of their topics and geneses: *al-'Iskandariyyah... Līh?* / Alexandria... Why? (1978); *Ḥaddūtah Miṣriyyah* / An Egyptian Story (1982); *al-'Iskandariyyah... Kamān wa Kamān* / Alexandria Again and Forever (1989), and *al-'Iskandariyyah... New York* / Alexandria... New York (2004).

The autobiographical is also present in films where Shāhīn the filmmaker and a member of the intelligentsia reveals his doubts, his concerns, and his sense of

disillusion with aspects of Pan-Arab ideology that he supports. The Egyptian and Arab defeat in the 1967 war against Israel is a case in point. This is evident in what has been termed the "trilogy of defeat" by critics such as 'Alī 'Abū Shādī.[81] The three films, *al-'Ikhtiyār* / The Choice (1970), *al-'Uṣfūr* / The Sparrow (1973), and *'Awdat al-'Ibn al-Ḍāl* / Return of the Prodigal Son (1976), are as much an act of catharsis on the part of Shāhīn, to settle an account with himself and the rulers of Egypt, as it is an autopsy of the state of mind, policies and government that led Egypt to the catastrophe of 1967.

For these films are as much an indictment of the regime as they are of the intellectual and his role in supporting the regime, to the point that the intellectuals "were corrupted [by the regime], and in turn the regime was corrupted by them."[82]

Shāhīn's critique of Egyptian and Arab culture extends to wider issues, such as the position of women and the contradictory and confusing feelings and viewpoints that men experience and develop to negotiate with them. There are women which have that magical combination of strong character and a coquettishness, such as Hannūmah in *Bāb al-Hadīd*, or the mother in the autobiographical quartet, or Bahiyyah in *al-'Usfūr*, or the dancer in *al-Maṣīr* / Destiny (1997), or, indeed, Waṣīfah in *al-'Arḍ*. In many instances, these women are more of an ideal, impossibly beautiful, intelligent and yet love and are loved by men.

The male character, on the other hand, is drawn along the full spectrum from being confident, assertive, in the John Ford way of characterisation, to the more wary, uncertain and insecure. Shāhīn also joins a small number of Arab filmmakers to create the space for sympathetic and three-dimensional homosexual characters, as can be seen in his autobiographical quartet.

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[81] 'Alī 'Abū Shādī, "Qirā'ah fī Thulāthiyyat al-Hazīmah / A Reading of the Trilogy of Defeat", *Sīnamā* / Cinema, Issue Number 24, May 2004, pp. 50 - 53.

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 50

Shāhīn's work is also symptomatic of the manner in which over the past six decades filmmakers in Egypt have interacted with the state, be it in terms of censorship or funding. While his early films, in the 1950s and early 1960s, were funded by local producers, Shāhīn began to make films produced by the state, and also began to produce films as part of a co-production with Algerian, French and German film distributors and organizations. Indeed, the last Shāhīn film to have been fully funded by the state sector in Egypt was the subject of this chapter, *al-'Arḍ*. Indeed, after *al-'Arḍ* the state was involved in only one other film by Shāhīn; paradoxically, it was *al-Wadā' yā Bonaparte* / Adieu Bonaparte (1985), as it was a film funded mainly by the French.

The reasons behind this rupture between the director and the state film arms are many fold; they include Shāhīn's own choice of subject matter for his films and, as Ibrahim Fawal states, "he refused to compromise his art by pandering to public taste, and his suspicion of officialdom persisted."[83]

Back in 1969, with Shāhīn still bewildered by the scale and extent of Egypt's and the Arab World's defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, it seems that Shāhīn found he would be able probe his views and those of Egyptian and Arab intellectuals over the causes of this defeat through the making of a feature film funded by the state's film arm, al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Sīnamā / Egyptian General Organisation for Cinema.

By the time of making the film, the writer of the adapted text, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, had developed a body of work which included a number of verse dramas, using the free verse – al-shi'r al-ḥur – in the dialogue of the characters.[84] His plays included the historical dramas, *al-Ḥussayn Thā'iran* / al-

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[83] Ibrahim Fawal, *Youssef Chahine* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001), p. 46

[84] For analysis of the work of al-Sharqāwī, see Muṣṭafā Badawī, *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982)

Ḥussayn A Revolutionary (1969) and *al-Ḥussayn Shahīdan* / al-Ḥussayn A Martyr (1969). Taking as their subject matter the historical events which led to the death in 680 AD of al-Ḥussayn Ibn ‘Alī Ibn ’Abī Ṭālib, the grandson of prophet Muḥummad, the staging of the plays ran into opposition from al-’Azhar, the respected Cairo-based Islamic authority. Experts in Islamic jurisprudence cited a prohibitin on the visual depiction of the prophet and his immediate descendants as basis for their opposition to the staging of the plays.[85] Interestingly, for a man with a body of work which included biographies of Islamic figures, including prophet Muḥammad, and the fourth khalīf ‘Alī Ibn ’Abī Ṭālib, al-Sharqawi’s world view is influenced by socialism. Indeed, his biography of prophet Muḥammad is presented from a “Marxist viewpoint”.[86]

Shāhīne’s[87] screen adaptation of the 1953-4 published novel *al-’Arḍ*[88] by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, is best assessed and analysed by firstly setting out the historical contexts of the production of each work respectively. This is due to the historical references and setting of the diegesis in both cases and the manner in which the present of the author and the director respectively influenced the construction of the past in each of the two works. The novel was published in serialized form during 1953 and published in full the following year. At one level the novel deals with the relationship between a city dweller and his village and country roots. It follows through this scenario a line of novels from the dawn of the modern novel format in the Arab world. In fact, the narrator starts

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[85] For more background to the attempt of the Egyptian theatre director Karam Muṭāwi‘ to stage the play in the 1970s and the opposition of al-’Azhar, see Marina Stagh, *The Limits of Freedom of Speech: Prose Literature and Prose Writers in Egypt under Nasser and Sadat* (Stockholm: Almqvist-Wiksell, 1993), p. 139; for al-Sharqāwī’s socialist leanings see Hilary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel: A Study in Social Criticism* (London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St. Antony’s College, 1974), p. 183

[86] Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 2, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 707

[87] The more widely used spelling is Youssef Chahine. The correct transliteration of the name, Yūsuf Shāhīne, will be used except in the context of a quote from an English or French source.

[88] ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī, *al-’Arḍ*, first published in Cairo in 1954. The edition used in the thesis was published in Cairo by Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī Lilṭibā‘ah wa al-Nashr, 1968 / Arabic Book House for Printing and Publishing, 1968. All translations will be taken from *Egyptian Earth*, translated by Desmond Stewart (London: Saqi Books, 1990). The original text will be referred to as *al-’Arḍ*, and the translation as *Egyptian Earth*. All translations of dialogue from the film are mine.

the narrative by referring to Arabic novels published in Egypt in the period that precedes the starting point of the narrative. These works include *Zaynab* / Zaynab, by Muḥammad Ḥussayn Haykal, *al-'Ayyām* / The Days, by Ṭāhā Ḥussayn, and *Yawmiyyāt Nā'ib fī al-'Aryāf* / Diary of a Country Prosecutor, by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm.[89] The point of similarity with these texts rests in the rural being presented through the eyes of the urban, the village and its daily life being dissected by the probing gaze of the city. The difference, however, lies in the political agenda of the narrative of *al-'Arḍ*, for unlike *Zaynab*, for example, *al-'Arḍ*'s starting point is a restlessness and a simmering rage against the status quo of rural life in 1930s Egypt where a feudal system pervaded to the benefit of one class and the detriment of the majority of the population.[90] As 'Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr points out, in *Zaynab* one finds a village 'without problems, a quiet and patient village where the fallāḥ lives the life of slaves and serfs without complaint, for he has no passion or dreams.'[91] Badr provides an insightful analysis of the place of the land in modern Egyptian literature that preceded the publication of *al-'Arḍ*. Badr contends that al-Sharqāwī faces the

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[89] All three works represent milestones in the development of written Arabic narrative and the novel:

Muḥammad Ḥussayn Haykal, *Zaynab* / Zaynab, first published in 1914, reprinted on many occasions. Available copy reprinted in Cairo in 1983 (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1983 / Cairo: The Home of Knowledge, 1983). Translation: Mohammed Hussein Haikal, *Zainab: The first Egyptian novel*, translated from the Arabic by John Mohammed Grinsted (London: Darf, 1989).

Ṭahā Ḥussayn, *al-'Ayyām* / The Days, first published in the 1920s, reprinted on many occasions. Available copy reprinted in Beirut in 1995 (Bayrūt: al-Sharikah al-'Āalamiyyah li al-Kitāb, 1995 / Beirut: The World Company for Books, 1995). Translation: Taha Husayn, *The Days: his autobiography in three parts*, translated by E. H. Paxton, Hilary Wayment Kenneth Cragg (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997)

Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, *Yawmiyyāt Nā'ib fī al-'Aryāf* / Diary of a Country Prosecutor, first published in Cairo in 1937, reprinted (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat al-'Adab, 1954 / Cairo: The Literature Bookshop, 1954), Translation: Tawfīq al-Hakim, *Maze of Justice: Diary of a Country Prosecutor*, Translated by Abba Eban (London: al-Saqi, 2007).

[90] This was the issue of land ownership and the manner in which the Turko-Egyptian Pāshā elites had come, partly through patronage, to own huge swathes of fertile land. The situation was markely changed by the 1952 Land Reform Law No. 178 introduced by the newly formed government of the Free Officers; this law redistributed all plots of land larger than two hundred faddāns held by individuals. For more details see Alan Richards Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800- 1900: Technical and Social Change (Colorado: Westview Press 1982), pp. 176-183

[91] 'Abd al-Muḥsin Ṭāhā Badr, *al-Riwā'ī wa al-'Arḍ* / The Novelist and the Land (al-Qāhirah:al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah lilta'līf wa al-Nashr, 1971 / Cairo: The General Egyptian Council for Writing and Publishing, 1971), p. 58, my translation

difficulty of trying to connect the 'historic reality' and the 'artistic reality' of his novel in that the revolt that takes place in the period covered by the novel against the rule of prime minister Ṣidqī was a 'bourgeois revolt' against a representative of 'Egyptian capitalism that colluded with the colonial powers'.[92]

The point provides a link to the film adaptation of the novel in 1969; for the filmmaker nullifies the bourgeois nature of the revolt against the regime and presents an Egypt, with its colourations of the fallāḥ, modern university and traditional al-'Azhar students rising against the regime that is presented simply as an agent of the British.

Adaptation Strategy

The historical context of the production of the film adaptation differs markedly from that of the writing and publication of the novel, for whereas the novel was written and published in the immediate period following the end of the monarchy and the dawn of a new age in the politics of Egypt and the wider Middle East, the film was made in the aftermath of a cataclysmic point in the history of modern Egypt and the wider region: the 1967 war with Israel and its catastrophic effects on the military, economic and political map of the area. Both novel and film carry the finger prints of the difference in the circumstances surrounding the publication and making of the novel and film respectively and, arguably, the contrast between the romanticism of Arab nationalism and solidarity that had accompanied the publication of the novel and what maybe seen as the bitterness of defeat and recognition that paralleled the film's production.

The ideological impetus of the narrative of the novel and the difference in its trajectory to that of the film is crucial in analysing the adaptation strategy followed by the filmmakers. The class system, the corrupt government, the subservience of the Ṣidqī Government and the king to the British are at the

[92] *Ibid.* p. 120

heart of the narrative of a novel written and published directly after the coup of the Free Officers against the monarchy, and during the very period in which the new ruling groups were plotting the future of Egypt and the type of political and economic system she would follow. Therefore, at one level, the novel can be seen as a release and an exorcism of all that was politically proscribed during the near past as far as the author is concerned. This would help explain the obviously rhetorical and politically motivated speeches that the characters and narrator of the novel share with the reader. For example, when a character asserts in relation to a particular intervention by the government that this is not related to elections and the need for people's vote, the narrator states that 'it was the government of Ḥizb al-Sha'b (People's Party) that had sent men to force the fellāḥīn to elect the party's candidates...this very same government deprives the land of the fellāḥīn of water and sends officials recruited from the families of the fellāḥīn to execute these orders.'[93]

Furthermore, at the heart of the novel stand three main forces: firstly, the need for social change and a loosening in the grip of one class over another; secondly, the need for agrarian reform and thirdly, a certain discomfort with religion inspired, like the other two points, by a socialist agenda in the narrative. To begin with, the call for agrarian reform is at best confused in the narrative of the novel; confused due to the reminiscences of the narrator and the stream of consciousness of the character of 'Abd al-Hādī. As Badr rightly points out, the ownership of the land in the economy of the narrative of the novel is only justified if it is one where the owned plot of land is small and its owner works and lives off the produce of the land.[94] In other words, the ideological position of the narrative, as will be clear while analysing the characterisation in the novel, is derived from a socialist position of introducing ownership of the land to those who work the land. The position is confirmed by parts of the narrative that did not survive the Desmond Stewart English translation: The narrator

[93] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 63, my translation. Quote not translated in the English translation, Desmond Stewart, *Egyptian Earth*, (London: Saqi Books, 1990), p. 52
[94] Badr, 1971: p. 129

states that only a few villagers actually own their land and, therefore, only these landowners are worried by the prospect of taxes and the confiscation of their land. The rest of the villagers are not particularly perturbed by prospect of land confiscation. 'In truth, they try to hide their gleeful laughter every time they see the tax collector, accompanied by an armed guard, enter the home of one of the land owning villagers.'[95]

However, the limited number of those owning land does not portray this group in a negative light; in fact the narrative places great emphasis on what is to all intents and purposes an umbilical cord in the economy of the novel between owning the land on which one works and of which one lives and one's integrity and honour. For this is a particularly brutal rule that does not spare any of the protagonists of the narrative, including Waṣīfah, the girl sought by all the eligible male characters in the village. Land ownership provides a power dynamic with heavy bearing on the network of relationships and positions of power and influence within the village and beyond.

The brutal rule that renders those who do not own their land lacking in honour[96] applies most saliently to the women of the village. The finality of this rule is adhered to by the entire narrative of the novel. Khaḍrah, the girl without a family or home in the village, needs to sell her body for as small a price as a piece of corn, mainly because she does not own land, and therefore has no solid source of income. The narrative demonstrates the nadir that is her position in the community both during her life and sudden death. She is shown to be physically attacked and kicked in the abdomen by Diyāb, Muḥmmad 'Afandī's brother, as punishment for a mere joke. His anxiety at the sight of her body squirming with pain on the ground is explained by the narrator on Diyāb's behalf by referring to how Khaḍrah has no family or strength, and dwells on the physical relationship between the two and the closeness that their bodies had

[95] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 4, translation. Not translated in Stewart.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 39

experienced.[97] While being reflective of the possible way of thinking of a character such as Diyāb, a young man whose other contact with the other sex must be limited to his immediate family, these thoughts have more in common with the brutality of the laws that govern the narrative on the link between dignity, pride and honour and ownership of the land, than with a genuine concern for a fellow human being.

Even death does not free Khaḍrah from the reaches of this law. 'Abd al-Hādī's suggestion that she be buried in Shaykh Shinnāwī's burial ground is rejected by the Shaykh who refers to Khaḍrah as unclean and that her dirty bones will not be buried in Muslim cemeteries.[98] On the other hand, the village virgin, Waṣīfah, is very rapidly thrown into the path of male beasts and a possible marriage to a man old enough to be her father the moment her family's small land is reduced further in size through confiscation by the authorities to build the new road. The banishment, implicit though it may be, is the starker given the prominence of her position within the narrative and her effect on the relationships between all the eligible bachelors in the village.

The filmmaker increases the number of villagers implied to own the land they work, in order to fit the trajectory of the adaptation which is inflected by the historical moment of the production, and therefore a scene showing characters revelling in the suffering of fellow villagers would not be helpful in the obvious aim of the film narrative to address the loss of another land, that of Sinai occupied by the Israelis. Indeed, this point explains the whole strategy followed for adapting the novel into the screen; with the lost land as the prize to which the filmmaker directs the consciousness of his audience, *al-'Arḍ* becomes a large canvas upon which the filmmaker traces the lines that connect the different forces that in Egyptian history have had a hand in both the loss of the land and also a role in liberating her from the hands of occupiers and conquerors.

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[97] *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 207

The final point in adaptation strategy is the filmmaker's treatment of the structural weakness in the novel that is the narrator. Having begun the narrative with a first person narrator, the novel somehow loses contact with him, and his limited perspective is replaced by an omniscient narration. The first person narration of the boy, who at the start of the novel had begun relating the story of his summer holidays back in the village, reappears in the text half way through the sjuzhet and at its end. The position of this first person narrator in the narrative appears haphazard. Badr suggests that the weakness in choice of type of narration is due to the novel having first been published in serial form in a period concurrent with its inception. Al-Sharqāwī, suggests Badr, was forced to abandon his young narrator when it transpired that a boy of twelve years could not possibly play a part in the struggle for the land against the authorities, nor be a viable candidate for Waṣīfah's affections.[99] This clarification raises more issues than it solves; Badr's acceptance of the premise that publishing a novel in serial form while it is still being written has an inevitable consequence of creating such problems which have to be remedied through ditching some central characters ignores the endless supply of examples of novels published in serialized format from Dickens onwards.

The above reservation notwithstanding, the fact that the narrative does away with the first person narrator early on in the novel gives the diegetic world a more plausible feel whereby the character of the narrator does not need to be in every room or field, or overhear stories about the happenings of the village, for the narrative to make sense. Moreover, the disappearance of the first person narrator, who was also a character within the diegetic world of the narrative, helps provide a more discernable voice to other characters, a voice that sits comfortably with Badr's description of al-Sharqāwi characters in *al-'Arḍ* as free willed and able to react and interact with the forces with which they are surrounded.[100]

[99] Op. Cit., p. 124
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 128

Characterisation

The novel places its characters along a grid that falls into an intricate system of binary opposites. There is the village virgin, Waṣīfah, as opposed to the village whore, Khaḍrah. There are the village elders, good and bad, as opposed to the young men. There is the old honest farmer, model father and husband, 'Abū Suwaylim, as opposed to the 'Umdah, a conniving, dishonest old man married to a woman too young for his old years. There is the young farmer, 'Abd al-Hādī, honest, strong and hardworking, as opposed to 'Ulwānī, who, although strong and feared by some villagers, is dishonest and lacking in honour. They both are in some respects presented as binary opposites to the character of Muḥammad 'Afandī, a learned man who owns the land but does not work it, and who is later shown to be lacking in certain morals.

These characters are in a sense a collage of types, to use Sergei Eisenstein's terminology.[101] They represent known stereotypes in Egyptian and Arabic oral and written literature. There is the totally evil and negative character of the 'Umdah. His main concern is to keep the mayoralty and keep the distant authority of the city at bay. Achieving his goal means arresting and sending the majority of the male villagers to the provincial capital where they will be humiliated and punished for not abiding by the new watering quota. His draconian treatment of the villagers is contrasted by his inability to keep his young wife from looking at, and possibly lusting after, other men. Impotence or lack of virility is a classic method at the disposal of authors in explaining the over aggressive or merciless behaviour of characters.

The 'Umdah's designs on the village on behalf of the Pāshā and the far away city authority are helped by Shaykh Shinnāwī, the cleric of the village. Being someone who does not own and work his land, the Shaykh could easily fall prey to the rule of land and honour. While the narrative makes no direct reference to

[101] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form and Film Sense:Two Complete and Unabridged works* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), reprinted by arrangement with Harcourt, Brace & Company, New York, from two different volumes, Film Form, 1949, and the new revised edition, 1947, of the Film Sense.

Shaykh Shinnāwī in this context, there is a tension between 'Abd al-Hādī and the Shaykh whenever the latter makes an observation about the land and the new watering quota. Indeed, 'Abd al-Hādī has an internal monologue, whispering to himself that Shaykh Shinnāwī would not be so eager to describe the villagers' misery as a divine retribution for their lack of prayers and attendance at the mosque, had the Shaykh owned a land in which his sweat mixed with its earth.[102] Moreover, Shaykh Shinnāwī's perceived lack of appreciation of the passion that the people hold for the land is demonstrated in his encouragement of the villagers to sign a blank paper that Maḥmūd Bey, the wealthy local landlord, later fills with a request to the authorities on behalf of the villagers to build the new road, contrary to their actual wishes.

The characters of the novel are drawn with physical attributes that would fit their demeanour and nature: as the most sought after girl in the village, Waṣīfah's beauty and attention from all the eligible male bachelors in the village is contrasted with the daughter of Shaykh Yūsuf, the only other 'honourable' woman in the village that is given a physical description in the novel. She is portrayed as having hollow cheeks and an unattractive figure. She is linked to Waṣīfah through Shaykh Yūsuf's interest in marrying his daughter to Muḥmmad 'Afandī, one of the candidates for Waṣīfah's hand.

'Abd al-Hādī's physicality is described in terms that assert his masculinity and strength and physical presence above the rest of the men of marriageable age in the novel. A chorus of village boys watching a gathering of the men observe 'Abd al-Hādī: "he ['Abd al-Hādī] rubbed the thick hair on his bare chest, matted with mud from the fields, and one boy whispered to another: 'Look! Abdul Hadi has one lion's hair on his chest, he's looking for it to rub…'"[103]

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[102] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 82; Badr, p. 136

[103] *Egyptian Earth*, p. 53. Transliteration of character names from the Desmond Stewart translation.

Part of ‘Abd al-Hādī’s description in the narrative would arguably fall in the portrayal of Muḥammad ’Afandī, a rival for the affections of Waṣīfah. The ’Afandī is described in the novel as ‘a small, thin man with a quiet voice. Weedy, with a scraggy neck, he shaved regularly and trimmed his moustache in a way followed by no one else in the village.’[104]

The filmmaker abides to a great extent by these physical and personal traits of the characters. ‘Abd al-Hādī is drawn with an infatuated camera that spreads the seemingly infinite space of the screen for close-ups of his facial features and the tall figure of the actor ‘Izzat al-‘Alāylī. The physical shortcomings of Muḥammad ’Afandī are emphasised in the adaptation by giving the character a foreboding and unattractive pair of spectacles that stand out in the village.

While most of the villagers survive the adaptation, the filmmaker’s choice of traits for certain members of the community helps explain the slightly different power dynamic in the adaptation. The character that benefits most from this change is ‘Abd al-Hādī, who emerges as an even more central character in the film due to the total absence in the adaptation of any real physical presence to the other young men of the village. The other character from the generation of ‘Abd al-Hādī who does have a presence in the masculine hierarchy of the novel is ‘Ulwānī. In the novel, he is admired by many women in the village, and feared by some men, for he is like his father –who migrated to the village- brave, excels in the use of fire arms, and is adept in using the stick/cane.[105] In the process of the change, the filmmaker presents ‘Abd al-Hādī as the sole worthy suitor for heart of Waṣīfah. In order to make ‘Ulwānī less threatening and not as much of a challenge to ‘Abd al-Hādī, he is presented as a boy rather than a man. This has an implication on certain scenes in the film adaptation; for example, when ‘Ulwānī spies on girls bathing, it is portrayed in the film as part of a boyish behaviour, rather than the predatory version of the novel.[106]

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 60
[105] *Al-’Arḍ*, p. 22
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 21

Similarly, the character of Qāsim of the novel, who emerges as the surprise suitor for Waṣīfah, is totally obliterated from the film adaptation. The character who makes an appearance in the film in a similar role to that of Qāsim, a coach driver, is used to focus attention in an expository manner on the presence of Waṣīfah in the vicinity of the village in the opening sequence of the film.

The exposition at this early stage in the film echoes the novel's focus on the character of Waṣīfah. In the written narrative she had been introduced via a conversation between the boys of the village and the narrator, reminding him of an escapade in which he was caught as an eight year old boy indulging in a game of bride and groom with the eleven-year-old Waṣīfah. The narrator relates how her figure was already attractive and how the other boys used to enjoy touching her.[107] Five years later, she is aged sixteen, and he is twelve; the narrator dwells on her physique and describes her full chest and figure.[108] These descriptions, frequent throughout the narrative, and their exceptional emphasis on the beauty and good health of the figure of the female character can be seen as counterpoints to the physical strengths of the male characters; their virility is balanced by her fertile attributes. It is no accident, in fact, that she is the only woman in the entire narrative of being described as healthy and of great looks. The other women that do get a physical description are limited to Khaḍrah, whose figure is painted as having passed its peak point of health, and the aforementioned daughter of Shaykh Yūsuf, who is burdened with ill health.

Waṣīfah, however, is different in that far from being the idealist romantic that was main character in *Zaynab*, she is aware of her physical desires. The fact that her father was the proud head of the local police force and owner of a small plot of land has something to do with her own pride and the love and 'fear' that she instils in everyone.[109] On their secret meeting by the shrine of a saint near the

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 6
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 29
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 24

village, Waṣīfah does not think twice in undoing the top of her dress ostensibly to hide the half a florin that the narrator hands her as a gift. In fact, she allows the narrator to stare at her bare chest and admire its shape. She suggests teasingly that they have grown older since the last time they played bride and groom inside the shrine in years gone by.[110] This is an audacious act on the part of the writer to reverse the male predatory behaviour so instilled in the mind of the male reader and present instead a young attractive woman who takes a proactive approach towards fulfilling her sexual desire. The youth of her companion and the lack of any real threat that he might constitute to her position in the village is a huge factor in her behaviour.

On another level, the construction of the character of Waṣīfah in the novel is a reflection of a suspicion of women at the heart of the novel. This is reflected in the position of characters along a grid in the novel focussed on issues of virility and fertility. The position of the male characters along this grid also affects the place of women with whom they are associated. The filmmaker takes the novel's plotting of characters along the grid of power and influence in the narrative but inflects it with the added dimension of the national struggle for the liberation of occupied Egyptian land. This inflection helps moderate and lessen the intensity of the misogynistic attitude of certain characters within the novel.

The novel's meditation on the thoughts and basic ideas permeating masculinity, presented through focus on the physical attributes of a character such as 'Abd al-Hādī, portraying him as Greek god-like, and also through his behaviour in the village and among his peers. 'Abd al-Hādī, as one of the potential suitors to Waṣīfah in the novel and as the sole worthy contender for her affections in the film, is drawn with aspects of character that emphasise his virility. While these features are moulded to fit the character's counterpart of the film, it is telling which aspects of the character do not survive the adaptation. These include an instance in which his internal voice is divulged by the narrator querying the

[110] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33

possibility of an illicit relationship between his beloved Waṣīfah and his nemesis Muḥmmad 'Afandī. The reader overhears him, 'was it possible that she had been meeting Muḥammad 'Afandī? Was it possible that his dry, horny hand had been at play on this fair, honourable flesh? He wished suddenly that any man who touched a woman would leave an ugly scar- visible to other men.'[111] The final sentence is a great evocation of the two-way stream of allegory between woman and land. The romantic viewpoint of associating the fertility of the land and her yielding of crops to childbearing and the fertile nature of women is set aside in this brutal and masculine rendition of women as creatures to be conquered. The very aspect that plays a central role in the male attraction to women in this masculine economy is also the reason for his anxiety; her being a 'fertile soil' for his genes makes him vulnerable to infringement by other men.

The attitude towards women by some of the male characters in the novel is underpinned by reference to a genie that is used to scare and forbid the boys in the village from staying out late:

> And into my head came the fairy stories I had heard, in particular of the night-fairy who would come out of the river and sit by the bank in the shape of a tall, pale peasant-woman with a pitcher to fill. But if anyone whom she asked for help in filling her pitcher came near, she would take him into the depths of the river, and he would never be seen again.[112]

The genie is female, white and with uncovered hair; she asks for help from passers-by; she thus is different from the norm in the village. The symbolism in her request is hardly lost on the reader, nor is the fact that her sole potential victims are of the male species: the threat is from a woman to a man. The presence of this element in the narrative is a great fusion of the written mode of storytelling, a form more associated with the urban readership in a country and a region with a high illiteracy rate, with that of the oral tradition, which is another form of imagining the community and imposing an order and logic to its existence.

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[111] *Egyptian Earth*, p. 84
[112] *Egyptian Earth*, p. 22

The filmmaker avoids the gravity of the issue raised by this complex relationship between men and women in the novel, due to his strategy of changing the trajectory of the narrative to one more focused on the liberation of the land, making the village a representation of the whole of the Egyptian nation. The adaptation's position is undoubtedly projected through the prism of the increased presence of women in higher education and in the civil service in the 1960s as part of a general trend in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, for example. Therefore, the strong character attributes of Waṣīfah in the novel, for example, are kept in the film with the added angle that makes her stand out as an individual in her own right, as opposed to the simple pride she has in the novel due to her father's position in the community. Similarly, when the narrator in the novel expresses his anxiety about Waṣīfah walking alone in the middle of the night, she replies that she can take care of herself and that the fact that her father was no longer chief of the guards did not mean that the birds 'can eat from his flesh'.[113] This sentiment is purged from the adaptation, despite the presence in the film of the clear link between the dignity of the girl and her father's position in the community. The obvious position the girl assumes she occupies in the novel, as being a liability and an object belonging to her father, is eradicated from the film as part of the narrative's awareness of its own urban audience of the late 1960s, as opposed to the novel's urban readership of the early 1950s.

The characterisation of a certain section of the elder males in the community and the manner in which they survive the adaptation is a further demonstration of the variance in certain aspects of the agendas between the film and the novel. The characters in question are Shaykh Shinnāwī, Shaykh Yūsuf and Shaykh Ḥassūnah. The three elders in the village have in common the presence of religion in the construction of their characters and their occupations. Shinnāwī

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[113] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 37. In this instance, the Stewart translation covers the meaning of the sum total as opposed to the actual words deployed; thus he translates the outburst as, 'even though her father was no longer Chief Guard, there was no one in the village who would dare to treat her disrespectfully.' *Egyptian Earth*, p. 31

is the 'imām of the small village mosque. Yūsuf is the local grocer who had studied for some time at al-'Azhar, the great seat of learning in Cairo. Ḥassūnah is a graduate of al-'Azhar who worked his way in the school system to the position of principal in the locality of the village, before being ostracised to a far flung corner of the country as chastisement for his role in opposing certain government backed reforms.

The three characters survive the adaptation with changes that reflect the position of the filmmaker, and the context of the film production, on religion. For whereas religion of the novel stands in general as an accomplice and a partner to authority, with a single exception, in the form of Shaykh Shinnāwī, religion in the film is separated to a point from men of religion. The negative attributes of the religious order are not shown to be linked to religion per se. This presents a marked divergence from the novel where the narrative is clearly constructed with socialist and Marxist leanings. Shaykh Shinnāwī is depicted in the novel as a buffoon with very little appreciation of the true suffering and difficulties endured by the average villager. His comic behaviour in the novel is supplemented by a satirical portrayal of his appearance: the size and magnitude of his abdomen is mentioned several times in the narrative, referring to its shaking under the effect of his movement. The emphasis on this part of the anatomy is arguably a reference to the relatively easy life of Shinnāwī in comparison with the harshness of working the land for the rest of the villagers. The contrast between the physique of the religious leader and the rest of the community is carried through into the visual rendition of the character in the film, though the manner in which he is framed, generally in wide shots and with other characters, makes him drawn in a more comic angle than the criticism of the novel.

Shinnāwī does fall in the novel to the brutal rule of 'no land, no honour' as 'Abd al-Hādī likens the Shaykh to Khaḍrah, in a stream of consciousness. They both do not own a land to live off, and they make their living from alternative

means.[114] The Shinnāwī of the film, however, retains the comic and simple self-preserving attitude of his counterpart of the novel. This is shown in his introduction in the film trying to cover his fear and anxiety of bumping into 'Abd al-Hādī in the dark of the night by berating him for not going to pray in the mosque. 'Abd al-Hādī's expected disregard to the Shaykh and his request is implied in the film to be a repetition of a time honoured scene between an old man of religion and a young man with respective age related concerns and occupations. The Shaykh's cry behind the rapidly disappearing 'Abd al-Hādī, 'you village of unbelievers', comes across as amusing and lacking any real dark undertones. In fairness to the novel, this aspect of the dialogue and interaction between the Shaykh and other characters is a reflection of the nuanced construction of the character in the novel. The difference lies in the change in the film's ideological starting point in building the character, one that abandons the overtly socialist and Marxist critique of religion as represented by the Shaykh's behaviour.

The second of the trio representing aspects of religion is Shaykh Yūsuf; his lot in the film follows that of his counterpart of the novel. Yūsuf is portrayed as a defeated character at many levels: his education at al-'Azhar did not lead to the positions acquired by his peers in the civil service or the religious bureaucracy; he could have been made a judge, a school principle, as he states in both film and novel, or an 'imām of a mosque in an urban centre; parts of his land were confiscated or taken over in compensation for debts or taxes; and finally his lack of a male heir is compounded by the ill health of his daughter and the consequent difficulty in getting her married. His role in anti-government protests and his refusal to pay new government introduced taxes do not qualify him for the position of respect that 'Abū Suwaylim, a man of his generation, is accorded. The reasoning rests in Yūsuf being a character type and thus the trajectory that he follows is set more by the contrast and spotlight that his character serves to project towards the honourable and most prominent characters in the narrative. This is evident in the fact that Yūsuf's role in anti-

[114] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 82

government protests is related by the narrator rather than demonstrated in a dialogue between characters. The latter scenario would have allowed Yūsuf to bask in the glory of his past. This privilege is given to 'Abū Suwaylim who is consoled by Shaykh Ḥassūnah by being reminded of the role all three of them, 'Abū Suwaylim, Ḥassūnah and Yūsuf, played in an anti-government revolt and the beatings they endured in prison. Crucially, the scene is designed to make 'Abū Suwaylim forego of the memory of a recent arrest and torture, rather than to focus on the heroism of all three. The fact that Yūsuf is not present in this particular scene in both novel and its film counterpart, and that the dialogue about his role mainly takes place between Shaykh Ḥassūnah and 'Abū Suwaylim, is indicative of the position accorded to Yūsuf in the narrative. The scene works in favour of 'Abū Suwaylim and Ḥassūnah's respective positions in the narrative.

The inferior position given to Yūsuf is linked in the film, as in the novel, to his insecurity as a man feeling the onslaught of the passage of time and the absence of a son to support him in his older years: 'He was sad.. feeling lonely, weak, barren and a bit lost.. and he was defeated..'[115] The filmmaker aptly puts these elements into a single scene in which Yūsuf pleads with other villagers to appreciate his reasoning for trading with the builders of the new road opposed by the whole village: 'I do not have an 'Afandī son who would have pity on me in old age [and support me]'. His awareness of the fragility of his livelihood and the overwhelming feeling of helplessness finds an escape in the books he read about the great hero in Arabic literature 'Antar Ibn Shaddād and the adventures of 'Abū Zayd al-Hilālī.[116] The novel's use of intertextuality to shed light on the character is avoided in the film, simply in order to avoid defusing the film's focus away from the main characters of Waṣīfah, 'Abd al-Hādī, 'Abū Suwaylim, Muḥmmad 'Afandī and Shaykh Ḥassūnah.

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[115] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 198. My translation; text not included in the Stewart translation.
[116] *Ibid.*, p. 350

Defeat is certainly not a trait that is associated with the third character in the trio of religious men in the village, Shaykh Ḥassūnah. He survives almost intact the journey to the screen, though the filmmaker shows Ḥassūnah to be actively pragmatic, unlike his counterpart of the novel who shows his acceptance of the status quo by simply returning back to Cairo to prepare for the new school year.[117] The film's portrayal of the character is also a study of the many different elements that Egypt of the late 1960s saw as components of defeat. These elements throw their long shadow from the present of the filmmaker to the historical period covered in the narrative. Therefore, while Ḥassūnah is described as honourable, educated and someone whose learning in al-'Azhar had a role in forming his taking part in the 1919 rebellion against the British, the context of the production of the film requires also an emphasis on rejecting any compromise. Dealing at one level with injustice in recent Egyptian history and at another level with the occupation of Egyptian territory by the Israelis, pragmatism in the economy of the film would suggest negotiating with the occupiers. The film adds this negative trait to the character in order to refer to the role played by the leadership in the failure that was the 1967 war. The linking of the character to the effort to liberate the land is achieved with great style in two sequences. The first is the introduction of the Shaykh in the film outside what appears to be a mosque from the Mamlūk period, signifying the heritage of Egypt and the role of this heritage in producing its leadership. The setting becomes even more captivating as a close-up shot of the Shaykh is accompanied by a reduction to the point of darkness of the lighting for the area behind him. The effect of his declaration, 'I can not achieve much without us all working arm in arm', is multiplied and abstracted, making his thoughts universal and free from the boundaries of his immediate physical surroundings.[118] The second sequence depicts the gradual unsettling of the Shaykh's basic beliefs towards the dangers presented by the building of the new road. The sequence brings together the Shaykh and Maḥmūd Bey, the aristocrat

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 322
[118] The shot sports an echo of Soviet Cinema of the 1920s. See David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge 1997), p. 128

for whose benefit in the film the new road is being built at the cost of land being confiscated from villagers. The filmmaker creates a personal stake for the Shaykh in the land to be confiscated, by making his land, along with that of his nephew Muḥammad 'Afandī also at risk. Maḥmūd Bey offers to save the Shaykh's land, in return for his cooperation. This offer is made through a montage of jump cuts between different settings and points in time that show the Bey starting his monologue of the need to improve and modernize the life of the village while respectively looking at a European statue, posing for a portrait, coming back from a horse-ride, and finally washing his hands in a basin held for him by a servant. All the while, the Shaykh's beliefs are being shaken by the ideas and thoughts of this Westernised aristocrat wilfully confusing issues of modernisation with his personal interests.

The Rural and the Urban

The ties that link Maḥmūd Bey to the main characters in the narrative are underscored with a fascination of the city dweller with the village and the village's conception of the city and the urban world. They both reciprocate a wholly stereotypical and unrealistic imagination of one another. Being a novel that begins with the conception of the village from the point of view of an urbanised villager, and later ends with his thoughts on the summer spent in his rural place of birth, *al-'Arḍ* offers a relationship between the countryside and the city that dwells over the respective images the village and the city have of one another. This is one of simultaneous admiration and fear; admiration of the city from the point of view of the village as the land of milk and honey, as Waṣīfah asks the narrator whether women in the city wash themselves everyday with a bottle of perfume, spend a whole florin a day, what they dress like, and what they eat.[119] This view of urban Egypt gives their inhabitants an allure that is expressed in the novel by Waṣīfah's thoughts that perhaps she should marry someone from town who wears the Ṭarbūsh, sharing the aspirations of her father in succeeding in marrying the second of his daughters to a city dweller as he had

[119] *Al-'Arḍ.*, p. 34

done with his older daughter.[120] The aspiration is also shared by Shaykh Yūsuf towards his own daughter.[121]

The fascination with the city is at one level a fascination with the other, with traditions and customs of the village taking a backseat in a cosmopolitan environment where anonymity and the vastness of the geography gives a certain amount of freedom of movement and behaviour absent from the village. The reality of this environment and the actuality of living it are shown in the novel to be wanting in comparison with the image constructed in the mind of the villagers. When Waṣīfah asks the narrator about life in the city, her questions are more rhetorical and in the vein of seeking confirmation of the fantasy rather a genuine attempt at acquiring an answer, so ingrained is the myth of the city in the mind of the villager. It is interesting that the narrator of the novel shares with the reader his misgivings about the girl's illusions: he explains how he sees boys at his school in Cairo arrive with torn shoes and cover the holes in their socks with their shoes, that not many pupils get a new school uniform at the start of the academic year and that his father would alter his elder brothers' clothes to fit him.[122]

A point of fascination for a film adaptation of a literary text is the presence in the novel of references to film and visual culture of the city. The focus in the first and only rendezvous between the narrator and Waṣīfah in the novel is the contrast between the imagined life in the city and the reality. This illusion on the part of Waṣīfah is counterbalanced by the young narrator's attempt at wooing her by dialogue he had watched enacted in films in Cairo, including American films.[123] The boy utters words that have an almost Pavlovian effect on women in films and literature: bosoms begin to heave and cheeks blush etc. Just as the city does not live up to its constructed image in Waṣīfah's – the village's- mind, so too does the novel's narrative show a rupture between

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 22-23
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 23
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 34
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 31

woman on the one hand and her construction in the cinema and popular literature on the other. For Waṣīfah is bewildered by the amorous words of the young narrator; words that are inspired by the love stories he had watched at the cinema back in Cairo. She retorts that she cannot comprehend his English conversation.[124]

The filmmaker's rendition of this scene arguably falls within the general schemata of the adaptation in that while the fascination between the village and city is preserved, the angle from which this fascination is drawn is more in line with the image of the village drawn by those very stories and films that the young narrator had read and watched. In other words, the urban fantasy of beautiful, simple minded and good hearted village woman is preserved and not shattered as in the novel. The divergence is symptomatic of the change in the character of Waṣīfah and her position in the narrative of the film. In the adaptation she is far less of the brash and sexually alert adolescent character that is presented in the first part of the novel, and more of the strong willed and beautiful character that is referred to in the latter half of the novel and in the expository parts of the narrative. The change in the construction of Waṣīfah would fall into the pattern of presenting the village to the urban viewer as a miniature of the nation that is undergoing a process of soul-searching in order to find the causes of the failure of 1967, the shadows of which overwhelm the film.

The filmmaker's presentation of the interaction between the city and the village also includes references made in the novel to how men in the rural areas view their counterparts of the city. The interaction between 'Abd al-Hādī and the irrigation officials is used in the film to demonstrate the depth of the gap between the relationship of the subsistence farmer with his land, and his reliance on water for his immediate livelihood and survival, and the cold machinery of government, based in the distant city, that affects his life with the mere stroke of a pen on paper. The filmmaker avoids referring to the history of the officials and their dealings with the village, unlike the novel where there is

[124] *Ibid.*, p. 25

an introduction of the character of the engineer and his assistant and the bribes the latter was accustomed to receiving from the villagers in order to allow them an extra day's watering quota. The filmmaker chooses to depict the two officials in silhouette, only allowing their voices to be heard, to emphasise the impersonal nature of government rulings on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their effect on real lives and characters, as represented by 'Abd al-Hādī with whom we had already begun to establish empathy in the film through his previous appearance in the wedding scene.

The character of Maḥmūd Bey is enlarged in the narrative of the film, and his relative the Pāshā is eliminated altogether as part of the film adaptation's strategy of lowering the number of characters in the narrative to allow space for more focus on each respective character. The Bey is also representative of the city in the village. As mentioned earlier, the montage that shows him in conversation with Shaykh Ḥassūnah, is used in the film to criticise the Westernised discourse within an urban aristocratic class in Egypt that appears to have very little respect or awareness of the indigenous culture. The film utilises the contact between an old man of religion, educated in al-'Azhar, with an urban possibly Western-educated aristocrat, to allegorise an Egypt, represented by the village, being at the crossroads between two at times oppositional, and also complimentary, viewpoints and ideologies. The viewer would pick on the fact that the very university to which the Shaykh belongs played a major role in the renaissance of Arab and Islamic societies in the Middle East and North Africa. Names such as Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh and Ṭahṭāwī come to mind, not to mention the great Ṭāhā Ḥussayn who was educated also at al-'Azhar.

The Maḥmūd Bey of the film is given the physical attributes that fit the novel's image of a 'dandified creature in his flowing gallabya of valuable cashmere?'[125] Although the possible competition in the novel that the Bey represents for Waṣīfah's affections are obliterated in the adaptation, as yet another example of

[125] *Egyptian Earth*, p. 44

the filmmaker's approach of focusing more action on fewer characters, the Bey is still given the attributes that would make him a threat to the men of the village in respect of the women. He is shown riding the horse described in the novel as 'splendid, proud, nimble, [and] beautifully groomed.'[126] The image of the Bey in both film and novel is in a sense a construct of the imagination of the village of the urban and aristocratic male. The fairness of skin and gracious mannerism of the character in the film helps visually project the description of the Bey in the novel.

The dialogue that is present in the novel between the city and the village, as represented by the numerous occasions in which 'Abd al-Hādī, the narrator and his father, and Maḥmūd 'Afandī refer to their visits to a town nearby, is on the whole reduced in the adaptation. The novel's endeavour to contextualise the struggle of the village within the national upheaval of Egypt of the 1930s against the Ṣidqī government is on the whole absent from the film. The latter is more concerned with the village itself, enlarged here to represent the nation as a whole. The one instance in which the city is presented on film is seized to weave a sequence out of references in the novel to popular unrest against the government. The place of women in the city's fantasy of the rural community is mirrored in the depiction of women that Muḥammad 'Afandī encounters on his sole visit in the film to the capital; the hotel owner is a khawājah, a European resident in Egypt, who speaks with broken Arabic with a heavy accent, and a young woman whose nationality is unclear, though she is dressed in overtly Western clothes. The close-up shot of the spectacled face of Muḥammad 'Afandī juxtaposed to a close up shot of a part of the young woman's figure aptly renders the viewpoint of this villager towards the young female city-dweller; it is one of pure repressed eroticism and fantasy.

The fact that this scene forms the first part of the section of the film presenting the distant city with whose orders and rulings the village grapples throughout the narrative is indicative of the hostile nature of the urban world viewed from

[126] *Ibid.*

the village. The very elements that make the city attractive to an educated person such as Muḥammad 'Afandī are also a source of threat, in the words of Rob Lapsley: 'The city [on film] is rarely the object of idealisation. Rather surprisingly, given the preference of many people for the freedoms, excitements and energies of urban existence... Overwhelmingly, fictional representations of the city have been hostile.'[127] Films such as *Nights of Cabiria* (Dir. Federico Fellini, Italy 1957), *Le Samourai* (Dir. Jean-Pierre Melville, France 1967), *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, USA 1976), *Aḥlām Hind wa Kamīlīa* / Dreams of Hind and Camillia (Dir. Muḥammad Khān, Egypt 1988), and *'Afwāh wa 'Arānib* / Mouths and Rabbits (Dir. Henry Barakāt, Egypt 1977) to name but few in a well established tradition, allude to the point made by Lapsley. In relation to Arabic cinema, and specifically Algerian Cinema, Sabry Hafez echoes the sentiment that the city is portrayed negatively in comparison with the 'idealised life' of the countryside.[128]

Mise-en-scène and Music

With the suppression of the subjective perspective of the narrator so prominent in early part of the narrative in the novel, the film adaptation enlarges certain elements in the narrational technique of the novel to replace the first person narrator, while at the same time enjoying the freedom and omnipresence the need for which had forced the novelist to abandon his young narrator for the greater part of the narrative. Most prominently, *mise-en-scène*, frame composition and narrative cadence are deployed to convey the expository parts of the first person narration.

This is evident in the wedding scene in the film, which is based on a similar scene in the novel. The difference rests in the extent to which the setting, character placement within the frame and the framing of certain characters are

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[127] Rob Lapsley, " Mainly in Cities and at Night", in D.B. Clark (ed.) *The Cinematic City* (London: Routledge,1997), p. 195, quoted in Sally Faulkner, *Literary Adaptations in Spanish Cinema* (London: Tamesis, 2004), p. 69

[128] Sabry Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm", *Alif*, 15, 1995, p. 62

used to firstly introduce almost every single character in the village, apart from al-'Umdah and Maḥmūd Bey, and also to shed light on the power dynamic between the men of the community. The scene is preceded by an expository dialogue between Khaḍrah and Waṣīfah in which the former teases the latter about 'Abd al-Hādī's proficiency with the game of cane sticks. Her remarks are juxtaposed directly to a close-up of 'Abd al-Hādī and Diyāb involved in what is shown, through the tight expressions and perspiration on their respective faces, to be a particularly ferocious game. The intensity of the match, as thrown into relief by the staging of the action and the movement of the two players in the frame, is used to demonstrate the strength of 'Abd al-Hādī in relation to the weakness, younger age and inexperience of Diyāb.

The scene is derived from the wedding procession in the novel which provided an enamoured description of the character and appearance of 'Abd al-Hādī where he proves his superiority and prowess against the best cross sticks player from the next village. Indeed, he exercises chivalry and magnanimity, to the relief and surprise of his opponent, by embracing him rather than pushing home his obvious advantage.[129] The change in the adaptation and the addition of an actual game of sticks at the scene of the wedding itself can be read as an allusion in the film text to the primal instincts and the undercurrent of competition between the men of the community over the unmarried women of the village; in other words, the game is an exposition of the rivalry that would lead to the winner taking part in his own wedding. Furthermore, in view of the real fight that takes place between 'Abd al-Hādī and Diyāb in both the novel and film at a later point in the narrative, the filmmaker inserts this mock fight as a way of foreshadowing the actual violence between the two and within the village. The simple inclusion of a point of antagonism in this happy occasion inserts an undercurrent of potential discord within the community.

This undercurrent is exposed as the senior member of the community, Shaykh al-Balad, asks the groom, 'Abd al-'Āṭī, to obey the 'Umdah's request to go to

[129] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 24

his home. More is revealed about the power dynamic in the village in the reaction of 'Abū Suwaylim, instructing 'Abd al-'Āṭī to ignore the 'Umdah and rebuking Shaykh al-Balad for asking the groom to attend to his duties as a guard on his wedding night. The staging of characters within the frame underpins the centrality of the relationship between the villagers and the 'Umdah in the narrative. Not only are wide shots used to emphasise the reaction and awareness of the community of the power of the absent man, the 'Umdah, and the disdain with which he is thought of, but also the shots themselves show layers of characters in the foreground, middle-ground and background of the frame. The space is thus used to emphasise a community that consists of elders who assert their views between themselves and of younger people and women who listen with obvious agreement.

The scene is also used to shed more light on the extent to which the filmmaker has invested in the character of 'Abd al-Hādī and 'Abū Suwaylim by the behaviour of other characters. The relatively strong position of the character of 'Ulwānī of the novel in the hierarchy of machismo among the male villagers, as shown through the narrator's description of his strength and the fear he instilled among the male villagers, is totally compromised in this scene as he is introduced as a 'boy', as one of the elders refers to him, and his immaturity is demonstrated through his insistence on taking on 'Abū Suwaylim in a game of sticks despite his total inaptitude. Through his frivolity, 'Ulwānī's role in the scene appears to be one of the many elements used to give more prestige and underpin the virility of 'Abd al-Hādī, the projected heir to 'Abū Suwaylim. The centrality of these two characters had already been alluded to in the first scene in the film in which 'Abū Suwaylim was depicted in close up gently plucking a shrub in his land followed by a close up shot of 'Abd al-Hādī looking towards 'Khaḍrah walking and singing teasingly on the dirt road nearby. The fact that 'Abd al-Hādī is privileged with a close-up on his first introduction is contrasted by Muḥammad 'Afandī who is introduced in the company of Diyāb. Furthermore, 'Abd al-Hādī, like 'Abū Suwaylim, makes his debut in the film narrative whilst working the land, unlike Muḥammad 'Afandī who appears

instructing his brother, Diyāb, on how to work the land, rather do any work himself.

Moreover, the use of the prologue of the film, before the opening-title-credits, to introduce these four characters, plus Khaḍrah and the narrator and his father, is a further advantage to them over others who will be introduced in the wedding. The fact that the 'Umdah is the last of the villagers to be introduced underlines his insularity from the village and the rupture between authority, as represented by him, and the rest of the community. This is underscored by the first few sentences of dialogue he is given in the film: he appears talking on the telephone to that distant authority in the city. His submissiveness and weakness in relation to the power at the other end of the line is contrasted by his assertive treatment of 'Abd al-'Āṭī. The latter is addressed as 'Wallah' (boy) and is not invited to sit down or eat with the 'Umdah. The abundance of food in this scene emphasises a lack rather than possession on the part of the 'Umdah of the virility vested in 'Abd al-Hādī in the earlier two scenes, for the thin and old face of the 'Umdah is contrasted by the relative youth and knowing gaze of his wife. The latter stresses the point by teasingly warning her husband against the health risk of getting over-anxious on the telephone. The exchange between the two suggests a deeper discord in their private lives that the wife tries to remedy by the offering of food and health advice, while the 'Umdah appears to be perturbed by the subtext of the advice.

The variety of food on the 'Umdah's table and the relatively presentable furnishings of his home, are contrasted by the simplicity of the food in 'Abū Suwaylim's household and its Spartan furniture. The point is emphasised further by the expensive and elaborate kind of possessions being moved to the villa of Maḥmūd Bey. In a sense, the film narrative suggests a symbiosis of character and land that has no place for earthly possessions. The more a character owns the less honourable and respectable he/she is. Luxury is associated in the film narrative with a lifestyle beyond that gained from

working one's own land. The point is an echo of the novel's umbilical chord connecting honour to owning and working one's own land.

Furthermore, in view of the film's use of the village and its land to stand in for Egypt, following in doing so a long tradition in Arabic literature of presenting the village as symbolic of the nation,[130] there is a clear association of duplicity and a lack of integrity with Western inspired education and ideals. This is shown through the furnishings of the Maḥmūd Bey Villa, and the latter's declaration 'why can't our artists produce such works of art', pointing to what appears to be a neo-classic Greek inspired statute. Those who mix with this culture do not come off well as underlined by the initial pragmatism of Shaykh Ḥassūnah, and his final admission of defeat. In other words, intellect and education should not be used to divert the nation from freeing its occupied land by the Israelis, there should be no compromise. The 'Abū Suwaylims and 'Abd al-Hādīs of Egypt and their pleas for a strong and united nation should be listened to.

Expression is given to the point in the scene in which the men get together to decide on the best action to undertake to stop the building of the new road. The scene is an example of the filmmaker juggling time, space and duration in the adaptation in order to throw into relief the film's addition of abstract and national layers to the immediate issue being debated. For the scene in the film deals with several situations of character friction and interaction from the novel; these include a scene in which the novel dealt with misinformation and rumours generated by the 'Umdah to create a divide between the two elder central characters of the narrative, 'Abū Suwaylim and Shaykh Ḥassūnah. There is also the scene in which 'Abū Suwaylim informs 'Abd al-Hādī of the plan to throw the iron and road-building equipment into the lake. The argument between the two elder characters of the novel is transformed from being based

[130] Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ, *Sarādiqāt Min Waraq* / Tents of Paper, Volume 2, Silsilat al-Kitābāt al-Naqdiyyah / The Critical Writing Series , (al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah li Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 1998 / Cairo: General Organization for Culture Centres, 1998), p. 362

on a misunderstanding to one derived from a pragmatist point of view being opposed by a heroic and passionate wish to take practical steps as opposed to theorising and rationalising defeat. The staging of the scene is such that Shaykh Ḥassūnah, Shaykh Yūsuf and Muḥammad 'Afandī are sat together on one side of the room while 'Abū Suwaylim and 'Abd al-Hādī are framed together. Again, we see the former three in the foreground of the next wide shot, while 'Abū Suwaylim and 'Abd al-Hādī are in the background. In between the two groups stands Diyāb, as an indication of his bewilderment. The fact that he is not placed next to his brother Muḥammad 'Afandī is an indication of his new found confidence as a veteran of government brutality, having been imprisoned with 'Abū Suwaylim and 'Abd al-Hādī. The speech 'Abū Suwaylim delivers reprimanding Shaykh Ḥassūnah, and those in Egypt with a pragmatist position towards the situation at hand, which might as well stand for occupied Sinai, and ends with his declaration, 'god is with those who are patient', is shot with close-ups of the main characters in the scene. Yet the close-up of 'Abd al-Hādī raises his position in the narrative further, as a result of the cumulative effect of the previous scenes in the film, whereas Muḥmmad 'Afandī appears the weaker and less worthy of Waṣīfah, the object of desire in the triangle between 'Abd al-Hādī and him. That Waṣīfah leans more clearly towards 'Abd al-Hādī in the film, unlike the novel, acts as a prize for the steadfastness and heroism of the young man.

As a reaction to the speech, which is a hybrid of conversations between characters in the novel condensed into a single voice in the film, Shaykh Ḥassūnah rises to hug 'Abū Suwaylim saying, 'you reminded me of my youth'. The momentum created by the speech, its delivery, the juxtaposition of words uttered by 'Abū Suwaylim with close-ups of characters, give the rising to his feet of Shaykh Ḥassūnah the symbolism of a whole nation rising to the challenge of discarding the rhetoric of defeat.

The promise of the new generation is issued on the lips of 'Abd al-Hādī of the film suggesting that they throw the road-building equipment into the river. This

is a direct quote from the novel, yet it had been uttered there by 'Abū Suwaylim. 'Abd al-Hādī's position is given this great boost without undermining the standing of 'Abū Suwaylim, coming as a reaction and an echo of the thoughts of the older man. The point is highlighted in the film as Shaykh Yūsuf mistakenly thinks 'Abū Suwaylim to be the source of the suggestion, saying, 'bravo, 'Abū Suwaylim'.

The worthiness of 'Abd al-Hādī for the affections of Waṣīfah, and the need for her father's approval, are presented in the film over several sequences and scenes that include a visual rendition of the 'primal' fear one man has over the 'appropriation' by another male of a woman from his household; the woman in question is Waṣīfah and the male outsider 'Abd al-Hādī. After mimicking the novel's indecision of 'Abū Suwaylim as to the identity of the man who will marry his daughter, showing him declare to his wife that he wishes to marry Waṣīfah to a city dweller, there is a clear indication in the film adaptation that 'Abd al-Hādī is the man privileged with Waṣīfah's favour and her father's approval. The point is comprehensively drawn out in a scene entirely invented by the filmmaker with the sole purpose of underpinning the implied future marriage of the two young characters: having attacked a guard assigned to escort Waṣīfah on her way to visit a neighbouring household in the middle of the night, 'Abd al-Hādī returns to her home to be greeted by the father who proceeds to challenge his young guest to break in half a bunch of cane sticks. 'Abū Suwaylim then follows suit by breaking an even thicker batch. Despite his wife's reluctance in view of their want, he insists that she make them a decent dinner. The filmmaker frames 'Abd al-Hādī and Waṣīfah in a close-up shot as 'Abū Suwaylim declares that 'Abd al-Hādī must not allow his wife dictate his behaviour. The choice of framing and composition, coupled with the editing of the whole scene, serve as a resolution of the riddle as to the identity of the future partner for Waṣīfah. The fact that the scene is set at the home of her father is significant as it underlines both an implicit acceptance by the man of the household and, more importantly, an allusion to the Levi-Strausian 'exchange of women' between the two men.

The same technique of framing, juxtaposition and editing is used to give a visual rendition of the chapter in the novel that depicts the torture endured by men of the village as punishment for their role in the throwing of road building materials into the lake. Whereas the novel had related the events in what Gérard Genette would refer to as an 'analepsis',[131] evoking the episode after the release of the detainees and their arrival home, the filmmaker presents the episode chronologically and in parallel to the emptiness that leaves its shadows on every aspect of life in the village due to the men's absence. The latter point is depicted through wide shots of empty streets and the presence of the solitary figure of 'Abd al-'Āṭī feeling the weight of his role in the arrest of the men and the guilt of his beating of the women, including Waṣīfah. Instead of the villagers, and the reader, becoming aware retrospectively of the harshness of the treatment that the men underwent, the filmmaker dramatically reshapes the narration and shows the torture as it unfolds in the diegesis. The men are ordered to shout out, as in the novel, 'I am a woman',[132] and they are subjected to beatings.

The montage of the torture scenes at prison presents the viewer with the same graphic detail as the novel in terms of the humiliation that the men suffer, with the added element of the shaving of the moustache of 'Abū Suwaylim as a vivid exposé of the psychological side of the physical pain and a visual rendition of the 'defiling' that 'Abū Suwaylim endures in the novel. The film's use of extreme close-ups of the moustache of 'Abū Suwaylim being shaven off magnifies the pain and brutality suffered by this elder of the village. As an addition to the sequence as related in the novel, the moustache shaving is an allusion to other brutal acts that the man may have endured which would compromise his own view of himself as a respectable man. Shāhīn's use of the extreme close-up of the act of shaving of the moustache stresses its importance

[131] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, translated by Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blacwell, 1980), p. 40
[132] *Al-'Arḍ*, p. 260

as a sign of masculinity and the position of its bearer in the pecking order of the village. Moreover, within the cinematic, visual context, moustaches 'rival eyes as one of the audience's best routes to the depth of a personality,' and so being forcibly removed from the face of the protagonist can have a powerful impact on the audience.[133] Shāhīn also avoids diluting the symbolic nature of the scene by singling out 'Abū Suwaylim for this treatment, abiding by the adaptation strategy of focusing the action on fewer characters.

The filmmaker follows the novel's use of the land as the refuge to which the broken old man turns after his ordeal to hide from the world. The point is stressed by the montage that follows Diyāb as he dashes after his release across one plot of land after another to reach his patch and commences to occupy the whole of the frame in a close-up as he kisses the earth. The experience of prison and torture, so goes the message of the film in an echo of the novel, have turned this boy into a man aware of a new raison d'etre, one that is charged with national symbolism, rather than the novel's maturity of an individual through adversity.

This symbolism at the level of the nation is apparent in the respective points at which the filmmaker chooses to begin and, crucially, end his narrative. The novel seems to fumble its way through the fabula by a sjuzhet that starts with a narrator that it later abandons, only to find him again at the end of the narrative to help tie the loose ends and return the emphasis to Waṣīfah and the identity of her future husband, and the likely consequences of the new road on the village. The filmmaker, on the other hand, begins with a close-up of the fingers of 'Abū Suwaylim as they gently pluck a shrub, and ends with those very fingers holding on to cotton plants as 'Abū Suwaylim's body is pulled across his very land by the horse of the officer who strikes him on the face. The circular nature of the novel's narrative, beginning with the narrator arriving and ending with him leaving, is replaced with another circular structure that begins with the land and

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[133] A view expressed by Buñuel in his essay on Adolphe Menjou's, quoted in Peter William Evans, *The films of Luis Buñuel: subjectivity and desire*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.123

the relationship of this solid and honourable man to her, and ends with him laying his life in her defence. The film loads the scene with allegory by inventing this final act of sadism on the part of the authorities against this honest farmer, as he was hit across the face by the officer in the novel, but not tied to rope and pulled through the field. This shot is juxtaposed with that of a cotton flower that is stained with blood to emphasize the metaphors of the land, as the mother, the virgin, that is being raped and soiled by the brutality of the invader.

These final sequences were not in the novel in their entirety, and the novel ends with Muḥammad, the narrator, returning to Cairo, after hearing his brother resignedly state the case for building the new road and the advantages it would accrue for the village. The film, however, is disinterested in this footnote in favour of modernization. The film is interested in using the events of the past, depicted in the past, to throw their shadows on the present, and to end with a mobilizing message for the masses against the invasion of Egyptian and Arab land by the Israelis.

The character of 'Abū Suwaylim loses his land before the overwhelming force of the authorities. The equal impotence of 'Abd al-Hādī before the power of the corrupt state is emphasised by a close-up of him standing powerless as 'Abū Suwaylim's body is pulled across the field. However, this final sequence is meant to show a triumph and victory in defeat; 'Abū Suwaylim is invested with such respect and heroism by the filmmaker throughout the narrative that this final scene links the character to a long line of historical figures in Islamic, Christian and world history that survived their conquerors through their ideas and through the legend they became by the passage of their history into the collective memory. The most obvious examples would be that of 'Imām Ḥussayn Ibn 'Alī Ibn 'Abī Ṭālib. He experienced a brutal death that was meant to end the ideals for which he stood, yet his memory and what is viewed by the Muslim world as 'heroism' lingers to this day. In fact, the filmmaker could be argued to reflect in his ending a particular bond that exists between Egyptian

Muslim culture and the legend and reality of this historical figure. In addition to the central position of the 'Imām Ḥussayn mosque, and that of his sister Sayyīdah Zaynab, in the cultural life of Cairo and the rest of Egypt, the links between this overwhelmingly Sunnī Muslim culture with one of the foremost figures of Shī'ah Islam goes back to the Fāṭimī rule in Egypt. In other words, the audience is invited to right the wrong inflicted on the collective 'Abū Suwaylim, that is the Egyptian nation, in the same way that the memory of a defeated, and yet triumphant in retrospect, hero is a source of inspiration. The fact that the film ends with a freeze frame on those very fingers clutching bits of earth and cotton plant emphasises an ellipsis and a lack of a discernable end to the fabula, effectively inviting the audience to write an ending that would be worthy of this final frame, an ending that makes this sequence the beginning for something akin to a rebellion or fight back against the forces that had oppressed 'Abū Suwaylim and, implicitly, invaded Egyptian territory. It also represents a choice by the filmmaker in structuring the film, beginning and ending with the land, the fingers and hands that work the land and the different forces at play over this land.

The different historical moment at which the film was produced from that of the novel, and the effect which this has on the agenda of the filmmaker- permeating his adaptation with the abstract and allegorical meanings of the land at a time of war with Israel- are reflected in the non-diegetic music that accompanies the narrative. For whereas the novel had referred several times to the melancholic melodies emanating from 'Abd al-Hādī's flute, the film frees the music from the masculine and yearnings for a fantasy of a woman that are implicit in the novel and opens with a crowd rousing upbeat score of a patriotic song written specifically for the film that commences with: 'if thirsty, we will quench the land's thirst with our blood'. The crimson red colour chosen for the film title also stresses the point, as does the upward trajectory of the animated *al-'Arḍ* rising from a grave like trench on the side of the road to fill the frame. The soundtrack leaves no doubt in the mind of the audience as to the particularity of the land in question and her ties to Egypt and her history. The

music helps stress the national struggle at the moment of making the film in 1969 with the struggle that is depicted between 'Abū Suwaylim, 'Abd al-Hādī, Waṣīfah, and to a lesser extent Shaykh Ḥassūnah and Diyāb, with the authorities, as one between good as represented by the common Egyptian fallāḥ and evil depicted both in the novel and film as the ruling class of corrupt and ruthless individuals.

Conclusion

The key determining point in Shāhīn's adaptation is the historical point at which the feature was made; this was a time of introspection, self-doubt and a glaring presence of the debris of the grandiose plans and declarations of Pan-Arabism generally and of President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir's personal standing as leader and a player at the regional and world stage. Effectively, the timing of making the film made it difficult to conform wholeheartedly to the Marxist and pro-proletariat/Fallāḥ agenda of the novelist without coming across as being a tactless propaganda piece for the regime of 'Abd al-Nāṣir after the defeat of 1967, in addition to the obvious divergent political agendas of the novel and the regime as regards the type of socialism to which they respectively aspire. Had the film been made before this nadir in Egyptian and Arab modern history, arguably the film could have been made along the lines of revelling in the achievement of the post-1952 government of agrarian reform and the elimination of the aristocracy. By the time of producing the film, the six-day war had thrown its shadow over almost every aspect of Arabic cultural output.

Moreover, the act of reading the novel in 1969 would have been inflected by the recent past, one that was different from that of the novel's first readers in 1953-4. For whereas the latter would have had first hand experience of the regime depicted in the novel and would therefore have enjoyed the freedom of reading a fictional account of past events from a viewpoint totally at odds with that of the previous ruling elite and somewhat ambiguous towards the new regime, in view of the overwhelmingly secular and anti-religious establishment rhetoric of the novel, the 1969 reader might have viewed the text with certain romanticism and

sensed the innocence of its objectives in view of the experience of having observed a government attempt - and succeed and fail in different measures - to introduce social, economic and political change to address some of the issues raised in the novel. S/he would also have been aware of the reality of the power game in which Egypt had found herself, as opposed to the impressions of the position of Egypt in the world map given by speeches and government propaganda.

Therefore, the film adaptation is faced with an audience matured by experiencing aspects of some of the changes called for in the novel. It is also tasked, in view of its funding by the film arm of the Egyptian State, and in view of Shāhīn's known Pan-Arab and Egyptian patriotic ideals, to call for unity and resilience of the nation in the face of a powerful enemy. Effectively, the trajectory of the film adaptation was partly set for the filmmaker by the forces and circumstances released by the 1967 war.

The changed agenda affects parts of the fabula of the novel that are abandoned, as well as those that are highlighted and enlarged. The emphasis of the novel on the ignorance and greedy nature of the religious establishment, as represented by the 'Imām of the village, Shaykh Shinnāwī, is moderated to account for Pan-Arabism's evolved awareness of Islam as an ally rather than the impediment to progress with which it is characterised in the novel.[134] This change is a reflection of the testing balance the Naṣir government had acquired over the years between its view of a moderate state-friendly Islam, as represented by the orthodoxy of al-'Azhar, and its distrust of the Muslim Brotherhood, the political movement established by Ḥassan al-Bannah in 1927, as exemplified by the violence exchanged between the two including the execution of six members of the Brotherhood back in 1954 as punishment for their role in an attempt on

[134] One could view the point demonstrated by 'Abd al-Nāṣir's choice of al-'Azhar mosque for delivering his first speech after the tripartite French-British-Israeli attack of 1956, or indeed the airing on Egyptian state radio and television during the 1967 war of crowd rousing songs asserting, 'Allāhu Akbar Fawqa Ṣawt al-Mu'tadī ('the cry of 'Allāhu 'Akbar will overwhelm the voice of any aggressor').

Naṣir's life,[135] in addition to the persecution and execution of the Islamist luminary Sayyīd Quṭub. In contrast to the novel, the film projects the religious elements in the text, Shinnāwī and Ḥassūnah, as benevolent, though respectively ignorant and pragmatist.

The shadows of the 1967 war can also be discerned in the journey the characters take from the page to screen. The novel's contemplation of the concept of masculinity and manhood that is apparent in its characterisation is diluted in the adaptation in favour of a more clear-cut binary opposition between a strong, honest and brave fallāḥ, as represented by 'Abū Suwaylim and 'Abd al-Hādī, the prototype characters to which David Bordwell refers in his analysis of 1920s and 1930s Soviet Cinema. Characters, he states, 'get defined chiefly through class position, job, social actions and political views... They become prototypes of whole classes, milieu or historical epochs.'[136] Shāhīn's 'Abū Suwaylim and 'Abd al-Hādī are soldiers and fighters who will free occupied Egyptian land with their uncompromising honesty and thrift, and their struggle to the death against injustice. With this objective in mind, every character in the film adaptation is constituted in order to throw into relief the exemplary combination of heroism and unassuming nature of these two characters. Other male characters are given less space on the canvas and act as pointers for the eye-line towards 'Abd al-Hādī and 'Abū Suwaylim. This means the physical strength and appeal of 'Ulwānī of the novel is replaced with boyish and juvenile qualities that affect the manner in which the character is perceived in identical scenes transposed from the novel to the film, such as the attempt he makes at taking advantage of Waṣīfah in the middle of the field he guards. While the novel had presented the situation as one for the young woman to stand up for herself against the temptations of this strong and obviously physically attractive male outsider, the filmmaker presents the scene as one where a young man makes a botched seduction attempt. The scene only succeeds in giving this

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[135] Mohamed Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tale: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London: Andre Deutsche Limited, 1986), p. 48

[136] David Bordwell, Op. Cit., p. 235

divergent reading as a result of the changed characterisation of 'Ulwānī, both in terms of his physical attributes and his behaviour.

Similarly, the flurry of attempts by the eligible men of the village for the affections of Waṣīfah is emptied of the indecision that coloured her behaviour towards them up to the final chapter of the novel. 'Abd al-Hādī is established from the outset of the sjuzhet of the film as the future partner for the most beautiful girl in the village. Her encounters with the young narrator and with Muḥammad 'Afandī only serve to underline the unfeasibility of a relation developing with the boy and the unworthiness of Muḥammad 'Afandī. Both cases serve to bring to the forth the character of 'Abd al-Hādī as the most certain choice for the young woman.

This young woman has many aspects of her character of the novel suppressed and others enlarged in the adaptation, with a view of presenting her as a partner to the young generation of 'Abd al-Hādīs of Egypt. Therefore, her role in the uproar at al-'Umdah's home is presented in the film to be one of almost political nature. Unlike the novel, the scene is presented as part of a sequence that begins with her walking with clear purpose and aim, as indicated through her facial features, echoed by her serious black dress that replaces the colourful attire she normally wears, and her firm strides through the dusty alleys. Her solitary walk rapidly evolves into a march by other women who follow her. The act of attacking al-'Umadah acquires political connotations, in view of this procession-like progress towards the 'Umadah home. The connotations are heightened by the drumbeat of the soundtrack that helps alert the audience of a forthcoming confrontation.

Finally, the timing of the production also affects the point at which the narrative begins and ends. This is dictated by the more specific nature of the political and allegorical message of the film, being mainly focussed on the issue of occupied Egyptian land and using the past to shed light on the present, as opposed to the novel's concern with a whole range of issues such as

modernisation, land reform, social, economic and political change, with a Marxist and overtly secular theme underscoring the whole narrative. Thus the first character introduced in the film adaptation is that of 'Abū Suwaylim, followed by his implied moral heir 'Abd al-Hādī. Both of them are first introduced occupying a space on their land; the old man caressing a shrub, while 'Abd al-Hādī is clearly working. Other male characters that are subsequently introduced do not share the complimentary composition and framing given to these two characters. Those who are first shown on the land, Muḥammad 'Afandī and his brother Diyāb, are made to share the frame and their position in the narrative is undermined from the outset by their body language and the nature of their dialogue. Similarly, the point at which the narrative of the film ends is in line with the issue specific agenda of the film, as opposed to the ending of the novel.

To the credit of the filmmaker, dialogue is not used to compensate for the absence of the rhetorical and politically charged texture of the voice of the narrator of the novel; instead, the visual, in terms of composition, choice of framing and juxtaposition of imagery, provides the uncompromising political message of the film. Rather than talk about injustice or corruption, the filmmaker presents poignant imagery accompanied by a musical score that further underlines the message. This is most evident in the final image freeze in the film that comes at the end of a montage lyrically rendering a symbiosis of man and land.

Chapter Three

Baqāyā Ṣuwar / Fragments of Memory
Reconstruction of Memory as a National Imaginary

The first feature film production in Syria was *al-Muttaham al-Barī'* / The Accused Innocent in 1928. Directed by 'Ayyūb al-Badrī and produced by a private Syrian company named Ḥarmūn Film, it was made while the country was still under French Mandate.[137] By the time of the nationalist coup of 1963, after 17 years of the country's independence, a total of seven films were made in Syria.[138] Jean Alexān argues that the relative ignorance and lack of expertise of the start-up production companies behind each of the seven feature films played a role in the failure of the respective companies to follow-up their first productions with any further projects.[139] The new Pan-Arabist government established al-Mu'assasah al-'Āmmah Li al-Sīnamā / the General Film Organisation at the end of 1963.[140] The aims of the GFO, as stated in Legislative Bill Number 258, on November 12th 1963, included directing 'film production in the service of culture, science, and national issues'.[141] While having been formed with an obvious ideological underpinning, it is important to avoid comparing

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[137] Jean Alixān, *Tārīkh al-Sīnamā fī Sūriyā* / The History of Cinema in Syria (Dimashq: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, 1987 / Damascus: Ministry of Culture, 1987), pp. 8-9

[138] *Ibid.*; for further general reading on Syrian modern history and the coup of 1963, see Volker Perthes, *The Political Economy of Syria Under Assad* (London: I. B. Taurius & Co., 1995), pp. 1-7

[139] Alixān, *Ibid.*

[140] George Sadoul, *The Cinema in the Arab Countries* (Beirut: Interarab Centre of Cinema & Television, 1966), pp. 179- 181

[141] Alixān, , p. 52

the GFO's output with the overtly political and pro-Ba'th Party nature of some of the films made with public funding in neighbouring Iraq. Indeed, the Syrian director 'Umar 'Amīralāy [widely transliterated in English as, Omar Amiralay], argued back in 2005 that 'the National Film Organisation has made forty-five features, but there is not one propaganda film in the modest history of Syrian cinema.'[142] While the nature and the extent of support to the Pan-Arab-Ba'thist government in the films made by the GFO can be debated, the point 'Amīralāy makes is supported by Lawrence Wright's brief investigation into the film production scene in Syria.[143] 'Amīralāy's own work, as exemplified by the documentary *Yawmiyyāt Qaryah Sūriyyah* / Everyday Life in a Syrian Village (Syria, 1974), testifies to the possibility of making films in Syria with a far more contemplative and agnostic position towards the viability and success of the socialist model championed by the ruling Ba'th Party. Films made with support from the GFO by Muḥammad Malaṣ, 'Usāmāh Muḥammad, and indeed Nabīl al-Māliḥ, the director of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* / Fragments of Memory (Syria, 1979),[144] which is the subject of this chapter, support the argument. These films include 'Aḥlām al-Madīnah / Dreams of the City (Syria, 1983), by Malaṣ, which shows the corruption in Syrian society, or Muḥammad's 1988 production, Nujūm al-Nahār / Stars in Broad Daylight even went as far as casting in the role of an autocratic character a look-a-like to the Syrian president of the time, Ḥāfiẓ al-'Asad [often transliterated in English as, Hafez al-Assad]. He told Lawrence Wright, 'It was "Yes, let's put Hafez al-Assad inside my movie."'[145] The small number of films produced by the GFO in the 56 years since its creation, reportedly standing at 50 feature films, is a point of heated debate and accusation and counter accusation in the Syrian artistic circles. As these lines are being written, the Beirut-based Arabic daily al-Safīr published an article on its website in which the present head of the GFO, Muḥammad al-'Aḥmad,

[142] Quoted in Lawrence Wright, "Letter from Damascus: Captured on Film", *The New Yorker*, May 15, 2006, p. 65
[143] *Ibid.* pp. 61-69
[144] A more accurate translation would be The Remains of Images, though *Fragments of Memory* will be used for the rest of the thesis as this is the title of the English translation of the adapted text.
[145] Wright, Op. Cit., p. 65. Emphasis in original.

angrily dismisses the accusations and criticism of ‘Umar ’Amīralāy that the failure of the GFO to produce a more substantial number of films and play a more dominant role in fostering a Syrian film industry is symptomatic of a corrupt and out-of-date socialist regime ruling the country for over 40 years.[146]

The director of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, Nabīl al-Māliḥ, is one of the most established filmmakers in Syria and the wider Arab world. His connection with the GFO goes back to being part of the trio of directors who made a trilogy for the GFO back in 1970. The trilogy, entitled Rijāl Taḥt al-Shams / Men Under the Sun (Syria, 1970), signified the first feature film production undertaken by the GFO after making its debut as a producer of feature films in 1967 with *Sā'iq al-Shāḥinah* / The Truck Driver (Dir. Pushko Fotshinitich, 1967).[147] He followed his work on the trilogy with the adaptation of the Syrian novelist Ḥaydar Ḥaydar's al-Fahad / The Tiger (Syria, 1972). Echoes of a character from this film can be sensed in al-Māliḥ's drawing of the character of the uncle in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*. For here, as Alexān states in summarising the story, is a character who is dispossessed of his land during the time of feudal rule and who has no option but to resort to carrying arms and taking on the authorities and other bandits in the countryside.[148]

Al-Māliḥ's admiration for the work of the Syrian novelist Ḥannā Mīnāh, whose novel Baqaya Ṣuwar and its film adaptation is the subject of this chapter, is made clear in an interview with Alexān in which he states, ‘many of Ḥannā Mīnāh's works intrigue me and I hope to present them cinematically, for I believe that I can add something through them.’[149] However, the director also reveals in a separate interview that he found this particular novel, *Baqāyā*

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[146] Muḥammad Al-'Aḥmad, “Raddan ‘Alā ‘Umar ’Amīralāy: 'Irādat al-Khayr wa Ṣinā‘at al-Shar / In Response to ‘Umar ’Amīralāy: A Benevolent Will and the Manufacture of Evil”, *al-Safīr*, al-‘Adad Raqam: 10993, Tārīkh 10/05/2008: www.assafir.com/ al-Safir; issue number: 10993; date: 10/05/2008; published on www.assafir.com

[147] Jean Alixān, *al-Sīnamā fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī* / Cinema in the Arab Nation (al-Kuwayt: Silsilat ‘Ālam al-Ma‘rifah, al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li al-Thaqāfah wa al-Funūn wa al-'Ādāb, 1982 / Kuwait: World of Knowledge Series, The National Council for Culture, the Arts and Literature, 1982), pp. 140-142

[148] *Ibid.*, p. 144

[149] *Ibid.* p. 160. My translation

Ṣuwar to be Mīnāh's "only work that is not amenable to cinematic treatment, as it lacks any real dramatic structure. It also suffers from a narrating style that can not be easily composed cinematically."[150] The reasons that convinced al-Māliḥ to adapt the novel to the screen lay in its "wealth of detail, ambiance and the depths of human quest for a life in dignity".[151]

The ambivalence the director reveals in this candid interview about the "adaptability of the text is echoed by the Mīnāh himself who was uncompromising in his criticism of the film adaptation of his work: "..[the adaptation of] Bāyā Ṣuwar revealed some atrocious vacuums [in the adaptation process], these included the script where there is an excessive inclusion of the minutiae from the beginning of the novel - elements which are not essential. Consequently, when the script reached the second half of the novel, the film narrative had become already too long. As a result, events [from the second half] were shortened [related in summary]."[152]

Mīnah appears in the interview like one of his more outspoken characters which appear in the numerous novels and short stories he has published. His work is clearly inspired by his immediate surroundings, by the Mediterranean coast of Syria were he grew up as part of the Christian community. The strong presence of the sea and life on the shore in his body of work has made him into the "most prominent marine writer" in contemporary Arabic literature. *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* is one of three works by Mīnāh to have been adapted to the screen. The other two are *al-Yāzirlī* / al-Yāzirlī (Dir. Qais al-Zubaydī, 1974) based on the short story, *'Alā al-'Akyās* / On Top of the Sacks, and *al-Shams fī Yawm Ghā'im* / Sun on a

[150] "Nabīl al-Māliḥ: *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* Min al-Dhākirah Allatī Ḥamalat 'Āmāl Kabīrah / Nabīl al-Māliḥ: *Fragments of Memory* which were a repository for many aspirations", an interview by the film critic Muḥammad Ruḍā with Nabīl al-Māliḥ at the Carthage Film Festival, 1980, published by the interviewer as part of his recollections in issue 401, on March 13th 2009, on www.shadowsandphantoms.com My translation
[151] *Ibid.*
[152] "Ḥiwārāt ma'a 'Usrat Film / Conversations with a Film's Family [cast and crew]", *al-Ḥayāt al-Sinamā'iyyah* / Cinema Life, No. 28, 1986, p. 2

Cloudy Day (Dir. Muḥammad Shāhīn, 1985) based on the novel of the same title. [153]

The filmmaker Nabīl al-Māliḥ is faced with the task of applying a cinematic treatment to a text primarily imparted through the voice of a first-person narrator. As well as relating his own story, the narrator of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* [154] is concerned in the novel with an awareness of the dynamics and issues permeating the act of reminiscing, 'the past has always found lively reception in me. It matures in my being, is clarified and becomes translucent as drops of clear water, regardless of all the profundity I live among in the present.' [155]

The personal nature of the history being imparted, its autobiographical characteristic, coupled with the narrator's identity being that of a character from the enframed story who has matured in years and knowledge creates parallels with, among others, Proust's In Search of Time Lost. Effectively, we are faced in the narrative with three versions or incarnations of the narrator: the narrator as a young boy, a character in the enframed story, whose thoughts and feelings are aired and analysed by the narrator as an adult, the second version, and thirdly the adult narrator viewing and contemplating his role and existence in reminiscing about his childhood.

These layers are completed by the implied author whose intrusion is kept to a minimum to give the narrator at the framing narrative the space to move between the two circles of text, frame and enframed. This aspect of the text invokes certain narrative theory strategies put forth most succinctly by Gérard Genette through his dissection of the text into three parts: story, 'the signified of narrative content'; narrative, 'the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative

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[153] Ḥannā Mịnā, al-Shams fī Yawm Ghā'im (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ādāb / Beirut: al-'Ādāb Publishing House, 1981); Hanna Minah, Sun on a Cloudy Day, Translated by Colo Pueblo (Rome: Passeggiata Press, 1997). The Arabic original was first published in 1973.

[154] Ḥannā Mīnāh, Baqāyā Ṣuwar, (Bayrūt: Dār al-'Ādāb, 1990). All translation henceforth will be from *Fragments of Memory*, translated by Olive Kenny and Lorne Kenny (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1993), while textual analysis will refer to the Arabic 1990 edition. All translations from the film dialogue are mine.

[155] *Fragments*, p. 3,

text itself'; and the act of narrating, 'the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place.'[156] Genette's schemata of text analysis along the lines of tense, mood and voice can be applied to *Baqāyā Ṣuwar.*[157] The tense applies to the 'temporal relations between narrative and story,'[158] a feature prominent in the text in its meditation and awareness of the temporal distance between the memory and the moment of its imparting to the reader. There is a yearning on the part of the narrator to reach into the past, into the enframed story, in order to prevent the occurrence of an event or an experience that is already beyond alteration.

The 'voice' applies in the way 'narrating itself is implicated in the narrative.'[159] The reader of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* is constantly aware of the presence of the first-person narrator and the influence of this presence on access to the events being narrated, as the narrator acts as a filter and a gatekeeper to the enframed story. The nature of the narrating act, its reminiscing of past events, brings to the fore other aspects of Genette's narrative schemata: the nature, length, reach and duration of the memory under scrutiny.

For the enframed story itself, though an analepsis par excellence in that it fits the definition, an 'evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at the any given moment', [160] as compared to the 'now' of the narrator, the enframed story also has its own analepses and prolepses. For example, the framing story starts the enframed narrative at a point in the story where the family are yet to leave the Syrian coastal city of Lādhāqiyyah, yet the narrator's expository narration over the imprecision of his date of birth as it appears on his official papers invokes a

[156] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 31
[157] *Ibid.*, p. 31
[158] *Ibid.*
[159] *Ibid.*
[160] *Ibid.*, p. 40

prolepsis to a further point in the narrative, when the narrator as a child is slightly older and at school.[161]

Moreover, these instances of anachrony between the plot and chronology, between the sjuzhet and the fabula time, or story and discourse, and the manner in which they are affected by the act of narrating emanating from a first-person narrator all are related to the nature of the narrative of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*: a first-person narrative dealing with past events. The past element gives the narrator looking back the advantage of omniscience due to the accumulated knowledge and the freedom to trespass the temporal and spatial planes covered in the text. The framing and enframing characteristic of *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, combined with the first-person narrator drive of the text does not make the text wholly focalized from the position of a single character, namely the narrator. For the world within the enframed story is endowed with polyphony of thoughts and character stance and viewpoint. Indeed, the verisimilitude of characteristics that permeates the characters in the enframed story fits comfortably with the dialogic aspects of the novel. As Genette states, "the use of 'first person', or better yet oneness of person of the narrator and the hero, does not at all imply that the narrative is focalized through the hero."[162]

This final point forms the departure for the choices made by the filmmaker in taking the text to the screen; for the omniscience exercised by the narrator is one that suits the film medium with the freedom of the camera to move spatially and, with the aid of editing and other cinematic devices, temporally with the freedom that is derived from the inherent feature of the film medium's partnership with the viewer in creating the text, as Christian Metz states, commenting on the act of watching a film,

> ...and I also know that it is I who am perceiving all this [the projected imagery on the screen], that this perceived-imagery material is deposited in me as if on a second screen, that it is in me that it forms up into an organised sequence, that

[161] *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, p. 54
[162] Genette, Op. Cit., p. 198

> therefore I am myself the place where this really perceived imaginary accedes to the symbolic...[163]

Narrative Perspective and Mediation

The political and historical context of the production cannot be escaped in an analysis of a text that deals with a period in Syrian history that forms an integral basis of the national narrative and the interpretation of which is weighed with a certain political position that feeds into the nation's understanding of itself. This narrative of the nation forms an image, a Lacanianesque reflection of the group, that is complimentary and which feeds into the nation's viewpoint of itself in the present. This present in its turn throws its reflections on the past as imagined by the nation. Effectively, as with most nations, the past as presented on the screen has more to do with the present of the nation than the 'actual' events that took place in the period under scrutiny. As Benedict Anderson states,

> ...the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, the only alternative is to fashion it 'up time' – towards Peking Man, Java gleam. This fashioning, however, is marked by deaths, which in a curious inversion of conventional genealogy, start from an originary present. World War II begets; out of Sedan comes Austerlitz; the ancestry of the Warsaw uprising is the state of Israel.[164]

Thus, the historical moment covered by the film is as much about the past of Syria as it is about the present of the filmmaker and the conditions under which the film was made.

The past-ness aspect of the drama is emphasised by the filmmaker's choice of doing away with the framing story, purging in the process the first-person narrator, and adding to the symbolic angle of the text. With the absence of the narrator who connects the narrative to the present of the reader, the film adaptation's time frame is totally encased in the sinews of memory and the national imagination of time. For the period in which the film narrative unfolds

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[163] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, translated by Celia Britton et al (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 48-49

[164] Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1991), p. 205

is firmly in the past, 'defined as the period before the events directly recorded in any individual's memory.'[165]

The suppression of the first-person narrator, along with the framing story, can be seen as a political act on the part of the filmmaker that reduces from the meditative and contemplative nature of the novel and its focus on the very nature of memory. The political act is reflected in the changes made to certain characters and their positions in the general structure of the film narrative. The fact that the film is produced by the film production arm of the Syrian state is an element that feeds into the tapestry of the adaptation strategy. The strategy has the political message at its very heart, and like *al-'Aswār*, revels in the achievements of the present as compared with the past. This trajectory is exemplified by the change in the identity of a character usurping the land of the mother of the narrator from his Syrian original, for he is a relative of the mother in the novel, to a Turk who barely speaks Arabic. Similarly, the Syrians working for the French are shown to lack a basic grasp of Arabic grammar, signifying in this context their disconnectedness with a crucial part of Arab culture and identity. The point is also present in the way these very soldiers are shown to help themselves to the food donated to the poor. Within the adaptation's economy, their lack in an aspect of Arab identity sits comfortably with their lack of compassion and morality. The significance is the more glaring in view of the fact that all three instances are additions and inventions by the filmmaker.

Characterisation

In addition to the three facets of the narrator's presence in the text- his child self, his adult being and finally his incarnation as a narrator commenting on both of his two appearances in the text-, the novel's characters can be divided into groups which are subdivided into further groups. These groups come in a binary opposition that is made more clear-cut in the film adaptation. The interesting aspect of these groupings is not so much between the separate

[165] Eric Hobsbawm, On History (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), p. 87

groups but the divisions within each particular group and the way that these sub-clusters form a grid of good and evil, and of oppressor and oppressed, whether directly or by association. The fact that these subdivisions survive the adaptation add colour and depth to the text's political message, while helping to emphasise the extent of the success of the Ba'th regime in making all of the hardship and exploitation- we are led to believe- a thing of the past, events that are sealed in a time frame antecedent to the present of the audience. For the film could have followed the route exemplified by the blatantly narrow conception of the world of innately good and evil in *al-'Aswār*. The fact that the Iraqi adaptation was based on a far more politically biased text than Ḥannā Mīnāh's novel is a valid point of difference; however, given the political trajectory of the al-Māliḥ adaptation, it is interesting that *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* provides many more shades of grey in the characterisation than *al-'Aswār*, giving the text more character verisimilitude, while still working within the film's political agenda.

The first division is that of the Arab and non-Arab. These two categories come into play in the division between the city and the country. From the outset of the text we are left in no doubt as to the place of birth of the narrator in the Syrian port of Lādhāqiyyah on the Mediterranean. Here resides the family at the outset of the narrative, before poverty and the father's imprudent business adventures force them to move to the countryside in search of work. The characters of the city are drawn from different social and ethnic backgrounds. Prominence is given in the novel to the friendship between the father figure and the Greek neighbour and business partner Kiryakou, as there is an introduction to his name, origin and proficiency in maintaining machines and cars, in addition to the power dynamic of his relationship with his Arab Syrian wife:

> She [his wife] would yell at one of the children in his presence:
> 'Damn your father!'
> Kiryakou would reply, 'why don't you curse my mother?' (He meant his son's mother.)[166]

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[166] *Fragments*, p. 11

This prominence survives the adaptation, as the film follows the novel's division of characters between city and village and along the lines of Arab and non-Arab. The significance of these four interwoven categories is multiplied in the adaptation as the kindness and buffoonery of the urban "foreigner" is contrasted by the "foreigners" of the countryside. These are Turk and French and generally are in the military or in charge of the gendarme. The novel's Bāsūs al-'Amīr is changed from a local nobleman, implied to be an Arab, to a Turk working with the French and the Ottoman overlords against the interests of the local population. The change is in line with the political trajectory of the adaptation; the characters are changed at the level of the fabula in order to achieve, among other goals, the squaring of the past as presented on the screen with the perception gained by the implied spectator through the cumulative effect of being part of the filter through which emanate, as well as a member of the audience for, the national narrative mentioned above.

The change of the ethnicity of characters throughout the film underscore the message that while the city is a hub of a cosmopolitan culture that benefits from peoples from different nationalities, the countryside with its associations with the land, with the origins and traditions of the nation, attracts "foreigners" with malevolent goals and tendencies; they are either military occupiers or land usurpers. This goes some way to explain the change in the identity of the person forcefully occupying the mother's plot of land from a group of people related to her to a Turk unable to speak proper Arabic and who shares Bāsūs al-'Amīr's accent. The symbolism of the Turk occupying Syrian land is hardly lost on the film's audience, especially when the filmmaker instigates a redundancy in the message by making the "whiter than white" character of 'Ibrāhīm demand from the Turk that he replies to him in Arabic.

Whereas the novel had characters from different ethnic origins occupy the narrative space, and where the Turks are presented in an uncomplimentary fashion- they are the occupiers who force local men into serving into the Turkish army, the film takes this description of foreign occupation and

exploitation and casts it in the mould of Arab nationalism's perception of the 1920s and 1930s. So that there is a far clearer division in the adaptation between the Arab and non-Arab, the former sharing the identity and ethnicity of the ideal audience, the target audience for the film.

Straddling the division between Arab and non-Arab and city and rural folk is the character of the proprietor in the final village the family temporarily inhabit before returning to the city. In the adaptation, the character is given the title of al-Āghā, a term used in both Turkish and Farsi to refer to a respectable member of the community or a master.[167] The political agenda of the film adaptation is reflected in the fact that the Āghā is introduced in both texts during a tumult in the village square in which locals are physically attacked.

In addition to the Arab and non-Arab is another binary opposition in terms of those in authority and those we are encouraged to view in both texts as downtrodden. Those in authority are themselves divided along the lines of being land owners who have an interest in perpetuating the poverty of the fallāḥīn in order to maintain their own privileges in life, and the officials or semi-officials who provide a direct layer of force and influence over the lives of the poor. This subdivision includes the local mayors, Mukhtārs, and their detail of guardsmen. There is agreement between the two texts over the shady and downright wicked nature of the latter subgroup. The agreement between the texts fits into the film's portrayal of the past as a period of hardship and infringement of the rights of the poor. Officials are seen as the face and the levers of the state or form of government in the past as conjured up in the popular imagination. For example, the filmmaker underscores the brutality and corrupt nature of the two mukhtārs presented in the film, with the former corresponding to his counterpart of the novel, while the latter's collusion with a gang of bandits nullifies his act of kindness to the father of the narrator. In the novel, the mother relates to the narrator the mukhtār's benevolence: '...the Mukhtār was a

[167] Interestingly, the Arabic article, al, is added to a Farsi or Turkish title as a reflection of the presence of this foreign based community status in an Arab country.

good man who gave them [father and his Greek partner] shelter and food and went with them himself in the car to al-Suwaydiya. He gave them a pile of oranges as compensation.'[168] The change represents a decision in line with others taken in synchronising character traits with the overall ideological trajectory of the adaptation.

With its left-wing socialist ideology, the Ba'thist government would view the feudal landlords as a force holding the nation back, a philosophy shared with 'Abd al-Nāṣir's agrarian reforms of the 1950s and 1960s, a period held in high esteem by Pan-Arab nationalists whose views to a great extent shape those of the Syrian Government and, therefore, the points of reference and agenda of the state's filmmaking arm. Where the novel had portrayed the landlord as an alien phenomenon in the landscape of al-Kabīr, the final village at which the family settles before finally moving back to the city, the filmmaker gives him a particularly merciless treatment from the very moment of his debut in the narrative. Where he had been introduced in the novel as an older brother striking his younger brother for attempting to run the estate in a different style to his, the film shows him overseeing the whipping of a villager. The fact that the reasoning for the beating is not mentioned in the film goes to further ostracise the landlord in the eye of the viewer and present him as a sadist brutalising the helpless peasants. The implication again being that in the contemporary socialist Pan-Arab state the fallāḥīn have an ally against such oppression.

Spanning all the above groups is the division between the two sexes; the adaptation takes its cue from the novel's emphasis on masculinity and further dissects and deconstructs the stereotype of the strong Arab male. This is achieved in the film adaptation without losing sight of the political agenda underpinning the production, the present of the filmmaker and the audience is projected as an echo to aspirations of those in the narrative with whom we are encouraged to identify. Therefore, whilst uncovering the vacuous nature of the ostentatious machismo of those in power and authority, the film is careful to

[168] *Fragments*, p. 16

preserve and enlarge the ideal male and folk-hero-like character of 'Ibrāhīm, the uncle of the novel who is presented with remarkable attention to the description of his counterpart of the novel. Resonating with the character's construction in the novel, the film uses the other male characters in the narrative to signify the authenticity and lack of bravado in his daily interaction with members of the community who seek his help in negotiating with bandits and corrupt government officials. The fact that he uses similar doses of tact, force and the threat of force with both groups respectively throws into relief the film's bunching together of both groups under a single negative rendition, a rendition that again speaks volumes of the adaptation's implied assertion that such characters and injustice are no longer the norm in contemporary Syria. The encounters with authority include the wholly redrawn scene in which 'Ibrāhīm confronts the local nobleman, Bāsūs al-'Amīr and representatives of the ruling elite and authority whom the film encourages the viewer to detest by making them appear to be in total agreement with the injustice for which 'Ibrāhīm tries to regain redress. The novel refers to the encounter between 'Ibrāhīm, the mother and father on one side, and Bāsūs al-'Amīr and the land 'usurper' on the other side in a short passage that covers the submission of the latter, a relative of the mother's called 'Abū 'Abdū, to the inevitable outcome of compensating her.

The film uses this occasion to emphasize the point made earlier by the replacement of the identity of the relative who had occupied the mother's land by the looks, in terms of attire, and the broken Arabic of a Turk. The man is depicted sitting next to Bāsūs al-'Amīr, who is presented here, unlike the novel where he is a local nobleman, as a Turk, signifying the dispossession of the Syrian people of the power of self determination, for both the individual who had taken illegal possession of the land and the person to whom the family turn to arbitrate are alien to the culture and the people. In the novel, voices from the women of the village are used like a chorus that is interwoven with the narrator's description of the state of his mother to introduce the nature of the position of Bāsūs al-'Amīr:

> 'Neighbour,' said one of the neighbour women, 'dry your tears. Tears don't work on 'Basūs' or the Mukhtār. Our neighbour whom the thieves came to rob didn't shed tears or get down on her knees before them. She surmised that she had either to die or give up the cow, so both the cow and she came out safe. That's life for you.'[169]

To press home the divergence from the novel in the undercurrent of the characterisation of Bāsūs al-'Amīr in the film, he and his companions are dressed in this scene in formal Turkish uniforms, and are seated next to an army officer dressed in French uniform. The filmmaker's use of 'alien' clothing is in a sense a further inscription with clothes of the foreignness and separation of this class of officialdom from the rest of society.[170] Instead of a simple process of negotiating a compensation for the land, the meeting acts out the resentment of a Syrian and an Arab against foreign occupation and rule. The character of the uncle is vested with yet more pointers to the legendary and imaginary national hero construct as envisaged by Pan-Arabism through the medium shot of him with his robes, white beard, and rifle at the ready. The fact that he is depicted standing tall on his feet, while his opponents are seated in their seemingly suffocating uniforms is another pointer to the implied spectator as to the inner strength of 'Ibrāhīm and weakness and transience of the foreigners. The character of 'Ibrāhīm emerges from the encounters with both groups in the film as the embodiment of the strong Arab nationalist, as opposed to the strong willed character who happens to also be an Arab and Syrian in the novel.

'Ibrāhīm's introduction in the novel is left on the whole for an internal diegetic voice emanating from the uncle himself to describe his own experiences and history. The narrator allows 'Ibrāhīm to recount his encounters with the bandits and the way in which he evolved into a sort of a self-appointed Sheriff for the villagers, providing them with protection against the bandits who plague the roads of the countryside. 'Ibrāhīm is allowed to talk in first-person mode stating, 'I didn't leave my land... Here I was born and here I'll die.'[171] The whole passage is wonderfully ambivalent as to the audience that 'Ibrāhīm

[169] *Fragments*, p. 24
[170] For a semiotic analysis of clothing and fashion see Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 3-41
[171] *Ibid.*, p. 26

directs his thoughts; is it that of the father and mother who visit him? Alternatively, it could be a conversation with the self that is meant to ease 'Ibrāhīm's own scruples about his interaction with the bandits. What is clear is that the implied reader, the narratee, and the narrator are in a sense an audience at different levels to 'Ibrāhīm's pronouncements. Despite his ability to help in such dire situations, the uncle is called on for help only twice throughout the whole narrative, as a reflection of the pride of the family members and the desire of the parents to keep news of their suffering and poverty away from their relatives and extended family.

To emphasise the equal degree of repugnance with which the authorities, the bandits and gangs that terrorise the population are viewed, the film presents 'Ibrāhīm using the same strategy with the bandits as used with officialdom, be they the Turkish landowners or the Mukhtār. This is achieved by visually rendering a few of the scenes to which 'Ibrāhīm alludes in an iterative summary style,[172]

> 'I was a travelling peddler,' he maintained, 'and would send my beast ahead of me while I followed at a distance... The robbers would appear, and throwing myself behind the first barricade I would shout at them, 'leave my load alone or I'll kill you'... Some would resist so I would shoot...'[173]

The filmmaker takes this philosophy of the character and the further iterative description of his encounters with the bandits in his regular endeavours to return goods stolen by the gangs from locals and fuses them into a single scene that says a great deal about the character of the uncle. The whole set of experiences he mentions in the novel are packed into the sequence in which the father of the narrator is present. The presence of the latter justifies the inclusion of the scene that has the sole role of shedding more light on the character of 'Ibrāhīm, without the use of the stream of consciousness, or voiceover.[174] The inclusion of the scene in the film again goes to further stress the chaotic and lawlessness of the period of Turkish and French rule; a lawlessness that is

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[172] Genette, Op. Cit., p. 85

[173] *Fragments*, p. 25

[174] The latter point falls within the general strategy mentioned above in suppressing first-person and stream of consciousness narration.

exemplified in the film by the bandits that attack the father and the female neighbours in the village. 'Ibrāhīm is apt in treating them in the manner to which they can relate the most, a mixture of male bravado, acceptance of a code of honour amongst thieves and the use of brutal force if need be.

The character of 'Ibrāhīm is illuminated further and his impossibly potent folk-hero status made the greater by the absence of such heroic and responsible characteristics in the person of the father. In the novel, the latter appears as one who lacks the traits and attributes that would qualify him for the title of a "good" father. The narrative of the novel is punctuated as much by the travel of the family from one village to the next as by the father's extended absences and restive periods of being in the company of the family. However, the narrator's memory is tempered also by a bitterness of the type permeated by the love and intimacy of immediate family members. The centrality of the father figure in the formation of the character who will grow up to be the narrator is exemplified by the first sentence of the narrative of the novel: 'They were taking my sick father out on a stretcher.'[175] This is by no means a mere event used by the narrator to create an opening into the narrative; it is indicative of the damaged nature of the patriarchal pyramid of this nuclear family, for the father figure recovers his physical health without acquiring a "healthy" understanding of the meaning of being the head of a family consisting of a wife and small children. He does not seem to have a full grasp of his role as the family's breadwinner. Therefore, the father's "sickness" at the start of the narrative is an interesting introduction to the failures and shortcomings of the character.

The filmmaker lessens from the criticism of the father and shows more of his carefree spirit, without mulling too long over the consequences of his decisions. This is achieved by setting the tone of his character from the start of the film with a sense of humour and joie de vivre that is illustrated by the sequence at the very beginning of the film in which the father is shown pushing a red 1930s

[175] *Fragments*, p. 1

car along with happy and excited children. He is dressed in modern dress, as opposed to the traditional dress of a few of the characters of the narrative. He also wears a leather cap that invokes in the viewer memories of Russian revolutionaries. In other words the debut of the father in the film narrative could not be further from his introduction in the novel. Here, he is happy, healthy and dressed in a manner that makes him stand out from the rest of the male characters in the narrative. The untroubled demeanour of the father remains unchanged in this opening scene as a character from the foreground of the frame approaches him, calling him 'Abū Sālim, thus introducing him to the audience and in the process creating a situation and a scene that is a construct from allusions and reminisces of the novel's narrator. Yet, far from showing the father's lack of a trade or skills for making a living in a negative light, the filmmaker shows him more in the vein of a man endeavouring to the best of his limited abilities to survive with his family in difficult circumstances. The circumstances, we are encouraged to believe through the *mise-en-scène* and narrative structure and characterisation, are a creation of the foreign rule and the backwardness in society that is perpetuated further by the lack of legitimacy of the ruling groups.

Thus what the narrator in the novel commented upon in a sorrowful tone is presented in the film as a harmless characteristic in the father, as indicated in the scene involving the middle-aged man dressed in traditional Syrian dress commanding the father to complete the building of a wall at the outside of his home's compound. The conversation between 'Abū Sālim and the middle-aged man reveals more of the character of 'Abū Sālim. He recounts his experiences in Egypt, waxing lyrical about its way of life, its people and its women while gazing with lustful and knowing eyes at the half covered legs of the young wife of the middle-aged man in the courtyard. The woman is captured in a medium shot doing the washing, perhaps the clothes of her husband, the very man who is building this wall as an obstacle before the predatory eyes of other men, while at the same time yearning for the women of Egypt. The conversation is interesting in its filming partially from the point of view of 'Abū Sālim, looking

alternately at the man on one side of the wall he is building and his wife on the other side revealing – seemingly unintentionally- more and more of her thighs. The woman here is being made an object for the gaze of the male character in a sequence of great interest in terms of the relationship of the real flesh and blood female to the abstract and the fantasy of woman as gleaned through the descriptions of 'Abū Sālim. This is particularly relevant to the state of mind of the middle-aged man and his rapturous child-like excitement at hearing the stories about women of a distant land, while wishing to shield his own young wife from the gaze of other men. The choice the filmmaker makes in presenting the woman is an echo of a passage from the novel that makes a general commentary about women, though it uses the character of Zannūbah as a point of departure:

> She too was a woman but a brown-skinned woman from a hut, not a palace. When she was drunk, they quarrelled over her body lying in the mud. Her image was not reflected in the horizon because she was real, not in the horizon where only fantasies live, things that can be visualised in the most tantalising colours and enchant because they are distant spectres, very distant indeed.[176]

The wall is shown later to fall, reflecting the narrator's allusion in the novel to the father's inadequacy at whatever profession he takes on.[177] The fall of the wall, in view of the filmmaker's position in this film vis-a-vis the treatment of women in Syrian society, as will be discussed below, takes the scene to a new level beyond that of the allusions to which the narrator of the novel makes. The narrator was referring to the father's inadequacy at doing his work; the filmmaker takes this aspect of the character and fuses it with the numerous occasions in the novel in which the narrator describes the father's way with women, his uncontrollable desire and the extent to which women find him attractive. It also includes references in the novel to his bohemian life-style, his travels and his lack of awareness of responsibility as a father figure.

> This good father who did not talk idly, did not ask for food or clothing and who travelled with death with no seeming sense of fear...When he was drunk he was despicable, waking up in the morning as limp as a cotton rag with a bottle of

[176] *Fragments*, pp. 130-131
[177] *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, p. 73

> arrack beside him, weak, condemned by his appetite in the presence of a woman.[178]

The scene also serves to explain the reason behind the father's present state of lack of vocation, as with the novel he had an accident working on a ship, or at the port, where a box had fallen over his shoulder depriving him of his physical capacity to work in the traditional occupations of coastal city. The use of the conversation with the middle-aged man serves yet another instance in this thesis of exposition in film narrative being delivered through dialogue, to compensate for the absence of the omniscient narrator of the novel. The sequence also serves to create the power dynamic between the different characters in film narrative; the father is clearly someone loved by the local community due to the very traits that make him an inadequate provider for the family; his lack of a steady job would keep him tied to a single locale and prevent him from travel. The sequence also includes a scene in which the father is shown browbeating his reluctant wife, the mother of the narrator, to hand over the few items of jewellery in her possession including the wedding ring, which he uses to finance the very business adventure the failure of which serves as beginning of the narrative of the novel. The fact that the filmmaker cuts between close-ups of the boy and the parents talking over the matter of the jewellery, and later as the father exchanges the mother's possessions for a few silver coins, is more in the way of drawing attention to those whom will be affected by the father's business ventures as opposed to creating a linkage with the novel's narrator as a child.

The inclusion of these shots and this sequence in the adaptation falls into the scheme of presenting and questioning the different forms and faces of masculinity in Syrian society. Being set in a period distant from the present of the filmmaker and his audience and fitting into a general definition of "the past", the film arguably has more freedom to dissect and comment on aspects of Syrian and Arab male behaviour and thinking which have survived with varying degrees into the present. Therefore, the characters of the gang that attack the

[178] *Fragments*, p. 38

father and his Greek partner, the character of sergeant 'Abdū, the Mukhtār of the village, in addition to the Turks and French who appear in the margins of the film narrative, all are faces of masculinity whose treatment are enlarged in the film in comparison with the novel.

The criticism is achieved by showing as opposed to referring to an incident or a story heard from a neighbour, as for example is the case with the rape of a woman in the village whose husband is away. In the novel the scene is related retrospectively,

> Father's female relative came with her son....
> She related in the most alarming manner how, 'they assaulted,' the woman in question. 'Didn't she scream?' asked mother. 'They gagged her mouth,' replied the relative. 'They drew daggers on her.'[179]

In the Genette scheme of narrative layers, a narrator at the extradiegetic level reports dialogue at the metadiegetic which itself is part of another set of narrative layers which place the characters involved in the conversation at the extradiegetic in relation to this particular story being related by the female relative.[180] The filmmaker takes this twice or three times removed narrative and presents it as part of the fabula in which the family are directly involved, thus weaving all the layers into a single level of narrative. In the process, the brutality and inhumanity of the men attacking the woman is emphasised. The childlike questions which the narrator reports about his ignorance at the time of the true implication of the term, "they rode her",[181] are purged from the film adaptation.

In making space for this scene, which is constructed from references in the dialogue of characters and exposition by the narrator of an event to which none of the family was witness, the filmmaker allows to come to the surface more of the horror and fear which permeate the event. While it is a woman who is brutally attacked in this scene, the emphasis is equally on the nature of masculinity; an examination of an aspect of Syrian and Arab culture that is

[179] *Fragments*, pp. 33-34
[180] Genette, Op. Cit., p. 228
[181] *Fragments.*, p. 34

autonomous at one level from the issue of occupation by a foreign power. The scene clearly involves Syrian men speaking in the colloquial which survives- almost intact- upto the present day of the viewer. It is their way of viewing women as objects to be conquered and possessed, in the same way which another gang had attacked the father and his Greek business partner in order to take possession of their merchandise, at which the filmmaker releases his wrath.

To purge any ambivalence over his position towards the rape, and to counter the voyeurism inherently involved in showing the body of a woman recovering from a savage sexual attack, al-Māliẖ chooses to repeat the strategy of showing as opposed to inferring or referring when the husband of the raped woman returns from his trip and in his turn viciously beats her and the one male villager who tries to reason with him. The scene is a creation by the filmmaker, for in the novel the narrator simply refers to how as a child he had seen this very woman living the life of a vagabond on the outskirts of the village trying to catch a glimpse of her children. The significance of the scene in the novel may be gleaned more accurately by reading the passage in the novel which describes the raped woman's expulsion from her home and her encounter with the narrator: 'As for this woman, her husband drove her out of the house.'[182] This short sentence is enlarged in the film adaptation into a scene that not merely evokes the woman being driven out of the house, but also graphically shows the pain and humiliation involved in forcefully evicting a woman, a wife and mother from her home. The filmmaker emphasises the pain by making a clear choice of daylight as the timing of the attack of the husband, as opposed to the night-time for the rape by the woman; the woman is the victim of both the lawlessness of the night and the gangs which inhabit it as well as the patriarchal and socially accepted norms in the relationship between man and wife as symbolised by the daylight under which the severe beating takes place.

The fact that the scene, like the earlier sequence of the rape, is witnessed by female and, crucially, male villagers intentionally provides a counterpoint to the

[182] *Ibid.*, p. 35

criticism of male behaviour by showing the men, like their womenfolk, helpless and too weak and rudderless as a group to affect the situation whether faced by the guns of the gang raping the women or the brute authority of the husband over his wife. The camera lingers on and slowly scans the faces of the villagers as they watch the beating and humiliation of the woman without offering her a helping hand. On another occasion when bandits attempt to steal the cow of a lone woman, the camera again ponders the bowed heads and resigned body language of the inhabitants of this countryside before the distraught widow, a neighbour to the family, appears to condemn the villagers' impotence that had led to such a brazen act by the robbers. The camera's movement juxtaposed to the words and appearance of the widow marks a departure from the novel's take on the incident. The narrator of the novel had implicitly accepted the attempted robbery as a fact of life within a set of circumstances that in retrospect he deplored. The filmmaker, however, adds the shadows of the present, his present of the 1980s, on the event, and in a sense links the widow's words to what may be seen to be the achievement of the Ba'th regime in ridding the country of this sort of lawlessness. In other words, the metatext of the film agenda takes over in this instance, leaving the novel behind.

This agenda is also present in the characterisation of the other significant male characters in the film; namely, sergeant 'Abdūh and the Mukhtār of the first village in which the family settles. The latter character carries onto the screen his counterpart in the novel's Dickensian traits and comic appearance and mannerisms. For while we are not told in the film of his glass eye of the novel,[183] the director, through the work of the actor, uses the high voice of the Mukhtār and his shifty demeanour to further stress the fault lines that run through people of authority in the narrative. In the case of the sergeant, the filmmaker transposes many aspects of his character from the novel, keeping his physical presence and assertive personality. The change which does occur to the character in the adaptation is at one level more in the way of feeding into the improved rendition of the father. This is demonstrated in the scene in which

[183] *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, p. 156

'Abdūh attempts to assault Zannūbah, the widow in the last village at which the family settle. Unlike the novel, where the father is protective of his childhood friend 'Abdūh and wishes to help him avoid the wrath of villagers,[184] the filmmaker makes the father the very figure who confronts the sergeant and indeed uses his rifle to ward him off the woman. Effectively, a detail in the fabula is changed for the benefit of characterisation. Moreover, this change in the character of the father emphasises the prototype nature of the characters of the Mukhtār and the sergeant respectively; they are 'prototypes of whole classes, milieus or historical epochs', as Bordwell states in reference to Soviet Cinema.[185] The change also forms part of the filmmaker's decision to present the father in a far more positive light, than his counterpart of the novel. The change makes him a far more worthy central character and one worthy of empathy from the audience, his shortcomings in managing the affairs of the family notwithstanding.

The other grouping in the narrative of the novel which falls into the adaptation strategy's treatment is the women folk. Taking his cue from to the general scheme of opposition in the portrayal between groups and individuals, which is a prominent theme in the novel, the filmmaker applies the adaptation strategy to the portrayal of the three prominent women in the narrative; namely, the mother, Zannūbah and the widow in al-Suwaydah, the first village in which they settle. The two characters have a common position as widowed women, women without a male partner and thus have a lack that is contrasted to the mother of the narrator with her virile and philandering husband. The two widows are drawn as binary opposites in the novel due to their opposing financial circumstances and the way in which this difference affects their social standing and life experience.

The character of Zannūbah is first referred to in the future tense, as the narrator mentions the other women whom he grew to love as a child, besides his

[184] *Ibid.*, pp. 334-335
[185] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.235

mother.[186] There is also the assault scene in which she is the victim and protagonist, as she is assaulted by local men who use alcohol to intoxicate and abuse her.[187] Yet, the first real interaction between the family and Zannūbah takes place on the morning after that incident when she visits the family home. Having already described to the narratee the close proximity of the land and house of Zannūbah to the narrator's, it becomes obvious that the duration of the woman's walk from her home to the narrator's is far longer than the actual time it would take to walk the distance. In other words the story time is stretched, in order to cater for the deluge of thoughts that the narrator needs to address at this juncture. The narrator begins by

> Zannūbah was approaching our house. She was coming in curiosity to investigate...
>
> Zannūbah was approaching our house.[188]

The present tense description of Zannūbah's approach renders the description detached from the rest of the narrative where there is an obvious gap between the time of the events and that of their retelling. It seems as though the narrator is contemplating an image of which he is a part, for the sentence ends by 'our home', in other words it comes across as if the narrator had leapt across the circles of narrative from his position in the extradiegetic to the metadiegetic, and in the process created more focalization of narrative through the eyes and experiences of the child of the scene, as opposed to the norm of the novel of relying on the viewpoint of the narrator for relating the story.[189] And to emphasis the detached nature of the description of Zannūbah's approach from the rest of the narrative, the next sentence proceeds to wholly ignore her progression towards the house, and spends time describing the circumstances that had brought the family into the temporary possession of the house. The narrator goes back to the image of Zannūbah's approach twice, using the very same present tense sentence, only to follow it up by yet more details irrelevant

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[186] *Ibid.*, p. 175
[187] *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, p. 270
[188] *Fragments*, pp. 130-131
[189] See Genette, Op. Cit., p. 228, for narrative levels; and p. 190 for focalisation.

to her approach, before finally describing her arrival at the doorstep of the home.[190]

The filmmaker uses a scene in the square of the second and final village in which the family settles to introduce Zannūbah in a wide high angle shot of the villagers pushing at the cordon of guards. In addition to her introduction, the scene also introduces the power dynamics and the social hierarchy in the community: there is the Bey, the local landlord, a man dressed in horse-riding attire, including a horsewhip; the soldiers and sergeant 'Abdūh. Lined against them are the local farmers and behind this line of seemingly oppressed group of locals is placed Zannūbah shouting abuse at the soldiers, and the pro-Bey community leaders. In composing the scene, the filmmaker brings elements from a scene at a further point in the chronology of events in the novel and adds them to the sequence in the village square. These elements include the arrival of the company of soldiers sent to commandeer everyone in the village to fight the locust, which takes place months after the family first arrive at the village.[191] This element is combined with another scene of Zannūbah shouting abuse at the men who surround her after she is assaulted in the middle of the night.[192] It is also combined with the gist of a dialogue she has with the father as he questions her claim to being carefree and audacious. Her reply includes a description of the Mukhtār as the man who during the day rules the village through the strength of the soldiers and at night becomes their servant.[193] The filmmaker brings these elements and fuses them with the discourse of Pan-Arab Socialism to provide Zannūbah with a speech that the camera follows by panning with her as she crosses the frame a couple of times. The act of crossing the frame and the obedient nature of the camera's movements to the direction Zannūbah takes encourage us to empathise with this character and with the principles for which she stands.

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[190] *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*, p. 279
[191] *Ibid.*, p. 319
[192] *Ibid.*, p. 270
[193] *Ibid.*, p. 320

The gist of her speech, that the Mukhtār is a thief and a servant of the landlord, is in keeping to some extent with the novel. Her use of expletives to counter any attempts by the Mukhtār and the dignitaries of the village to silence her provide an adequate reservoir on which the implied spectator can draw for the characteristics of this new woman in the narrative. The introduction of the character is complete as far as the family is concerned, as they witness her performance and follow her speech possibly in the same way as the filmmaker's camera. With the camera's brief focus on the two religious men- clerics- the scene serves to introduce the entire set of elements and forces that will finally face one another at the end of the narrative. The dark shadow that the novel had thrown over the prospects of the family in the village, via the reproof of the cart drivers of the family's decision to move to the village, is reflected in the film with the kindly query of the woman who will become a benevolent neighbour.

By providing this expository scene before the appearance of Zannūbah in the family home, the filmmaker is doing away with the initial feelings of disgust that the narrator of the novel had for her.[194] This decision is in line with the creation of a more sympathetic character from the outset of the film narrative, as opposed to the sympathy for the character of Zannūbah which evolves after the full introduction to the character. The change reflects the film's treatment of this woman, as well as other female characters with more acceptance of feminist critique of patriarchy, and also in line with the film's obvious championing of progressive Pan-Arab Ba'th ideology towards women. Thus the tragic circumstances of the loss of Zannūbah's husband and son, and the role of the local powers-that-be in their murder, help create feelings of sympathy for Zannūbah within the diegetic world of the film and among the implied spectators, as well as underscoring the political nature of the transformed-to-the-screen character.[195]

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[194] *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3

[195] Narrated in the novel long after the first encounter between the family and Zannūbah. *Ibid.*, p. 290

This character as created by the filmmaker differs widely from her counterpart in the novel. The difference rests in the above-mentioned metatext of the film text, as opposed to the novel. The former is interested in creating a folk hero of sorts, a hero drawn with the accumulated knowledge of history that is remembered through the prism of a Pan-Arab Nationalist ideology that ruled Syria at the time of making the film, and effectively funded it through the Syrian state. In a sense, the film text is at some level a justification of the present that is shared between the implied spectator and the implied filmmaker/author by comparing it favourably with the 'bad' old days of feudalism and foreign rule.

Therefore, whereas the character of Zannūbah of the novel is a down-trodden relatively attractive widow that is regularly attacked and raped by the locals, and who forms a special bond with the narrator and his mother as a fellow oppressed and poor human being trying to make the best out of a dismal situation, the film version of the character offers a heroine who takes on the local powers-that-be. These include the Mukhtār, the Āghā, and the clergy. She also takes on the soldiers sent from the nearest town to oversee the harvest. Effectively, the filmmaker takes the same circumstances and factors that had turned Zannūbah into the down-trodden woman being abused by the locals into a character who despite these regular beatings and assaults becomes a voice for the weak and oppressed. Even when Zannūbah of the novel taunts the men of the village for their impotence and inability to change their lot,[196] she does so more from her position as a woman with no responsibilities and family ties, rather than from her position as a galvaniser of the masses in which the filmmaker depicts her. The director uses her very lack of home and family to make her more audacious against authority.

The point is aptly demonstrated in the first real encounter between Zannūbah and sergeant 'Abdūh. As in the novel, the scene takes place at the home of the family. The novel version had depicted Zannūbah semi-drunk and full of curses

[196] Baqāyā., p. 347

against the sergeant. The cause of her anger was immaterial. She was merely repeating what the locals had asked her to say in her drunken stupor.[197] The film version, on the hand, precedes the encounter with a not entirely comprehensible scene of a woman grieving for what seems to be her dead husband in her arms. She is consoled by Zannūbah. The scene between her and the sergeant at the family home is cut short before the sergeant utters his threat of the novel, 'I am going to sleep with you tonight! '[198]

In yet another example of the present of the filmmaking moment and the historical context of the production being fused with the ideological viewpoint of Arab nationalism, we can detect a huge change in the trajectory of the character of Zannūbah in the way this scene is cut short to her advantage at the expense of the sergeant; for where she had been presented in the novel as a 'brothel person' who deserved sympathy,[199] the filmmaker is keen to emphasise the parallels he creates in her character with that of uncle 'Ibrāhīm. In the novel, her antagonism with the Bey and the Mukhtār are coloured with her personal oppression and feeling of total dispossession and weakness in the face of the world. The filmmaker, on the other hand, presents her as another strand of opposition and rebellion against corrupt and brutal authority as represented by the Bey, the Mukhtār and the sergeant. Therefore, the decision to cut the scene short has the adverse effect on the sergeant, for he does not have the chance to bewilder her in the film as he does in the novel with the statement, 'I am going to sleep with you tonight!' Moreover, given the new strong willed nature of her character in the film, it would be problematic for the filmmaker to allow the character of the sergeant to utter such a threat to Zannūbah without giving her the opportunity to follow the sort of reaction that would fit her characterisation in the film. The stronger position of Zannūbah in the scene is emphasised by the manner in which the filmmaker stages the action and makes her stand above the sergeant, thus giving her a more prominent visual status.

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[197] *Ibid.*, p. 230
[198] *Fragments*, p. 163
[199] *Ibid.*, p. 137

Therefore, the assault of the sergeant against Zannūbah is portrayed in the film in a different light to its counterpart of the novel. The film version forces the father to choose between his childhood friend, the sergeant, and Zannūbah. Predictably, he chooses her, for she represents aspects of Syria on which the filmmaker seeks to focus. Despite her harsh circumstances and the coming together against her of the different systems that operate in her society, be they patriarchal, feudal, foreign occupation or misogynistic, she is also aware of her place in history and the role she needs to play in order to liberate herself, standing her arguably at the centre of a microcosm of Syria and the Arab world at large, of the shackles that keep her down.

The point is demonstrated by the filmmaker's inclusion of a mirror scene between the family and Zannūbah to one earlier in the narrative of the family with the uncle. Just as 'Ibrāhīm had led the family in a melancholic folk song after freeing their daughter from the clutches of the Mukhtār, so too Zannūbah sings a dark melody that seems to be an enunciation of the feelings of the singer and of both the parents whose faces the camera scans looking for echoes in their expressions to the words of the song. Despite the seemingly amorous intonation of the lyrics, the scene is permeated with the anger and anguish of the impotence that those in the scene feel towards changing their lot. This lot is summarized by the father's monologue which although uttered aloud, may as well be an internal diegetic voice that has spilled into the diegetic surface. He addresses his words to a point beyond the frame of the shot, perhaps to a power beyond the village, the diegetic world of the film, beyond the material world. His final word, 'we are waiting', can be linked to the metatext of the film narrative, and the point in Syria's history in which it was produced. 'The waiting,' so goes the film's position, 'is over, for we have achieved independence and are ruled by our own.'

The change in the prism through which Zannūbah is viewed in the film is also motivated at the level of the fabula, so that in the same way as the father's

characterisation is changed with the help of omitting certain scenes and certain aspects of his behaviour, and succeeding in the process of presenting his behaviour in a less critical treatment than his counterpart of the novel, the character of Zannūbah is forbidden in the film adaptation from taking part in a relationship with the father. She does not become his mistress, and therefore does not join the elements which combine in the hardship of the mother. The mother of the novel is powerless in view of her husband's relationships with, among others, Zannūbah and the widow in al-Suwaydah. The absence of an adulterous relationship between the father and Zannūbah in the film falls into the scheme of characterisation in the film adaptation which seeks to find primarily in Zannūbah a more sympathetic and admirable character. This means that she abdicates her position along the triangle of desire, in the René Girard tradition, in opposition to the mother of the narrator in a primal quest for the father.[200] The woman of prominence in the text of the novel, the widow in al-Suwaydah, does keep her position in this respect. The filmmaker alludes to the relationship by showing the father and the widow exchanging looks of interest on the very day of the family's arrival at the village. This interest is transformed via the agency of a failed attempt to steal the cow of the widow in the middle of the night by a group of thieves who kill one of their own in their muddled attempt. The scene is presented, as opposed to the novel's relating of it via the narrator's recounting of the news heard as a child about the incident in the village. Presenting the scene underlines the strength of the character of the widow and paves the way for the father to intervene on her side during the assault in the middle of the night on a neighbouring woman by an armed gang. The latter scene is purely a creation of the filmmaker, as the attack on the woman is related in the novel to the family retrospectively; the father and the widow are not witnesses to its brutality. Its dramatic and visual rendition in the film achieves, among other goals, a coming together of the father and this brave and fearless widow who shouts abuse at the locals for standing idly by while the

[200] See René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), and also James G. Williams (Ed.), The Girard Reader (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1996)

woman is assaulted. In retrospect, a relationship between the two is shown to have emanated from the moment of the father's intervention and prevention of her jeopardising her life by attempting to stop the armed gang.

The triangle between the mother, father and the widow is shown in its most visual sense on one of the father's departures on business, for the mother and the widow stand side by side in medium shot watching with equal degrees of concern the slowly disappearing figure of the father. The signification is emphasised by uncle 'Ibrāhīm's quietly disapproving look towards the widow who audibly prays for the father's success in his new business adventure.

Mise-en-scène

The aforementioned decision of the filmmaker to suppress the framing aspect of the narrative and focus on the enframed story is paralleled with his decision in the choice of space for staging the narrative. Unlike the novel where there is reliance on the narrator's retrospective knowledge of events in the past, the film is firmly placed within a certain period, and the narration confined to the linear and the chronological. The absence of a hovering extra-diegetic narrator creates the need in this chronological narration for motivation for change of locale, in terms of space, and in terms of time. Al-Māliḥ makes obvious decisions in the geography in which the action unfolds. In order to grant the father and mother access to the main events of the narrative without the need for creating a pretext for their physical proximity to an event, or having to rely on an overtly expository conversation, the filmmaker creates a setting that is compact in dimensions and thus allows for direct contact between the different inhabitants of the space without the need for a journey, be it on foot or otherwise. This is most evident in the village chosen by the filmmaker to stand in for al-Suwaydah; whereas the narrator in the novel had gone into detail as to the relatively large space that separated the house and land given to the family by the Mukhtār from the rest of the village, the filmmaker positions the house at the very centre of the village, opposite to the home of the widow and near the house of the woman who would be assaulted by the armed gang. Similarly, the

home of the family in the final village before their return to the city is placed directly overlooking the main square of the village. It is at this square that the family first arrive in the village and their home is positioned along one of its three sides. Opposite to them is placed the home of Zannūbah and next to them the home of the old woman who offers them a helping hand on their first arrival. The filmmaker effectively moves the homes of Zannūbah, the family and the old woman from different parts of the village and positions them next to the warehouse. This allows for a linear space that can be covered with a single continuous camera pan, and it also mirrors the setting and the spatial relationships between the different homes in al-Suwaydah and, interestingly, the neighbourhood in which we first saw the family in its home city of al-Lāthiqiyyah.

The effect of this change is to allow the father to simply open the door of his home to see the action that is described in the novel unfold before his, and our, eyes. The filmmaker thus chooses the space with an eye on his decision to present rather than rely on the mediation of a narrator or an expository dialogue of one sort or another.

Moreover, the space in Ḥannā Mīnāh's *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* has a fundamental role on the structure and nature of the narrative; for as Gaston Bachelard explains, in memory

> ... space is everything, for time ceases to quicken memory. Memory [...] does not record concrete duration... We are unable to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness. The finest specimens of fossilised duration concretised as a result of long sojourn are to be found in and through space.[201]

The spatial relationship of the family home in al-Suwaydah to the residence of the Mukhtār is used in the novel to elucidate the harshness of life the mother endures as she makes her way home after being locked in the stable of the Mukhtār. It is this distance between the two spaces that generates the anxiety in her and in her children, for the space separating them is part of her state of

[201] Gaston Bachlard, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon press, 1994), p. 9

anxiety for them. Similarly, the typography of the square, a corner of which the family use as their home under a fig tree, is crucial in conveying to the reader the dire state in which the family survives and the absence of a safety net to rescue them from exposure to the ills of the world and nature.

The filmmaker replicates this emphasis on space by deploying it to help propel the forward movement of the narrative and to underline the power dynamic between the characters in each of the two villages in which the family settles. The open courtyard before the home of the Mukhtār of al-Suwaydah acts as a stage for a Western-style confrontation between uncle 'Ibrāhīm and the Mukhtār. The depth of the space allows the filmmaker to make full use of the deep-focus technique that works to both add realism to the scene and also a bravado to the movements and mannerisms of 'Ibrāhīm as he rolls a cigarette in the foreground of the frame while the Mukthār appears hiding behind a window in the background. This courtyard is also used by the filmmaker to stage a confrontation between the Mukhtār and the villagers over the sale of the silk produce. Its relative size allows for a large number of villagers to be crammed in and for the inclusion of the kaleidoscope of viewpoints expressed in the novel via the narrator and through a dialogue between a group of anonymous characters:

> -Why did those sons of bitches bring in the Indian silk?
> -Ask the merchants...
> -Those sons of bitches outnumber the French...
> -Neither shareholder nor... they are ruined same as us.
> -Cry for yourselves... the bigwigs, and merchants are in good shape.[202]

The filmmaker uses the large number of the villagers to make the courtyard appear smaller by forcing them into a small part closest to the table of the Mukhtār who goes about purchasing the produce against the debts incurred by the villagers and noted in his ledger book. The anger in the exchange is enlarged with the help of the crammed conditions and with a view of showing more of the characteristics of revolt and resistance to injustice that the filmmaker

[202] *Fragments*, p. 84

considers to be the central qualities that would help change the situation and lead to independence.

The use of space also acts in the film as a harbinger of the vastness of the national space, its physical texture, climate and the time-honoured occupations and crafts that its people have developed within its land. This is most evident in the introduction in the film of uncle 'Ibrāhīm: his appearance interrupts the progress of the cart carrying the family to the village of al-Suwaydah. The wide classic painting-like composition of the shot in which the uncle appears is an instance of the director's usage of the image and its ability to invoke thoughts and analogies accessible to the spectator at many levels. For the wide shot of the cart moving towards a tree, from right of frame to the left, with the character of the uncle digging the earth next to the tree explores the difference between the two men in the scene. The father as a city dweller, perhaps of fishing stock, and the uncle, a farmer rooted in the land, like the tree behind him. The white robes of the uncle serve to declare another aspect of the farmer character in the mythology of the east, his honest and candid demeanour. The cart, the men and the tree are in the foreground of a panoramic scene of seemingly snow and tree clad mountains in the distance; all serving through their expanse as a visual sign to the size of the country, its long standing place in history- through its ancient natural resources on display in the scene- and perhaps the minuscule position of these individuals' worries and concerns in relation to this wonderful and poetic rendition of the national space. This could be seen as an authorial intrusion by the director, confirming to the implied spectator the history of the land in which both the director and the implied spectator share their present. This interpretation could be supported by the director's use of the zoom out technique to reveal the character of the uncle digging the land, as the technique serves to make the implied spectator aware of the cinematic apparatus at work before him/her, and of the presence of the filmmaker behind the camera.

Conclusion

The meditative element on the meaning of memory and its reconstruction which underline Ḥannā Mīnāh's *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* are transformed by the decision of Nabīl al-Māliḥ to telescope the narration to a single time frame, abandoning altogether the framing story and focusing on the enframed narrative. This change has far-reaching effects on the nature of the story and its trajectory. For while the presence of the first-person narrator, imbued with the omniscience gained by virtue of relating events antecedent to the moment of narration, had moulded the nature of the narrative and provided a filter and a mediation that the reader could use as the base from which to join the narrator on his forays into the enframed story, the filmmaker at one level replaces the familiarity of the voice of the narrator vis-a-vis the reader with the familiarity of the political agenda and trajectory of the narrative. This political agenda is based on Pan-Arab Ba'th Socialism projected into the past. Its familiarity arises from the half a century separating the moment of producing the film and the historical moment encapsulated in the narrative. In other words, the ideology underpinning the film production acts as the point of reference explaining the nature of the characters and the changed trajectory of the narrative.

This is most evident in the change of the ethnicity of the land usurper and of Bāsūs al-'Amīr from their Arab and Syrian origin to Turkish. The portrayal of the foreigner, and specifically a Turk in this context, in a negative light is underlined in the staging of the scene in which 'Ibrāhīm is portrayed looking down upon the land usurper, the foreigner, and demanding, 'Speak to me in the language of the Arabs'. The fact that both Bāsūs and the person taking possession of the land are drawn in shades of black that have very little to do with their respective renditions in the novel is significant given the changed trajectory of the narrative in the adaptation and the political prism through which the past is rendered.

Similarly, the absence of the first-person narrator looking from a framing level of narration creates the need to motivate narrative progress, as opposed to the reliance on the journey of the narrator through past events. Therefore, character

dynamic becomes central in moving the narrative forward. The absence of the narrator also explains the filmmaker's decisions on the setting and the relationship between the different spaces and locations in which the action unfolds. This is achieved efficiently by bringing the different spaces and settings into a compact locale that allows for a more direct contact between the characters, emphasising personal relationships that are seen on the screen, as opposed relying on a narrator to convey the undercurrents and forces that dictate and affect the different communities in which the family settles.

As was the case with other adaptations studied above, the criteria by which this adaptation is assessed need to include the agenda that permeates the production as demonstrated by the final film text. While both narratives fall at varying degrees in what Benedict Anderson would term 'imagining' the nation type of process, there are differences in the filmmaker's objectives in constructing the narrative from those of the author of the novel. The novel gives more weight to invoking the personal in the history being reminisced as opposed to the filmmaker's emphasis on the national through the personal. The characters acquire certain aspects of the prototype of Soviet Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, losing in the process some of the "realist" elements in Ḥannā Mīnāh's masterly characterisation. The result is a film text that is weighed with the expectations and perceptions of the moment of its making projected into the past being reconstructed in the imagination of the present. This imagination is heavily politicised and has an inherent desire to justify itself through finding and emphasising fault in certain aspects of the past; these aspects include foreign rule, as opposed to national rule of the present; corrupt authority, as opposed to "honest" and patriotic national authority; weakness of the poor facing the brutality of lawlessness and oppression as opposed to the empowerment and law and order that come with independence and national rule.

With these objectives in mind, Nabīl al-Māliḥ's adaptation is a strong contender for a successful use of cinematic tools to convey to the screen a complex narrative with style and confidence.

Chapter Four

Al-'Aswār / The Walls
The Dialectic Transformation of Rhetorical Narrative

Iraqi film production began in the late 1940s, with around 37 feature films being produced between 1948 and 1968.[203] These productions preceded the involvement of the state, and thus were financed from the private sector.[204] Early films included co-productions, most notably with Egypt. *'Ibn al-Sharq* / The Son of the East (1946) was such a production. The film was written and directed by 'Ibrahīm Ḥilmī, an Egyptian filmmaker.[205] In 1968, the government established Dā'irat al-Sīnama wa al-Masrah / the General Organization for Cinema and Theatre to act as the state's film production arm. Only 30 films were made in Iraq between 1968 and 1980.[206] The 1980s saw the production of films which tended to fall into the propaganda mode of film production,[207] perhaps a reflection of catastrophic war with Iran, and the disputes with Syria, Libya and later with Kuwait.

Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl is one of the more prolific feature filmmakers in Iraq, having made over seven feature films. He received his training in London and

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[203] Kiki Kennedy-Day, "Cinema in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Kuwait" in Oliver Leaman (ed.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African film* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2001) , pp. 364 - 406

[204] See Jean Alixān, *al-Sīnamā fī al-Waṭan al-'Arabī* / Cinema in the Arab Nation (al-Kuwayt: Silsilat 'Ālam al-Ma'rifah, al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li al-Thaqāfah wa al-Funūn wa al-'Ādāb, 1982 / Kuwait: World of Knowledge Series, The National Council for Culture, the Arts and Literature, 1982), pp. 172-4

[205] Maḥmūd Qāsim (ed.), *Dalīl al-'Aflām fī al-Qarn al-'Ishrīn fī Miṣr wa al-'Ālam al-'Arabī* / Film Guide for the 20th Century in Egypt and the Arab World (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat Madbūlī 2002 / Cairo: Madbūlī Bookshop 2002), p. 1012. My translation.

[206] Kennedy-Day, p. 399

[207] *Ibid.*

began his career as an editor in the film department of the oil company in Iraq.[208] After making a series of films for the state's film arm, Jamīl went on to helm the big-budget state-funded war drama *al-Mas'alah al-Kubrā* / Clash of Loyalties (1983), which came with an international cast that included Oliver Reed. Jamīl commenced working on *al-'Aswār* after participating with his previous feature film *al-Ẓami'ūn* / The Thirsties (1973) at the Moscow International Film Festival, where his film was nominated for the Golden Prize.

The writer of the adapted text, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubayʿī, was born in Iraq in 1939 and began to pen short stories in the 1960s. In an interview with the London-based *al-Sharq al-'Awsaṭ* Arabic daily, al-Rubayʿī states that his association with the Socialist Ba'th Party of Iraq goes back to the mid-1960s, before the Ba'hist came to power, when the party was out of office and its "members were persecuted".[209] Although the relationship reaches a point of discord in the 1980s, the political leanings of al-Rubayʿī's work certainly do reveal sympathy to the Pan-Arab cause espoused, among others, by the Ba'th Party. This is most evident in the political and social agenda of the lead character in al-Rubayʿī's novel, *al-Wakr* / The Hideout[210]. Al-Rubayʿī's narrative style, with its overtaly political and rhetocial tone, has arguably reduced from the aesthetic of his work. In terms of the development of the Iraqi novel in the 20th century, this reader finds greater contribution from other authors, including Fu'ād al-Takarlī.

In a brief exposition of the method of adaptation he followed in taking 'Abd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubayʿī's 1976 novel, *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* (The Moon and The Walls) to the screen, Jamīl contributes to the ongoing debate on the nature of literary adaptations by stating that he had constructed the whole film narrative around the assassination of a single character: a local barber in the

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[208] Kennedy-Day, p. 366

[209] Ḥassūnah al-Miṣbāḥī, "al-Riwāʾī al-'Irāqī / The Iraqi Novelist", interview with 'Abd al-Raḥman Majīd al-Rubayʿī, February 27th 2004, issue No. 9222, available at www.aawsat.com

[210] 'Abd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubayʿī, *al-Wakr* / The Hideout (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 1980 / Beirut: The Pioneer House, 1980)

novel.[211] The Muḥsin of the novel is a secondary character, an agent in the Proppian economy,[212] who is not party to the life of the inner circle of the narrative that revolves around the residents of the alley. He is visited regularly by the more respected man in the alley, Shaykh 'Alī, and his shop acts as the setting for an impromptu political salon.

In the film adaptation, entitled *al-'Aswār*,[213] Jamīl's focus on the fabula of the novel can be seen in his decision to radically alter the syntagmatic order in which the narrative unfolds at the discourse level before the audience; so that while he keeps a certain part of the chronology of events from the novel, his path parts company with the novel's order of presenting the events. To use Proppian terminology, he keeps certain aspects of the fabula, while almost wholly doing away with the sjuzhet of the novel.

The fabula of the novel covers a set of events that take place in the period immediately before the formation of the modern state of Iraq through to the final days of the monarchy. On the whole, the discourse style of the narrative, the sjuzhet, abides by the chronology of events of the fabula. Events are presented as they appear in the story time; there are no flashbacks or forwards. There are expository summaries of events and characters that fall in the antecedent category of events before the starting point of the narrative, and before the 'now' of the story.

The film's fabula, on the other hand, is presented in a sjuzhet that is heavily elliptical and reliant on flashbacks. Moreover, the fabula of the film concentrates at a small portion of the historical period covered by the novel. The film concentrates at the two years of 1955 and 1956, which were contemporaneous with the formation of the Baghdād Pact and the

[211] Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl, "Ru'yah Sīnamā'iyyah wa Sīrah Faniyyah / An Artistic Trajectory in Cinema", *Alif* 15 (1995), p. 126

[212] Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, rev. and ed. Louis A. Wagner, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968)

[213] *Al-'Aswār* / The Walls (Dir. Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl, Iraq, 1979)

nationalization of the Suez Canal. The fabula starts with Muḥsin's barbershop acting as a sort of a political salon. The men from the alley, along with others such as Hātif, the Arab nationalist high school teacher, gather to talk about the latest political events with the fervor of revolutionaries. Their meetings attract the attention of the powerful merchant running the big grocery store opposite the barbershop. These meetings are in parallel to the development of a love affair between members of the young generation in the alley, as represented by 'Abbās and Mājidah, and Nājī and Nahlah, respectively.

The youth of the alley are politicized and helped into an awakening by the teachings of the history teacher, Hātif. These lead to their taking part in demonstrations, firstly against the dismissal of pupils from school for their political activities, and secondly in support of Nāṣir's nationalization of the Suez Canal and in opposition to the subsequent Franco-British-Israeli attack on Egypt. These demonstrations, the death of Nājī at the hands of the riot police, and the arrests of Muḥsin, the barber, and Hātif, are antecedent to the point of the fabula chosen by the film to begin the narrative. The film takes its starting point as the release of Muḥsin from prison, his journey back to his barbershop, and his murder by what are assumed to be members of the secret police later that very day. The complete fabula is gleaned at the end of the sjuzhet, the film narrative, when it transpires that the whole film up to that point had in fact been an enacted flashback running through the mind of the young man 'Abbās as he is about to lead his inmates of political detainees in a prison breakout.

This means that whereas the novel used the 1940s and 1950s as the historical backdrop to the development of the narrative and the growth of the characters into the revolutionaries that will- after the end of the sjuzhet and in the implied future of the fabula - lead the country's liberation from the clutches of backwardness and foreign domination, the film adaptation takes the viewer to that exact point in the future to which the novel had directed the imagination of the implied reader. This means that instead of worrying itself about the growth and the indoctrination of characters into political animals, the film narrative

deals with these characters at the point before the explosion that comes as a result of their total awareness of the repressive and corrupt nature of the monarchist system and their need to uproot the status quo.

Effectively, what emerges is an agreement in the overall objectives between both narratives, but a divergence of means and a discrepancy in the points from which both narratives start their respective journeys. In other words, the sjuzhet is clearly different in the two narratives, but the film embraces the novel's fabula and its ideological content and orientation.

The Narrator

The obvious leanings of both texts to a particular political ideology is thrown into relief by an omniscient and omnipresent narrator whose intrusion is clearly noted in the novel. Despite the fact that there is no overall omniscient narrator in the film providing a voice-over to the narrative, as is the case in the novel where the narrator is present throughout the whole narrative, the film does illustrate the presence of an overall narrator that is only too happy to declare his presence to the implied audience.

In the novel, the narrator achieved this at several levels, including the provision of descriptive and expository narration, and more crucially through his commentary on the political situation and the characters' leanings in a highly politicised and overtly opinionated manner.

The formula followed throughout the narrative is of providing the written equivalent of the cinematic aerial shot of a space and the characters occupying it before descending swiftly into the ground and eye level of the characters. For example,

> The home of Ḥamīd is located in an alley that splinters off a wide road connecting the hospital and al-Rūf suburb, where the cemetery and the shrine of al-Majāhīl... are situated. The home of Ḥamīd comprises of a single room, its clay walls have been

> covered from floor to ceiling with palm straw rugs, and its ceiling is made of palm tree trunks and covered with Bawārī.[214]

The narrator continues to furnish the room through his description, dropping in the process more information about the family and its members. Similarly, in another part of the text

> The Hawā street stretches wide and straight between the east and west of the city. Scattered in the middle island of the street are green rectangular gardens with tall eucalyptus trees...
>
> To the east of the city is situated the Ṣābi'ah quarter bordering the farms of 'Abbūd near the banks of the Euphrates...
>
> To the west of the city....
>
> The city awoke to the sight of a large number of workers uprooting the eucalyptus trees in the middle of Hawā street...[215]

The narrator of the novel is also privileged with the ability to express aspects of the inner being of the characters that they themselves may not be able to express so succinctly. This allows the narrator to link the dots between different traits and characteristics in the outer public mask of the characters to their private and personal histories. Ḥasnah is the first of the characters to undergo the treatment at the outset of the discourse time of the narrative. In a demonstration of the order of the sjuzhet being different from the fabula, the narrator stops the story time to physically describe Ḥasnah as she busies herself preparing the food.Her weak and slight frame leads to a brief and effective summary of her illness, to the circumstances in which she was overcome by her chest ailment and the time she spent in hospital.[216] The narrator goes back to the story time and follows Ḥasnah as she goes about the chores of housekeeping, before returning to her past and the manner she had met and married Ḥamīd more than twenty years prior to the present of the narrative. Through her history, the narrator also touches on her husband's past and how he had come to be a night watchman or police officer.[217] The past of the characters

[214] *Al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār*, p. 11. All translation from both film and novel are mine.
[215] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105
[216] *Ibid.*, p. 10
[217] *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15

adds a sense of three-dimensionality and helps the narratee and the reader better understand the trajectory of the characters.

To use Norman Friedman's terminology, the narrator here is to all intents and purposes an editorially omniscient narrator.[218] In other words, the narrator exercises the freedom of moving within the time and space of the narrative, dipping into the thoughts of the different characters and expressing his own opinion. An example that encapsulates some of these features is the scene at the forecourt of the local police station. The scene comprises of the head of police giving the night watchmen a dressing down for their incompetence and failure in preventing anti-government slogans appearing in the streets of al-Nāṣiriyyah. The narrator states,

> ...and Ḥamīd came out querying [the reason for the mayor's visit], as he had shortly returned from the Sarāy [municipality offices] simmering with contempt... For the commander of the centre had called in all the watchmen/guards and made them stand in a long line....[219]

This narration is intertwined with the narrator's description of the men as being mostly in their forties whom 'life had cast to its peripheries and who could not find an alternative but joining the guards/police corps.'[220] While describing the commander as he hurls abuse at the group, the narrator reports the genuinely confused questions that come from different parts of the line-up, before settling on Ḥamīd's eyes as they wander through the features and mannerisms of the commander:

> Ḥamīd was bewildered, as he was standing in the front row... unable to find a word to utter. Yet his eyes did not pull away from the irate face of the commander of the centre, and realised that there was another pair of spectacles before him, with a thinner frame. And he [the commander] was mounting them on his eyes in place of the other pair every now and then. He would do that in a mechanical manner without Ḥamīd being able to realise why or the difference between the two pairs.[221]

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[218] Norman Friedman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), pp. 145-56
[219] Al-*Qamar wa al-'Aswār*, p. 189
[220] *Ibid.*
[221] *Ibid.*, p. 190

As the scene unfolds and more attention is paid to every aspect of the facial movements and visible idiosyncrasy of the commander, the narratee and the reader are provided with more information on the characters in the scene, and more importantly, on the way in which the narrator views the scene. His stance on the situation is made clear at various points in the narrative, in which the descriptive gives way to the celebratory and the chanting of an anti-government demonstration when the narrator declares, 'a wave of joy overwhelms the city ... when the Arabic heart of Cairo awoke and overthrew the monarchist regime there.'[222] And,

> The country was simmering with contempt...The opposition resorted to all means, in order to get its voice heard. Yet, the authorities faced all this with brutal force. The number of those arrested increases, and the prisons fill, and yet the cry [for freedom] did not lose its persistence and resilience.[223]

The telltale signs of opinion in these examples being expressed by the narrator are the choice of words that represent a total departure from a mere objective reporting of events. Phrases such as the 'Arabic heart of Cairo', or 'prisons fill', or 'the cry' [for freedom], all point to a progressive Pan-Arab narrator that is at odds with the system governing the country in the time period addressed by the narrative.

These characteristics of the narrator are clearly present in the narrative of the film adaptation. Firstly, there is the visible narrator in the shape of 'Abbās, the young man who is arrested and falsely accused of the murder of Muḥsin the barber. The character of 'Abbās and his memories of the events that led to the night of the murder of the barber provides a framing for the narrative. In fact, in the initial scene between 'Abbās and the investigating police officer, 'Abbās provides a voice over that briefly overlaps the conversation of the characters in the scene he is recalling aloud for the benefit of the police officer. Moreover, the fact that a close-up of his face, in the police station and later in the prison cell, follows the end of each segment of flashback does provide a clear cue to the

[222] *Ibid.*, p. 265
[223] *Ibid.*, p. 211

implied viewer that 'Abbās is indeed the narrator of the preceding events. All of this puts greater emphasis than the novel on the personal point of view of the narrative and arguably creates a more politically charged story.
'Abbās's role as narrator runs into trouble in view of the very basic technical point of his inability, as a character within the diegesis of the narrative, to have been privy to every conversation and meeting included in these flashbacks.[224]

The flashbacks that are attributed to 'Abbās's point of view, through the juxtaposition of events to inserts of him in close-up, include conversations and private meetings and dinners that form a vertical slice of Iraqi society, ranging from the moment Hātif kisses his bride on the night of their wedding, to the distance travelled by a brown envelope containing a bribe from the top of the desk of an official to the drawer, and finally to a conversation between the prime minister of the day, Nūrī Pasha, and two of his advisors. The chorus-like nature of the monologue of one of these advisors, the total lack of empathy for the suffering of the average man sported by the Premier, and the out-of-reach nature of the scene for all the known characters of the diegesis, all point to a direct intrusion here by the filmmaker to present a scene that is implicitly included in the text of the novel.

The cinematic tools that flank these flashbacks leave the audience in no doubt as to the focalization of the narrative being from the point of view of our young hero. Tools such as the close-up of 'Abbās, the dominance of angles in scenes that convey his point of view of the event in which he is both partaking and witnessing, juxtaposed to the temporal ellipses that keep returning to him, all help the audience see in 'Abbās not only a narrator but also a point of reference in the narrative. To use Gérard Genette's terms, the focalization in the film is more or less fixed from one character's point of view.[225] This fact does not

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[224] Similar to those of Marcel in Proust's In Search of Lost Time, the events that 'Abbās remembers catch up with him at the final scene in the narrative, and the narrative ceases to be mainly from his point of view. Gérard Genette, *Narrative discourse*, translated by Jane E. Lewin, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 198
[225] Genette, p. 190

become clear until the very last scene in the film when we realise that all the narrative of the action had in fact taken place in 'Abbās's head, and that he was reminiscing to himself the events that had led to his incarceration.

There are two points that could account for this 'omniscience' to a character whose knowledge ought to be limited by his circumstances and the information, people, environments to which he has access in the diegesis. The first of these would be the time frame that is presented in the film narrative not reflecting the actual time frame from which the character of 'Abbās is narrating the story. In other words, instead of him narrating the events that led to the murder of the barber from his prison cell, he could be narrating the events from the same time plain and historical point as the audience in 1970s Iraq, having succeeded in bringing down the monarchist regime, and is now providing his memoirs and those of his generation as they struggled against the former regime. This reasoning could be partly plausible given the structure of the film narrative and its reliance on more than one layer of narrative. It is also plausible in view of the nature of the subject matter of the film, as opposed to the novel; the latter was concerned with the development of an ideology through a process of trial and error, while the latter is concerned with the point before the explosion that led to the achievements of Pan-Arab ideology via its Iraqi surrogate of the Ba'th Socialist Party. This is to say, that the film's focus on the point directly before the explosion, being the now of the character of 'Abbās in his prison cell, in a sense makes a direct connection between the present- the now- of the audience and that point of the explosion, as 'Abbās leads into the sunset his fellow inmates. The sunset here stands for the end of the old regime and the era it represents. With this point in mind, it would be plausible to assume that 'Abbās had survived the regime's fight back against the uprising, and that with the benefit of time he was able to piece together the different events that had an effect on his life and the life of his compatriots during the final days of the regime.

Given the rhetorical nature of the film adaptation, it is no wonder that Jamīl chooses to address the role of the narrator in his adaptation head-on. For what emerges is not an interest on his part in the message of the novel, but rather the manner of its narration to the implied audience. In a sense, Jamīl keeps the rhetorical essence and trajectory of the novel, and infuses it with his highly political and Soviet montage influenced cinematic language. The omniscient narrator of the novel spoke to the reader of events and described them in a highly emotive and prejudiced manner; the implied narrator of the film, Jamīl's implied surrogate, via the prism of his cinematic tools presents these events and characters in a similarly emotive and politically biased way. The point of the film adaptation here is to serve the ideological ends of the one party political system that is funding the production, an end aptly described by Metz in connection with the Soviet Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s: 'Eisenstein never shows us the course of real events, but always, as he says, the course of real events refracted through an ideological point of view...Signifying from beginning to end. Meaning is not sufficient; there must also be signification.'[226]

To take the Soviet connection a step further, it could be argued that the whole choice of the murder of the barber as the lynch pin for the entire film adaptation is indicative of the ideological and political rationale that was the driving force behind making the film. To magnify the interest and centrality of an event in the adaptation that had played a mere symptom of a brutal and corrupt system in the novel makes the film adaptation an ideologically charged project from the point of devising thefabula; the story itself becomes rhetorical in nature. Coupled with the manner in which Jamīl allows the fabula to unfold, the film reaches new heights of overt narration and political propaganda. In a sense, Jamīl's adaptation fits into Bordwell's description of Soviet films, such as *Battleship Potemkin* (Dir. Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1925) and *October* (Dirs. Grigori Aleksandrov and Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet Union, 1928): 'These

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[226] Christian Metz, Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema, Translated by Michael Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974),, p. 37

films are signed and addressed through and through, the diegetic world built from ground up according to rhetorical demands.'[227]

The manner in which he achieves this is in two-fold; the first is through the use of the aforementioned cinematic tools that direct the audience both implicitly and explicitly toward a particular way of looking at a character or a scene. The point being that he declares his presence as an implied author in the narrative through the way he puts the narrative together. The second is Jamīl's inclusion of newsreel footage and commentary from the period in question at important junctures in the narrative. To look at Jamīl's two basic points that put into practice his aforementioned dialectic manner of adapting the novel to the film, this is an appropriate stage to start deconstructing his work over three main categories: narrative structure, characterization, *mise-en-scène* and music.

Narrative Structure

The film follows and heightens the rhetorical characteristic of the narrative of the novel and its overtly politicized orientation at many levels. The manner in which its different parts come together is designed to both alert the viewer of its political telling of a story, so that the viewer is aware from the very start of the sjuzhet of the political impulse in the message and the telling, the signified and signifier.

By focusing on a period that is perhaps no longer than two years in the late 1950s, Jamīl's adaptation becomes more current and overtly connected to the present of the audience of the Iraq of the late 1970s. The film's political message of championing the progressive working class and educated youth against the capitalist ruling elite and their servants in all classes of society is a message that chimes with the thinking of the ruling Ba'th Party of Iraq, thus making the film's message at one level a demonstration of the efficacy and voracity of the ideology of the new ruling elite.

[227] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 239

The reduction of the narrative time in the film adaptation, reducing the overwhelming majority of the narrative to flashbacks in the mind of 'Abbās in his prison cell before leading the revolt against the prison guards, and the old regime, enhances the ideological dimension of the narrative in that the history being narrated from the point of view of this young man is clearly from the point of view of the regime at many levels. Firstly, the narrative is made more focused on Ba'th ideology, as opposed to the novel's attempt to provide a survey of Iraqi political thoughts and movements before arriving at Ba'thism which is deemed in the novel as the culmination of these movements and experiments by the generations in the first half of the twentieth century. This is achieved by doing away with all the other political discourses to which space was allotted in the novel, albeit in order to arrive at Ba'th ideology. Secondly, the fact that the whole narrative emanates from a single individual's recollection of the events being narrated shifts the film narrative closer to the point of view of Ba'th ideology as the audience is left in no doubt of the Ba'thist orientation of the character of 'Abbās. Thirdly, the reduction in the narrative time helps give significance to events and encounters that were part of the wider tapestry of the narrative of the novel. The paradigmatic choices made by the filmmaker in what to include from the novel are as crucial as his decision to exclude certain events and characters; these choices are made the more political in outlook through the syntagmatic choices of the film narrative which relies on showing an event, the murder of the barber, then working from an antecedent point in the fabula back to the event again. The choice in structure helps add an undercurrent of tension to otherwise everyday occurrences, such as the barber going about his daily work with his clients, or the walk taken by the teacher, Hātif, with 'Abbās, or the discussions between the women of the alley of political issues.

The flashbacks attributed in the film to 'Abbās fall into two levels of analepses, in Genette's terms, in that they are an 'evocation after the fact of event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given

moment.'[228] The reach and extent of these analepses underline the explicitness of Jamīl's narration and its rhetorical style. The audience is made to follow the wait-and-see strategy expected of 1920s and 1930s Soviet Cinema audiences. Sjuzhet structure and narration style work at two complimentary levels; one retards the audience's ability to piece the fabula together, due to the highly elliptical structure and the absence of character history to help form empathy between the audience and the characters, while the other underlines the political message of the film by directing the thoughts of the bewildered audience to the significance behind the façade of the story. The lack of a chronological narrative, and the use of a highly stylised manner of piecing the elliptical sjuzhet together, leads the audience to look at the message that unifies the flood of what initially seem unconnected images and scenes.

The retardation takes place via the use of an analepsis from which branch further analepses. The main flashback is revealed to be from 'Abbās' point of view in the prison cell; from this point the character casts his eye on events in the past that show him to be casting a further eye on the past. In effect, he reminisces at different levels, in the same fashion as the Marcel character in Proust's In Search of Lost Time. So that what seemed during the unfolding of the narrative to be flashbacks by 'Abbās, are in fact flashbacks, analepses, within the all-encompassing flashback at the end of the sjuzhet. These flashbacks include the recounting by 'Abbās to the investigating police officer of the events that led to his finding the corpse of Muḥsin, or when he watches as Yāsīn relates to the school principal the manner in which 'Abbās and he came upon a fellow student writing anti-government slogans on the blackboard. The last example is interesting as it involves 'Abbās at three levels: as the narrator from whose perspective these memories are unfolding, as a partaker within this event that he remembers, and as a partaker within the enactment of Yāsīn's recounting of a past event. He is, in Genette's terms, a narrator of both extradiegetic-homodiegetic and the intradiegetic-homodiegetic categories, in that he at one level is a narrator giving us a glimpse into a narrative in which he

[228] Genette, p. 40

was a protagonist, while at the same time being a narrator within that secondary narrative.[229]

The second aspect in the filmmaker's relentless projection of a didactic and overtly political message in his narration of the fabula is his use of newsreel materials from the 1950s as a way of connecting the minutiae of life in the alley, the sūq and the teahouse with the geo-political upheaval that was taking hold of the region in the aftermath of the nationalization of the Suez Canal. It is plausible to equate his use of the newsreel material and commentary with the prejudiced and didactic expository text that emanates from the narrator of the novel. There, the narrator had included his support to Nāṣir's actions in the very expository narrative with which he informed the reader of the general sense of public support for the nationalization of the Canal, and later for the Egyptian fight against the tripartite attack on its soil, in addition to his position with reference to the signing of the Baghdād Pact. The film takes newsreel reports on these events as they were screened in Iraqi cinemas, and in some cases in Egyptian cinemas. The inclusion of these newsreel items is a form of dialectics between fact and fiction, at one level, and also a film within a film at another level. For the events reported in the newsreels did actually take place in the past, thus providing an anchorage for the film narrative to a particular moment in Iraqi and Arab history; yet the inclusion of the first newsreel at a point in the film structure which follows the graphically presented murder of the barber paints in dark shades the contents of the newsreel, as it shows the leaders of the monarchist government taking part in the formation of a political alliance viewed by Arab nationalists as an attempt to counter the rise of Pan-Arabism.[230] In other words, far from presenting a factual account of past events, the newsreel becomes a construct and a fictionalised account of real events; fictionalised in the sense of the echoes of Ba'th narrative of the past it is made to carry by virtue of its position in the film structure.

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[229] Genette, p. 248

[230] For the divergence between the aims of the creation of the Baghdād Pact and its eventual consequences, see among others, Mohamed Heikal, *Cutting The Lion's Tale: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1986), pp. 52- 59

This fictionalised account of real events is also shown in the montage of the famous 'presidential decree of nationalizing the Maritime Suez Canal Company' as proclaimed by Nāṣir in a public speech. It also applies to a montage of the British and French bombing of Egypt and the destruction they cause on the ground accompanied by the audio of Nāṣir's speech declaring his will to fight on despite the ferocity of the attack.[231] All three newsreel items included in the film can be argued to be part of the rhetorical nature of the narrative and designed to serve the general political and ideological orientation of the filmmaker. This is to say that even in the case of the first newsreel showing the signing of the Baghdād Pact with its original soundtrack and commentary, or what purports to be its original commentary, the implied viewer is left in no doubt as to the side s/he ought to take. The expected position of the implied viewer is strongly suggested to be at one with that of the filmmaker. This can be deduced from both the choice of point in the narrative at which the newsreel is inserted and their content. So that the signing of the Baghdād Pact newsreel follows immediately Muḥsin's release from prison, suggesting a link between his imprisonment and the government that entered into this pact. This link is confirmed retrospectively by the narrative.

The inclusion of the newsreel material serves as a tool at the disposal of the filmmaker to hinge the narrative to a particular historic point, and obliterate any doubt the spectator may have as to the exact historical period in which the film narrative takes place. Secondly, this could be the visual rendition of the monologue by narrator in the novel explaining, in the case of the first newsreel, from his ideologically subjective point of view the setting of the Baghdād Pact. As mentioned above, this monologue is one of many in the novel in which the narrator seems to hover above the entire territory of Iraq at a particular historic point explaining to the implied reader the political scene and the forces pushing the country in one direction or another. An example that would fit with the

[231] The latter newsreel is an obvious montage made by the filmmaker of archive footage edited with parts of Nāṣir's radio broadcasts.

newsreel format on film can be the declaration of the narrator of the novel: 'With the dawn of 1951 Nūrī al-Sa'īd formed a new government and recommenced his attempts to link Iraq via a new alliance to Britain, as a substitute to the abandoned treaty of Portsmouth.'[232] Similarly, 'Emergency rule was declared in Iraq, and a military government was formed headed by the Chief of Staff of the army who began his work in hitting the uprising that had reached universities and factories...and tanks began to occupy the streets....'[233]

They also serve to provide a cue for the characters to discuss and react to the issues of the day. Thus every one of these newsreel items is either directly followed by a discussion and a debate between the characters, as is the case after the newsreel declaring the nationalization of the Suez Canal, or a retrospective analysis of the contents of the newsreel, as provided by the character of the school teacher, Hātif. In the novel, these political discussions between the residents of the alley are mostly used by the characters to while away the time, unlike the film's visceral feelings towards events under discussion. The intention on the part of the author of the novel is perhaps to highlight the ignorance and disempowerment of these people whose children shall 'liberate' their country from the status quo. The filmmaker on the other hand gives greater emphasis on their offspring. An example of the vast difference in rendition of these political discussions between the two texts would be the issue of Palestine in the novel, and the issue of the anti-Baghdād Pact pamphlets in the film; in the former, the narrator focuses the attention of the implied reader to the ignorance of the characters and their inability to fathom the complexity of the whole question of the creation of a Jewish state. The narrator of the novel refers to Shaykh 'Alī's thoughts on the impending war and his considering of purchasing a radio in order to gain access to the news that he is so often expected to analyze to his guests and the residents of the alley.[234] In addition to its role as a source of information to the residents of the

[232] Op. Cit., p. 225
[233] *Ibid.*, p. 277
[234] *Ibid.*, p. 77

alley, the radio in the novel works in tandem with other aspects delineating the ignorance of the older generation of the alley to draw attention to the peripheral nature of most members of the community to national, regional and international affairs. They simply hear of events and talk about the news just as they do when socialising; the radio becomes another tool in the arsenal of Shaykh 'Alī's position as the centre point of reference to the older members of the community. His seeming confusion and lack of a true grasp of the situation is contrasted by the narrator's reference to the extra lengths that teachers in the local schools go to put the issue of Palestine within the range of the struggle against imperialism.[235] The film's reduction of narrative time and shifting of emphasis to the younger generation of the alley reduces from the importance of the Shaykh, and replaces his centrality with the position of Hātif, as teacher to the teenagers of the alley, and the barber Muḥsin who views the boys as 'his sons'. The reduction in the importance of the Shaykh in the adaptation is arguably part of the film narrative's avoidance of the novel's description of the ignorance that permeates the religious learning of the Shaykh. Where the novel had presented ignorance cloaked with a superficial understanding of religion as part of the survey of different political social movements that preceded the arrival to Ba'thism, with a view of portraying the latter as a culmination of the endeavour to find the political, social and economic system and orientation most suited to Iraq, the film is structured as such that there are only two camps of thought to choose from: good and evil. Religion does not figure in either group.

Indeed, the Shaykh's lack of knowledge and obvious bewilderment in the novel is mirrored by the naivety and innocence that is borne out of a similar ignorance expressed by women in the alley; so miniscule is their awareness of the emerging political map of the Middle East that they find it necessary to use two words familiar to them, Filis and Ṭīn, in order to remember the Arabic name for Palestine, Filasṭīn.[236] The film works through mirror images of these two scenes

[235] *Ibid.*.
[236] *Ibid.* p. 75

according to the parameters it had set itself from the outset: prototype characters, extreme evil versus a mixture of revolutionary zeal and naivety, and a shrunk temporal scale that covers the period around the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the impending end of the monarchy. This is evident in the filmmaker's choice to show the teacher, Hātif, as he explains to the students the geo-political situation, as well as the demonstrations that rise against the government's foreign policy, and the annoyance with these anti-government activities of those characters that benefit from the status quo. Thus, the film shows what is referred to in the novel as the outside world that the narrator explains from his high up position in the diegesis, including references to the greedy and corrupt class, before dipping down to the eye level of the characters.

Characterisation

The heavily elliptical mode of narration followed by the filmmaker, and his highly rhetorical and self-conscious style create two major effects in terms of interaction with the implied audience; firstly, the fabula becomes an object that requires work and perseverance from the audience in order for it to come together through the cues provided in the sjuzhet; and secondly, left to drift from the familiarity of linear narrative, the spectator's major point of continuity and regular contact are the characters. These provide the link between the different sequences that are juxtaposed with little forewarning as to the point in the story to which they refer, or indeed their point of focalization. However, the overtly self-conscious narration obstructs to a greater extent the empathy with characters to reach its full potential, a result that could arguably be seen as intentional on the part of the filmmaker. He is willing to make the very method of filmmaking part and parcel of the message that the audience is meant to derive from the experience of watching the film.

Therefore, Jamīl populates the world of *al-'Aswār* with characters that are endowed with the traits and personalities that would not dilute the political message at the heart of the film; no character is allowed to gain a predominant position in the narration, lest s/he pull the audience too far into the diegesis

away from the overall spectacle of the combined effect of the fictional world and the world of the audience as experienced during the viewing of the film.

As was the case with the fabula and sjuzhet of the novel and the transformation it underwent in the film narrative, the characters of Jamīl are at the point before making a life-changing decision, they are not allowed the time and space to evolve into the revolutionaries of the novel; they just are. This transformation is part of the general outline of the film adaptation that condensed the fabula time into a couple of years, as opposed to the decades of the novel. While this condensation allows more attention on a single point in Iraq's modern history, it has the further consequence of cutting out many of the characters of the novel, or otherwise give them a minor appearance in the periphery of the text

Before going into a detailed comparison and analysis of the characterization in both texts, it is important to make a general point on Jamīl's strategy in developing his characters on the screen: His depiction of the characters emphasises the archetypal nature of these individuals within the grand and the miniscule life of the nation and the individual, respectively. Therefore, the film disposes with characters that do not provide a sense of opposition, in the Levi-Strausian sense- and provide an example of a whole stratum or group of people. For example, Yāsīn of the novel, who was the son of Shaykh 'Alī, is purged from the adaptation and a totally alien character to the narrative of the novel is created in the film and given the name of Yāsīn. The new character fits into the sense of opposition as the son of a corrupt merchant. Similarly, the middle-aged man who sets up a small grocery shop in the alley and who is ostracised by the community on the basis of rumour is also purged from the narrative of the film as he does not fit the politically charged binary opposition.

As with its structure, the film's characterization follows aspects of the films of Eisenstein and Soviet montage: 'Narration causality is constructed as supra-individual, deriving from social forces described by Bolshevik doctrine. Characters thus get defined chiefly through their class position, job, social

actions, and political views.'[237] So that the characters are more prototypes, to use a Bordwell terminology, rather than three-dimensional protagonists organically developed through the narrative. This strategy is most apparent in the characters of the corrupt merchant, the teacher, the school principal, the policeman, and the barber, respectively. It is very clear on which side of the divide between good and evil, in their most pure and dark senses, each character stands. The film does not allow any redeeming features to any of the characters that it casts in the evil camp. Whenever such characters happen to be a film rendition of their novel version the filmmaker does not allow them any of the humane features they possessed in the novel. Thus Jamīl's police officer punishes all of the pupils for their part in the school disturbance, unlike his counterpart of the novel who disparages his lieutenants for arresting mere children. Similarly, the school principal is drawn by Jamīl as a government agent who passes on the names of the politically active students to the police; al-Rubayʻī's original is a school principal who receives the list of the names from the police. There is no space in the adaptation for the grey area for the characters to dwell in; they are either innately good or bad. There is an almost Orwellian painting of characters in the way individuals resemble the pigs, the sheep, the horse and the dog of Animal Farm, albeit, the film's philosophy is one that grafts the characteristics of Communism gone wrong, which Orwell presented in Animal Farm, to the of Iraq of the 1950s, a country ruled by a monarchy.

Finally, Jamīl's characterization has all the symptoms of a Lacanian[238] image projected on the screen in terms of its relationship to the filmmaker, the audience, and the state that funded the film production. For these characters, their garish black and white shading, are infused with the ideals of good and, crucially, evil. Those characters that are on the side of good in the film correspond to the elevated, impossibly idealistic, honest, brave, intelligent and

[237] Bordwell, Op. Cit., p. 236

[238] See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, translated by Bruce Fink (London:,Norton Paperback 2004), pp. 3-7

distinguished individuals that had been drummed into the heads of the audience from the religious texts and Friday speeches at the mosque, of the great saints of Islam, and also – paradoxically- from the secular and nationalist Pan-Arab interpretation of characters from Arab and Islamic history. The characters on the screen are not only bigger in size, projected as they are, but also bigger in personality and belief. For an audience sympathetic to Ba'th ideology these characters would be an ideal worthy of being emulated.

Interestingly, the Lacanian aspect of the characterization is suffused with the self-conscious method of filmmaking that works against the very point of painting these greater than life characters. The rhetorical gets in the way of seeing these characters as perfect reflections of an imperfect self, due to the fact that the audience is not allowed to be submerged in the diegesis, and thus practice idol-worship, by the way in which this diegesis is conveyed to the non-diegetic world of the audience.

In relation to the novel, the film characters are of two kinds: those that are retained in order to serve the filmmaker's aforementioned goal of making a politically rhetorical feature, and secondly, those characters who were referred to as the 'other' in the novel and are given a face in the film adaptation.

Those characters from the novel that are retained in the film adaptation fall into two categories: those who are taken from the text of the novel and projected onto the screen with few discernible changes, and those who merely keep the names of characters from the novel and are projected as totally different entities in the adaptation. This division helps the filmmaker to use those elements in the narrative of the novel that aid his cause and to discard the characters that do not provide him with the focused energy he seeks.

This division is evident in the households that occupy the alley. The four main families of the novel are reduced to three in the film adaptation, so that the home of Jabbār disappears from the film adaptation, and the family homes of

Ḥamīd, Shaykh – Ḥajjī - ʻAlī, and policeman Maẓhar survive into the adaptation. The reduction helps narrow down the number of characters. There is also in the film the home of Hadī, the school janitor, which is a later addition to the alley of the novel, as the janitor and his daughter move into the second half of Jabbār's house in the novel. The one crucial addition to the residents of the alley comes in the form of the home of 'Abū Yāsīn, the wealthy and corrupt merchant who represents a rendition into flesh and blood of the 'other' of the novel, the corrupt beneficiaries of the status quo. The aforementioned reduction in the number of families of the alley that survive the transition from page to screen helps vacate the physical space in the diegetic canvas to house the 'Abū Yāsīn household in the alley in the film, as well as providing a symbolic microcosm of Iraqi society where the good, be they from the poor and illiterate older generation, or the new educated working class, live next to the malevolent members of society, represented in the film by the merchant and the informer school janitor.

The characters that survive almost intact the process of adaptation include the elder of the alley, Shaykh ʻAlī, who is referred to in the film as Ḥajjī ʻAlī; Ḥamīd the night watchman, and the barber Muḥsin. In the novel the first two are cousins and come from the same village, yet their paths only meet in the alley after a detour that had taken Shaykh ʻAlī to Iran where he lived and worked for years. Ḥamīd, on the other hand, had gone through a variety of menial jobs, before settling on his position as a night watchman. The family relationship between the two is strengthened with the marriage of Shaykh ʻAlī to Ḥamīd's sister, Khayriyyah.

The two are also representative of the interesting mix of rural Iraqi society of the time in that they both are illiterate in their own different ways. Ḥamīd cannot read or write, while the Shaykh's knowledge is ad hoc and based on a randomly accumulated knowledge of star signs from religious sources. They are, effectively the narrative seems to suggest, ill equipped to face the challenges of the modern state of Iraq. Their counterparts in the film carry with them this

bewildered status and exemplify the benevolent, yet ignorant older characters that need to be informed, even enlightened, by the new generation. The decision to change the title of 'Alī from the elevated religious position of Shaykh to the more common, yet respectable, Ḥajjī can be seen within the context of the filmmaker's desire to provide a politically charged film that does not inadvertently question the legitimacy of the religious establishment, as is the case with the novel's portrayal of the Shaykh. The film text does not wish to deviate from its main task of undermining every aspect of the monarchist system at the very moment that preceded its collapse. The Shaykh of the novel represents a stage along the route of the aforementioned progression of the Iraqi national zeitgeist and political thought from its tribal and religious roots towards the more universal Pan-Arabism. In fact, in the novel it is made clear that the Shaykh has no orthodox religious learning, and that instead of theology and Islamic jurisprudence, Shaykh 'Alī is more familiar with star signs and astrology. The filmmaker decides simply to do away with this aspect of the character, given his strategy of looking at Iraq at the point before the 'explosion'.

The character of Muḥsin sits in between the generations; he is old enough to refer to the youth as his sons, and yet is younger than the two elders. His political activity and awareness in the film does not fall into the same category as his counterpart in the novel. There, the character was a prominent member in the local town of a certain National Democratic Party, a political entity whose policies and ideological standpoint are not investigated in the novel.[239] The reasoning behind the novel's reticence may fall into its general trajectory of providing a survey and a general look at the development of nationalist political thought in Iraq, with the explicit view of arriving at Pan-Arabism as the sole solution to all of Iraq's and the region's ills. It follows, therefore, that by giving the name of the National Democratic Party to Muḥsin's group the novel is implying the group's ideology through its name, the policies are assigned according to the political label they are given.

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 149

The film rendition of Muḥsin is somewhat different in that he is far more Pan-Arab in his thoughts, as seen through his celebration of the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and at the same time less of a political leader than his written counterpart. His progressive Pan-Arab credentials play a part in every aspect of his film character, starting with his abandoning of the traditional Arab dress of the novel in favour of a modern shirt and trousers outfit, to the single book found in his possession that seems to be a contemporary history book, to the portraits on the wall of his barbershop which include that of a military leader who had fought against the British in the 1920s. The changes in appearance correspond to the transformation of the character in the film; he is a progressive working class character whose political beliefs are in sync with, or adumbrate, those of the 'progressive' rulers of the Iraq of the 1970s.

In the same generation as the barber is the character of Hātif, the history teacher at the central secondary school in Baghdād. Hātif is a character who has a namesake in the novel, and has the accumulation of traits that include those of his counterpart of the novel and of another altogether different character alluded to in the written narrative. The Hātif of the novel is a young master bricklayer who is an autodidact and has evolved into a member of the Communist Party of Iraq. The inclusion of the communist character in the novel is influenced by the historical context of its writing in the early 1970s when there was an alliance between the Ba'th government of 'Aḥmad Ḥassan al-Bakr and the Iraqi Communist party, who together formed the National Patriotic Front.[240] By the time of making the film, the alliance had ended, thus explaining the elimination of the communist character in the adaptation, yet again demonstrating the overwhelming presence of the present in a politically charged retelling of the past.

The other character whose traits are attached to the character of Hātif of the film is the unnamed physical education teacher who introduces the boys at high

[240] See Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 196

school to nationalist and Pan-Arab thoughts.[241] The amalgamated character that appears in the film is one that is perhaps the ultimate ideal combination of political activist and film star looks: intelligent, educated, honest, proud, intellectual, and oozing with charisma. The construction of the character is also part of the political context which was marshalling the Iraqi media in an incessant campaign for a positive image of the Ba'thist.

Hātif would certainly fit the aforementioned Lacanian perfect mirror image to which the filmmaker directs the audience. Here is a greater than life character who is dedicated solely to the liberation of his country from the pro-Western monarchist rule, and is willing to risk his position and his life towards that end, be it through teaching the boys in his charge a Pan-Arab take on contemporary history of the Arab world, or through his interaction with persona non-grata, such as Muḥsin, and airing his pro-Nāṣir views in the police-informer-infested-teahouse. Hātif is treated within the diegesis for the idol and leader that the filmmaker projects him to be; he is respected by all, those who agree and disagree with him alike. In fact, Hātif gets married to a resident of the alley and is treated to a traditional zaffah, or the groom procession, to the home of the bride. The point of the procession seems less to do with providing a filmic rendition of the marriage of the Hātif of the novel to Ḥamīd's daughter, Najiyyah, and more in keeping with the filmmaker's emphasis and celebration of the perfect model of a progressive and intellectual Pan-Arab for which Hātif stands. The choice of the name of Hātif in both the novel and adaptation is significant in view of the meaning of the noun: the harbinger of good news or a visionary. The communist of the novel gives his name to the Ba'thist of the film, as in the novel he had acted as a harbinger, among other young men in the alley, of the ideologies that would lead to Ba'th ideology; in the film adaptation, the character of the Ba'thist teacher is the visionary who can see beyond the rule of the pro-British monarchist regime.

[241] *Al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār*, pp. 236-239

A few of the students in his charge, standing here for the future generation that will inherit the task of leading the country- in the film narrative's economy- to a glorious and happy ever after, comprise all the youth of the alley. These include 'Abbās, Nājī and Yāsīn. The first two represent a merger of the characteristics and development of three characters in the novel; namely, 'Abbās, his brother, Kāmil, and Yāsīn, son to Shaykh 'Alī of the novel. The merger of the three characters into two sits comfortably with the filmmaker's focus on the period that preceded the fall of the regime, for he is interested in characters that are already on the verge of possessing an understanding of their political direction. The character of Yāsīn of the novel, along with that of Kāmil, represents the evolving political awareness of the young generation. Kāmil goes through a period of rose-tinted religious ideology that seeks to apply the elevated ideals of the Islam of the 8th and 9th Centuries to the modern world, and by the end of the narrative he begins to take interest in politics via a more contemporary ideology, which happens to be Pan-Arab in outlook.

Kāmil's political development is followed by the narrative as it shows the reactionary nature of his recourse to religion; for he eventually refocuses his energies on basketball and does quite well in a championship that takes place in Baghdād, in what is an attempt by the narrative of the novel to take one of the younger characters of the alley to the seat of power.[242] His religious phase includes his arrest for his involvement in the calls for the abolition of the monarchy and the re-establishment of the Khilāfah.[243] The novel's stance towards Islamist political ideology can be sensed through the depiction of teenagers, such as Kāmil, as its main followers. A point that is underlined as Shaykh 'Alī helps gain Kāmil's release from detention at the police station:

> Shaykh 'Alī kissed Kāmil on the cheek and walked away with him.
>
> [Shaykh 'Alī]- Don't let it worry you, son.
>
> But Kāmil queried in a manly manner:

[242] *Ibid.*, p. 284

[243] *Ibid.*, p. 232-7

[Kāmil]- Uncle, do you know with what 'Imām Ḥusayn – peace be upon him- replied to al-Hur's warning against fighting?[244]

With the rest of the highly ostentatious exchange, the reader is left in no doubt as to the frivolity of Kāmil's understanding of Islam; an understanding that is not far off that of Shaykh 'Alī's.

In the syntagmatic structure of the novel's narrative, there seems to be a direct move from Kāmil's desertion of religious thinking to its embracement by 'Azīz, the other part of the hybrid character that is 'Abbās in the film. The 'Azīz of the novel is son to Shaykh 'Alī. He had only heard of such politicised understanding of Islam after the arrest of Kāmil,[245] and moves towards religion as a way of recoiling into himself after the marriage of a girl from across the local river with whom he was in love; the very river across which a new bridge is being built. The blow to him of her marriage to her cousin seems to lead 'Azīz into religion. This change marks the beginning of the narrative's long-term interest in 'Azīz's political and ideological development. His earlier interests in writing poetry and love verses for the girl who does not know of his unrequited interest begins to be joined by more lofty national and social interests. The one salient point in the narrative's elliptical narration of the evolving interest of 'Azīz is the version of religion to which he resorts. This is a version, or an understanding, that is totally at odds with the version with which Kāmil briefly had toyed; for instead of seeking salvation from the present through ancient Islamic past, 'Azīz attaches terms to his Islam such as poverty, inequality, lack of social and health services and so on of the many diagnoses that would sit comfortably with a socialist agenda. He, therefore, assigns the status of martyr to the deceased Ḥasnah, Ḥamīd's wife:

The contempt in 'Azīz's heart grew over the death of the 'martyr'; thus he used to call Ḥasnah...for she is a martyr from her birth. An adolescent who carries, and grinds and bakes bags of wheat, shepherds the sheep, milks the cows, and sows and reaps... And when Ḥamīd married and took her with him to the city, she carried with her a worn out chest, and instead of flowering and flourishing in the shades of the city she wilted away...

[244] *Ibid.*, p. 237
[245] *Ibid.*, p. 233

> And 'Azīz would bite his hand with pain; no hospitals, no cure, nothing at all, and the same destiny awaits his mother, father and uncle, and perhaps himself as well if it were not for his persistence in studying, and here he is at the point of going to Baghdād to join its university where he will set out on his great journey that might get him to achieve his dreams of accomplishing something for his country and nation, and for his poetry...[246]

This mixture of adolescent angst, the maturity of a young man brought up in a household of learning of sorts, the usual naiveté and desire of youth to change the world and perhaps the shock of the loss of someone close all seem to be tempered with the knowledge that social mobility for his class can only be achieved through the route of the civil service, the path to which is education. Indeed, the narrator glimpses the elders as they discuss, in a reference to the relative good pay of the civil service, the obese appearance of government employees.[247]

To stress the difference in 'Azīz's understanding of Islam to that of Kāmil's earlier years, the narrator directly quotes him expressing his relief at Kāmil's return to basketball: 'Sport, at any rate, is better for him than the problems of al-Khilāfah, and being pursued by the police...'[248]

The narrative had set the groundwork for 'Azīz's developing ideology earlier in the text by the narrator. He states, describing 'Azīz sitting by the river watching the work of fishermen and workers constructing the new bridge:

> He ['Azīz] took a long breath and felt a deep comfort. He is totally on his own. Understood by no one, [and] whose opposition [to the status quo] is not recognised by others. Being fond of readings in Arabic history, he is taken by the biographies of the makers of that history...[249]

Past glories are contrasted in 'Azīz's mind, like the followers of most Arab nationalist ideology, with the present of the narrative in the 1950s of Iraq. In what seems to be a reflection on one of the main expressions of this discontent amongst a large section of the Arab intelligentsia, 'Azīz is described as writing

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246 *Ibid.*, p. 257
247 *Ibid.*, p. 255
248 *Loc. Cit.*
249 *Ibid.*, p. 217

a poem to one of these great leaders in Arab history, Mūsā Ibn Nuṣayr, in the usual flowery and effusive manner of older Arabic poetry.[250] The poem is also similar in style to the folkloric poetry of the Shī'ahs Muslims of the South of Iraq in praise of the twelve 'imāms. The choice of Mūsā Ibn Nuṣayr is crucial in the narrative, given his role in defeating the Persian Empire and conquering its territories for the fledgling Islamic land. As was the case with the inclusion of a Communist character in the novel, the aim of including these Shī'ah Muslim-Arab- characters, who form the majority, if not all, of the residents of the alley, is more to provide a chronology of the development of Pan-Arabism by including characters from different religious and ideological backgrounds. It also marries certain stages of the development of Pan-Arabism with Islam as a counter-point to Communism. Through their diversity, the characters confirm their unity as Arabs, and thus the future followers of the evolving thoughts of Pan-Arab writers, such as Michel 'Aflaq and Zakī al-'Arsūzī.

The religious affiliations of the characters in film are not pondered on, perhaps in keeping with the filmmaker's strategy to focus on the point in Iraq's history that preceded the fall of the monarchist regime; any diversion that mention of religion may cause is avoided.

The past glories which 'Azīz was rhapsodizing in his poetry by the river feature in an important scene in the film; during the history class. 'Abbās listens to the charismatic intellectual teacher talk about the role of colonialism in dividing the once great and united Arab land into little countries and kingdoms in order to be able to rule them more effectively. Thus, what had been a stream of thoughts exposed to the implied reader by the narrator of the novel is portrayed through a thoroughly didactic setting at both the sjuzhet and the fabula levels by the filmmaker. The effect of the setting, the classroom, the characters, teacher and pupil, and the timing of the dialogue, during the period that followed the signing of the Baghdād Pact, all help draw more clearly the personality of the characters involved. 'Abbās is shown to be the young man that is being

[250] *Ibid.*, pp. 217-8

groomed to be a future revolutionary, while the teacher is shown to be breaking away from the curriculum of the day to inform the youth in his care of the alternative ealities around them, as seen through the prism of a highly politicised and Pan-Arab orientated view of history.

The film also presents the scene of 'Azīz writing poetry by the riverbank. The scene in the novel had worked on the contrast between the present of the character and that of the hero whom he addresses. This is achieved by making 'Azīz commence writing his poem after the machinery and the cranes building a bridge nearby end their day's work.[251] The scene in the novel works on the contrast between the practical and dreamy, the modern and old as underlined through the tableau of 'Azīz writing the poem while resting on the river bank watching fishermen, representative of the ancient and old system of life, working next to the builders of the new bridge. The one point that connects the poem to the present is the final two verses, which plead with the historic hero to come to 'our land to recoup that which has been enslaved and rebuild that which has been ruined.'[252] Effectively, the scene presents three time references; first that of 'Azīz, second that of the hero, and third that of the implied author and implied reader. These periods are important given the ruling ideology at the time of the writing and publication of the novel, the 1970s. In many ways the poem is a definition of the word Ba'th, or renaissance.

The film takes this scene and adds the components of a further scene from the novel, where 'Azīz had written love poems for a girl living across the river. The filmmaker uses an array of cinematic tools to construct the scene with a view of sketching more aspects of the young man's character in the film, as partly represented by 'Abbās. The fact that the scene appears as the very first sequence in the sjuzhet of the film helps add more weight to its implication further down the line of the narration, and also makes the character of 'Abbās

[251] *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172
[252] *Ibid.*, p. 218

and his dreams the very first point of contact between the audience and the diegesis.

The scene begins with a zoom in from a wide shot to a moving female figure across the river. The frame begins with a male figure lying in the foreground on the river bank closest to the camera and then he gradually disappears from view as the camera zooms in on the female figure running across from left frame to right on the other side of the river. The composition of the shot makes clear that the point of view is that of the male figure in the foreground of the frame. The next shot is taken from the opposite riverbank tracking slowly back as the young girl runs towards the camera. This is followed by a close-up of the young man, whom we will know later to be ‘Abbās; followed by a corresponding close-up of the young girl in a shot that depicts her running towards the camera without moving out of frame. The male figure is shown standing up, before a cut to the fishing boat down below, between the two banks, where a fisherman throws what seems like a chunk of dynamite into the river, followed by ‘Abbās throwing a crumbled piece of paper into the river, to bring about the end of the sequence with the explosion of the dynamite. The most salient aspect of the intrusion of the filmmaker in the narration is the use of the combination of zoom ins with slow motion, thus alerting the audience to the presence of a hand moving the levers behind the scene, and also asking them to look at the stretched duration for a deeper meaning than the simple appearance of a youth watching an attractive young woman running. The fact that this happens to be the very first sequence in the film makes the scene more of a bundle of question marks that the filmmaker throws at the audience, rather than any expository narration that would help acquaint them with the setting and characters. The sequence can be argued to be part of the filmmaker's characterization of ‘Abbās, as the implied audience will realise in retrospect that this was partly a daydream that the young man was having while watching fishermen go about their business.

The fishermen, and the presence of 'Abbās are effectively the only two elements in the scene that are outside the daydream. The fact that the girl across the river is a figment of 'Abbās's imagination makes the young man whom she looks at and who is presented in slow motion also a figment of 'Abbās's imagination; he imagines a scenario in which he takes part. This is indicated by the fact that the act of throwing the dynamite into the water is shown at real speed, before going back to the slow motion of him throwing the crumbled piece of paper into the river. The explosion that follows is also shown in real speed. The interaction between the fictive and the real time at the level of the diegesis is fascinating here, especially when viewed as a feature that works against the ideological text imposed upon the narrative. This is followed by the title of the film, thus assigning the sequence the status of a prologue to which the filmmaker will later return at a further point in the sjuzhet.

The characterization of 'Abbās continues at a pace as he becomes more and more of a politically aware and active individual within the chorus that forms the 'white' side of the characters, as opposed to the negatively drawn pro-government group of individuals. In fact, in what is clearly an intentional route followed by Jamīl, 'Abbās is allowed only a single sentence throughout the film narrative that is not political in nature. Every single conversation in which he is involved is political and didactic in nature. This is rationalised in the film's economy by the fact that all the narrative is to a great extent an enactment of his thoughts and memories while he is detained for his anti-government and political activities. His thoughts during such testing and abnormal times revolve around the events that led directly to his present position as a detainee in a cell with another political prisoner. Close-ups, frame composition, and music cue the implied audience to understand a scene or a sequence to be from the point of view of this central character in the film adaptation. In the overall structure of the film, the trajectory of this character is presented as one of the elements that legitimise the right of the Ba'th to rule after its struggle against a corrupt regime.

A secondary character within the same young generation as 'Abbās, and sharing the same school and alley milieu, is Nājī. This is a character that is pencilled in with a distant resemblance to the character of 'Abbās of the novel. He, like 'Abbās of the novel, is in love with Nahlah, the daughter of the school janitor, Hādī. The relationship between the two is depicted at a later stage in their lives than the novel where they are in their mid-teens. The change in age serves to take the relationship between the two from the innocent first love of the novel to one that is inflected with the overall trajectory of the film narrative, so that the relationship works at the level of the emotional and primal of two young people in such a repressive society being allowed to spend a few stolen moments together, and also as a mirror image of the world of the adults where actions need to be accounted for. The action in question here is the spying in which Nahlah's father indulges for the benefit of the school headmaster and the authorities against the pupils and their pro-change nationalist teacher, Hātif.

The mélange of the two worlds of the personal and public that the above relationship demonstrates runs throughout the narrative of the film. Blood, community, class and work ties are strained, strengthened and tested by the prism of social, economic and political forces that affect the country at various levels. The difference between the way in which these forces and effects are presented in the film in comparison with that of the novel is the fact that they are far more focused and stressed in view of the shorter duration of the fabula of the film and the fact that the time frame in which the narrative unfolds is a more visceral and cataclysmic time for Iraq in particular, before the fall of the monarchy.

An example would be a scene in the novel that is transferred almost intact to the film; namely, the visit of the elder of the alley to his home village to seek the approval of his opposite number for the marriage of a Najiyyah, daughter to Ḥamīd in the novel, and daughter to Ḥajjī 'Alī in the film, to Hātif, the bricklayer of the novel and the high school teacher of the film. The scene as it unfolds in the novel involves a dialogue between the Shaykh and the village

leader that merely mentions a discord caused by the murder of a villager by one of the landlords. The murder is mentioned in passing as part of a status quo that allows the feudal class to exercise their draconian powers unchecked by the state. The presence of the scene and the expository dialogue between the two is part of the arc of the novel that is less concerned with the point of change as with the process and route that will at some point in the future, beyond the end of the narrative, lead to change. The film, on the other hand, takes the point of change as its declared point of focus, and uses the scene of the village as one of the ingredients that stir up discontent and the desire for change at a local level that in its turn links up with the grid of dissatisfaction on the national stage. Therefore the characterization of the two main protagonists in the scene, Ḥajjī ʻAlī and the village leader, is designed within this grand scheme in terms of the way the state of the country at large is reflected in the lives of these two villagers, one living in the city, and the other toiling on in the countryside.

The manner in which the two are brought together is in keeping with the film's method of leaping straight to the part of a scene that would unmask a point that fits in the rhetorical jigsaw of the narration. The *mise-en-scène*, the setting, the staging of the scene, and the dialogue, all serve the agenda of turning a scene, in the Levi-Strausian economy,[253] from the exchange of women between members of a community, into a political platform for exposing more of the corruption and inaptitude of the monarchist regime as exemplified by the manner in which the system deals with a simple land dispute.[254] The manner of achieving this end serves to introduce more of the character's view of the world, and hence the director's characterization of the protagonists. The scene begins with a tracking shot that carries all the signs of an evident choreography of the movement within the frame and attention to shot composition. The characters move from right of frame to the left in mid-depth of field, while in the foreground is a

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[253] See Claude Levi-Straus, *Myth and Meaning*, (London: Routledge, 1978), and Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975)

[254] Interestingly, the film narrative takes the Levi-Strausian element to a point as the exchange of women and words, as exemplified by the teachings of Hātif, all work towards the eradication of the regime and the creation of a community that will be in the future of the narrative.

stationary army jeep full of army soldiers followed by a group of men sat in the traditional open-air salon. As the two move right to left, in an apparent symbolism, in the background a group of sheep are herded left to right. The scene effectively shows the forces that are at work within this rural locale, the state's oppressive apparatus, the traditional custom-laden patriarchal system, and a major source of income for the villagers, the sheep being herded like the villagers by a superior more powerful force.

The scene says a great deal about the two visiting city dwellers in the way they seem to be alien to this country life, on the one hand, and also in the fact that they represent the past and the future of the country at large, the elder Ḥajjī 'Alī and the teenage 'Abbās, respectively. The scene, however, impinges on the constitution of the personality of the characters by putting them both at the very heart of the status quo from which the film narrative suggests Iraq has managed to escape; the status quo of feudalism, oppression and corruption. The character of the Ḥajjī could be seen as the benevolent face of this status quo; he represents the inability of the traditional system to face down aspects of that very system that are keeping the country from progress and helping the elite to more of the country's wealth. Therefore, the presence of 'Abbās, being at one level a narrator of the whole film, serves several purposes; he is the witness to an event that he will later recall, a fact that is illuminated by the filmmaker's use of close-up shots of him listening to a two way conversation between the other two characters; he is the young man in the scene that provides the counterweight to the older generation of the Ḥajjī and the village leader, one generation has a front seat view of the unfolding of a ritual that possibly has not changed in centuries. Finally, his very appearance in the scene provides a further layer of meaning to the meeting between the two elders, for they see in him the continuity of this very way of life that does not sit comfortably with his future progressive beliefs.

The depth and strength of these progressive beliefs is magnified by the devastating set of events that form the tunnel through which the character of

'Abbās is ushered by the filmmaker as a means of providing him with an intensive course that is character forming and ideal for a future leader.

This ideology is also present in the manner in which the female characters of the alley are drawn. Beginning with Mājidah, the beauty of the alley and object of 'Abbās's affections, she does not have much in common with any of the female characters of the novel. Her namesake of the novel is the unreachable beautiful girl from across river with whom 'Azīz is in love.[255] The filmmaker chooses to create a similarly beautiful character and plunge her into one of the two evil households of the alley, the home of the corrupt police sergeant. Her presence in this pro-status quo household serves to intensify the confrontation between the good and evil, the black and white economy of the film. She fits in with the progressive anti-illiteracy and women's rights ideals of Ba'th thinking. On more than one occasion, she is introduced reading a book or working on her school homework. Her opposition to the status quo, as stated above, reaches its zenith when she declares to the astonishment of her parents, '... I am not a piece of furniture that you can pass from one household into another'. The sergeant and his wife directly link this rebellious streak to education, and forbid her from going to school. The point is mirrored in a scene between 'Abū Yāsīn and his son, after the latter was arrested for taking part in an anti-government school disturbance; the pro-government merchant declares that his son will not be attending any more school. Thus, the opposition to learning comes from the two vile character prototypes that are presented to the audience as symptoms of a rotten regime.

Mājidah's femininity and her position as the most attractive girl in the alley is emphasised by the filmmaker in a short sequence that follows the conversation between 'Azīz and his parents about the futility of education and the mother's promise that were he to stop mixing with 'Abbās and company, she would marry him to the most beautiful girl in the area. The Freudian undertones of the scene are carried over to the next scene as Mājidah's reflection in the mirror is

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[255] *Ibid.*, pp. 171-2

shown in close-up as she combs her hair. A diegetic soundtrack of a typical Iraqi love song accompanies the scene. The sight of an obese middle-aged neighbour watching her through the window interrupts the young woman's contemplation of her mirror reflection. She closes the window and the scene ends. The interesting point about the scene is the use of the reflection in the mirror and the contemplative manner in which Mājidah looks at her own image. In a sense, the scene signifies Mājidah's awareness of her beauty, the burden that this gift bestows over her shoulders, given her attachment to 'Abbās and the likely difficulty of receiving her parents' approval for such a marriage. The appearance of the peeping Tom verifies at another level the thoughts on the disadvantages and rewards of beauty; for while it attracts such unwanted attention, it constitutes part of one's being and thus the person with whom 'Abbās is in love.

The juxtaposition of the two scenes brings to the fore a set of triangles of desire and mediation, as analysed by René Girard.[256] Mājidah becomes the object at one level of this triangle of desire, with 'Abbās the mediator, being her known favourite, and Yāsīn emerging as the subject. She is also mediator in a triangle between herself, the men who desire her, and her image as created in the heads of those very men seeking her favour. By her looking at her image in the mirror, therefore, Mājidah is possibly contemplating the image with whom men are infatuated and which may stand in the way of her happiness, in view of her parents' insistence that she marry Yāsīn. The triangle of desire and mediation of the novel which revolved around Mājidah, from across the river, her cousin, and 'Azīz is achieved in film within the same strategy of presenting a character in the diegesis to represent the 'other' who merely deserves a mention in the novel. This is clear in the filmmaker's decision to locate Mājidah, before her marriage, in the alley and make Yāsīn a surrogate for the cousin who asks for her hand, thus presenting all the components of the triangle, the object, the subject and the mediator.

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[256] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).

The character of Mājidah of the film is interesting in a further dimension, as she becomes the mediator in relation to 'Abbās as the object of her desires. This transpires in a scene in a public park as 'Abbās and Mājidah are brought together for the first time in the film narrative. The scene works at two conflicting levels; on the one hand, here is a setting for a romantic tryst, as is confirmed by the blocking and movement of the two characters in the frame, close to one another, their body language and the final touch of 'Abbās kissing Mājidah's hand; on the other hand, the scene is highly rhetorical and does not allow the romantic overtones to divert the implied viewer's attention from the political message of the scene. This is apparent from the dialogue that undermines the blocking and the body language of the couple:

> Mājidah: 'Abbās! At times, I feel some fear...
>
> 'Abbās: From what and why?
>
> Mājidah: I fear for you and for the others; they wouldn't mind destroying you and your future!
>
> 'Abbās: you, me and the others...when we stand forth and release our great cry...at that moment the greatest force would not be able to prevent us joining our voice with that of our people...
>
> Mājidah: I think and I wonder in fear that I may lose you; that I would be left alone!
>
> 'Abbās: You won't be alone...despite the circumstances, life is great and this is an indisputable fact.

While Mājidah is declaring her fear for 'Abbās' life, she is also declaring her desire for him and her fear that 'they', the powers that be, may take him away from her. In effect, she is in a triangle of desire competing for 'Abbās with the government and the political activities with which he is involved.

At another level, the dialogue between the two might as well be part of two unrelated conversations that the filmmaker has amalgamated into one highly rhetorical and unrealistic exchange. While the girl declares her fear for his life, 'Abbās makes elevated crowd-rousing pronouncements that would be more at home in a political rally than to the object of his affections. Given the narration strategy of the film, this effect can be seen as wholly intentional on the part of

the filmmaker who does not wish to divert the attention of the audience from the message that underlines the narrative. The point is accentuated by the appearance of a baton-wielding policeman shadowing a baby being pushed in a pram. The connotations are clear; the brute force of the state is there to suppress any opposition, even from a baby in a pram. Paying homage to the Odessa Steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet Union 1925), the shot ends the scene with an ominous note that counters any romantic or life affirming messages that the scene might have given the spectator, as it provides an analogy of the state's monopoly of the use of violence, as represented by the baton-wielding police officer, against civilian society, as represented by the image of the baby and pram. "The monarchist regime of the 1950s would use force to suppress the dreams of 'Abbās of a Pan-Arabist utopia", the film tells the audience.

The manner in which Mājidah is drawn on the screen chimes with the Jamīl's characterization of the other female characters. Gone are the vacuous minds of Najiyyah of the novel, or the total lack of presence that was the salient aspect of Ḥasnah's [wife to Ḥamīd] personality, or the simplicity of Khayriyyah. The women in the film diegesis are an indispensable part of the movement to liberate the country, and also part of its oppression. The former applies to all the young women, in addition to Khayriyyah; while the latter applies to the filmmaker created characters of Um Yāsīn, and Um Mājidah. The latter two characters compliment their respective husbands' corrupt and brutal way of life. This filmic rendition of the female characters as active participants in the events of the 1950s is reflected in large numbers of women in traditional 'Abā'ahs who take part in the anti-government demonstrations and the mourning procession for Nājī.

The procession is followed by a wake in which the filmmaker relentlessly combines the literal with the rhetorical in a highly ostentatious exchange between the tearful Khayriyyah and the cold and uncaring Um Mājidah, the wife of the police sergeant. The scene is mirrored in the wake held by the men

where the sergeant follows the same line as his wife of blaming Nājī's involvement in politics for his death at the hands of the police. The point of both scenes is to emphasise the political divide that does not abide by gender; women are as clear of their pro and anti- government sentiments as their men folk.

Mise-en-scène and Music

The political nature of Jamīl's adaptation is a theme that follows through and dictates his choices in *mise-en-scène* and location for the narrative. Most saliently, the locale of the narrative is moved from the town of Nāṣiriyyah to Baghdād. This helps bring the action closer to the centre of events, and turns the characters into participants and witnesses to the events that led to the fall of the monarchist regime, as opposed to the characters of the novel who were mainly hearing of events taking place in the capital. Moreover, the move to Baghdād adds further dimensions to the composition of the residents of the alley; they become a far more representative cross-section of the Iraqi population at large than their counterparts of the novel, being as they are a mixture of locals and villagers who moved to the city.

The decision also creates the possibility of allowing more interaction between the sexes, given the more liberal attitude of the city and its spatial expanse. It also makes more plausible the inclusion of progressive thinking female characters, such as Mājidah, who are educated and intelligent to the extent of being aware of the oppressive nature of the patriarchal system in which they are trapped.

The move to the capital, in other words, turns the alley into a haven for a group of people from different social, religious, political, and economic backgrounds. Being in Baghdād means the director can do away with the implicit Shī'ah references of the novel, thus allowing him to discard any potential diversion from the central political message of the film. Baghdād also allows the youth to come in to contact with the political movements that would shape the future of

the country. This contact comes in the form of the teachings of Hātif, the secondary school teacher whose history lessons could easily be mistaken for a stirring speech by a Pan-Arab leader.

Moving closer to the setting of the action, the viewer discerns two main locations for the unfolding of narrative events: the alley, with its small houses, and the local sūq where the barbershop, the grocery store and the teahouse are located. While there is no sense in the film of the spatial relationship between the different homes in the alley, as was the case in the novel, which provides the reader with an aerial map of the locale, the film manages to provide continuity in the furnishings, the lighting and decorations between the different homes in the alley. The viewer is left in no doubt as to the proximity of the living rooms of the police sergeant Maẓhar, Ḥamīd, Ḥajjī 'Alī, the school janitor, and the corrupt merchant, 'Abū Yāsīn. The different economic strata to which these dwellings belong are reflected in the furnishings and clothes of the occupiers. Ḥajjī 'Alī's home reflects his dignified presence, despite his obvious poverty; Ḥamīd's living room is similarly basic and lacking the feminine touch that Khayriyyah adds to Ḥajjī 'Alī's dwellings; the sergeant's bedroom-come-living-room is similarly simple, albeit more a reflection of his implicit attempts to avoid drawing attention to the extra income he gains from his dealings with corrupt officialdom; and finally the home of 'Abū Yāsīn reflects his obvious wealth in the fact that he seems to be the only one amongst the residents to have sofas and armchairs in his living room, and that there is a second floor for the bedroom(s). The novel's references to religious portraits adorning the walls of Ḥamīd's home are avoided altogether. The only posters on the walls are related to fashion, and these appear in Um Yāsīn's bedroom.

The absence of religious symbols and signs in the film adaptation is compensated for by an abundance of visual cues and prompts that add more signification to the image. These declare their appearance from the first sequence of the prison, where the prison bars are juxtaposed via a long dissolve to a lush green setting, and the concrete of the walls follows the river and the

state of nature in which ‘Abbās had been busy daydreaming. The montage of the prison, its walls, barbed wire, and the cell windows helps bring the spectator closer to the reality intended by the filmmaker. This reality is brutal, oppressive and inhumane as indicated by the lack of human presence in the empty courtyards, corridors and windows. The first time that the human presence is revealed is with the face of a prisoner being allowed out of his cell. The filmmaker’s decision to freeze the image at that very moment to give way to credits makes the audience focus more on the setting and the relationship of this person on the screen to those cold concrete surroundings. More interestingly, the halted story time here makes the image suspended in mid air, an indication of the political message behind the film: ‘these are symptoms of the bad old days, and this man here is one of the heroes who played a role in the downfall of the puppet regime of the monarchy and the rise of Pan-Arab Ba‘th ideology to power,’ the audience are encouraged to deduce. The last point is one that dawns on the audience retrospectively at a later point in the narrative, as at this point in the sjuzhet we are not aware of the identity of this man.

The use of prison bars to indicate cruelty is shown elsewhere in relation to ‘Abbās; he is framed within the iron bars of the cell door, increasing further his sense of imprisonment and oppression. The iron bars and cell door also indicate the narrative’s frame within the frame manner of narrating as exemplified by use of flashbacks within the flashback of the narrative. The iron bars divide the image of ‘Abbās within the frame, providing thus a visual rendition of the elliptical nature of the narrative. The shot is repeated at the end of the narrative as ‘Abbās realises finally that Muḥsin had been murdered by the secret police. His cry, ‘they murdered him’, is shot through the same iron bars. The difference in the demeanour of ‘Abbās in the two shots, the first tired and confused, strong and furious in the second, changes the meaning of the shot in its two incarnations. The first indicates oppression and confinement, while the second ushers in the sequence of the prisoners breaking out.

The other visual part of the *mise-en-scène* is the filmmaker's insertion of objects within the frame that add more poignancy and connotation. This is most evident in the presence of sport trophies and cups in the school principal's office as he jots down the name of the student accused by Yāsīn to have been behind the anti-government graffiti: the trophies are shown in the foreground of the frame as the principle writes down the name. Similarly, as Hātif confronts the principal over his role in calling in the police to put down a student disturbance, the trophies and cups are positioned in the foreground of the frame. These trophies, carrying the engravings of the arms and crest of the monarch, stay in the foreground of the frame as the two are forced to leave the office by the rising tear gas. In addition to the school's successes in sport, the emphasis on the trophies gives the added message: in order to be in a position of authority in the past, one needed to go through all the loops set by the former regime to declare one's allegiance.

Finally, in order to form a direct link between the status quo of the diegesis and the system of government in the 1950s, the portrait of the monarch is present in every scene involving the malevolent side of officialdom. This begins with the scene at the police station where the police officer's comic attempts to extract answers from 'Abbās are interrupted by a phone call from the powers that be. As the officer puts his cap on and stands to attention while listening to the orders down the telephone line, the filmmaker frames him so that the portrait of the king would be right above his head and visible within the frame. The king is effectively behind the orders that are coming from above to sacrifice 'Abbās and fudge the investigation into the barber's murder. The malice behind these orders is shown in another scene at the police station as a police officer orders the punishment of all the boys who took part in the school disturbance. The king beams his approval in the background of the frame that includes a pool of light where the officer, the corrupt merchant, and the strong willed barber form a triangle. The distance between the three and the portrait is doused in darkness. From this darkness emerges, and later recedes, 'Abū Yāsīn to condemn the barber for his refusal to carry out the punishment. All the while, the portrait is

in full view. It is also in full view as this very 'Abū Yāsīn watches his bribe being handed over to the high-ranking government official. The latter's declarations that he supports the export of rice despite the shortages in the home market is framed in a wide shot that encompasses him, 'Abū Yāsīn, and the portrait. The connotation being, here are the components of corruption and the power that overseas its persistence. Likewise, the king's face oversees the scene in which the Prime Minister Nūrī al-Saʿīd dismisses the rumours that his friends and relatives are depriving the market of desperately needed goods to hike up the prices.

The frame composition and the specific use of deep focus that includes foreground as well as background to the action taking place within the frame has two counteractive results. On the one hand, it adds an element of realism, in that it shows a perspective similar to the human eye, while on the other, it counters this impression by indicating the presence of the camera which is capturing the action through physical barriers in the scene. When there are no physical barriers between the camera and the subject of a particular scene the director creates the same effect through the use of 'dynamic camera angles that create many diagonals'[257] visually in the frame and so direct the attention of the audience to the method of capturing the scene. An example would be the journey 'Abbās makes through a prison corridor to his cell. He is pushed from one wall of the corridor to the other while progressing nearer and nearer to the foreground of the frame. His movement criss-crosses the frame and creates further diagonals to those of the architecture of the corridor that has at its far end a staircase and a door leading to the floor above. The realism is further diminished by the use of a highly intrusive non-diegetic music on the sound track.

The musical score of the film leaves the audience in no doubt as to the filmmaker's agenda. The otherworldly and alienating sound that accompanies the daydream sequence at the beginning of the film assures the audience of the

[257] Bordwell, p. 237

political nature of the narrative at hand; no space is allowed for any romantic undertones to seep into the scene. The overt non-diegetic military march music on the soundtrack compliments the filmmaker's intention in delivering a highly political piece propagating the virtues of Ba'th ideology.

The role of the music is of such centrality in the narrating that in many instances it blatantly prevents the audience from deriving one meaning in favour of another from a given scene. The obvious example is the theme tune that is first introduced with the title of the film as it emerges from the river at the end of the daydream sequence; the military march nature of the tune sets the tone for the rest of the film and warns the audience of what is to come. The tune underscores the montage at the prison complex and the credits sequence over the frozen image of Muḥsin the barber. Any potential for understanding the sequence as the beginning of a social or psychological drama is nipped in the bud by the non-diegetic music. The music is the final act of authorial intrusion into the text.

Moreover, the nature of the music prevents any chance of dwelling on a scene in anyway that would divert from the political trajectory of the narrative. Whenever there is pain on the screen, as with 'Abbās being pushed down the prison corridor, the boys having their heads shaven, or the suffering of the demonstrators at the hands of the police, the theme tune is inserted to create a connection between these different instances of oppression and to insist on their position along the path that led to the end of the former regime. In the final scene of the film, this is implicated in the music despite the image, which shows a prison break out. The music adds a further political dimension to the act of breaking out of the prison and provides a foreshadowing at the audio level of the success that will meet these inmates.

This connection between different scenes via the soundtrack is evident in the sequence where the boys cover the town centre with anti-government posters. The different components of the sequence are cued to the implied audience by a

solo guitar tune. As the boys first appear with the pamphlets on the high street in the middle of the night they are accompanied by the non-diegetic music that adds an element of danger and, yet again, continuity to all the other anti-government actions in the narrative. When the film cuts back to them, after a brief scene simultaneously taking place at the police station, the guitar notes indicate the connection between the different parts of the sequence. The music is cued again as Ḥamīd comes back home to check on the son he struck on the face for spreading those anti-government pamphlets.

Conclusion

Whereas ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubayʻī's *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* had attempted to create a history and a survey of Iraqi nationalist thought as a precursor to Baʻth ideology, Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl's film adaptation is interested in casting more of the present's shadow on the past, and to look at this past in view of the present. The present being that of 1970s Iraq; a present ruled by the very Baʻth Party that the al-Rubayʻī novel had implicitly described as the sole saviour of Iraq from its backward and weak state. The fact that both the novel and the film were published and produced, respectively, by the Baʻth Government's Ministry of Information, casts both texts in an even more pro-government propaganda light.

The political agenda of the filmmaker is apparent in his decision to telescope the duration of the narrative from the decades of the original to a mere two-year period. The time scale and the particular period chosen in the adaptation are fundamental to the film project; for to shorten the period covered by the narrative from decades to two years would in any event create more focus and energy in the narration. This energy and focus is tripled in view of the chosen period of the mid 1950s that encompassed the signing of the Baghdād Pact, the nationalization of the Suez Canal, and the tripartite attack on Egypt. The direct link between these events and the rise of the Baʻth Party to power is not lost on the implied audience.

Once it is accepted that Jamīl's film is a highly political and rhetorical rendition of a politically biased novel, the analysis can be directed to the richness of the film adaptation in purely cinematic terms. This acceptance is derived from the recognition of the obvious predisposition of the narrative towards a certain ideology, its shading of evil all those in the narrative that do not fall into the camp of Pan-Arabism, and its implicit linkage of the heroes of the narrative to the contemporary rulers of the Iraq of the implied viewer in the 1970s.

This linkage does not allow for the slow and studied development of characters and their ideologies that the novel had attempted to achieve, albeit with a view of presenting Pan-Arabism as the real and ideal set of beliefs for Iraq. The film starts by looking at characters who are either staunch believers in the ideas and dogmas of al-Arsūzī and Michel 'Aflaq or are going through the last stages of discovering Ba'thism. This can also be seen in the manner in which the film narrative is populated by highly active female characters. Gone are the 'almost part of furniture type' of women of the alley. They are replaced by political animals that favour and oppose the status quo. The women include those who are being educated in progressive thought, and, crucially, those who are preaching this thought. The latter includes the character of Khayriyyah who defends the right of the young to free speech and to be politically active. The characters who are not politically active are either simple and decent people, whom the narrative respects and simultaneously disregards as components of the past, or the malevolent beneficiaries of the corrupt monarchist system that, according to the metatext of the narrative, kept Iraq weak and backward.

Accepting the politically biased nature of the adaptation allows the viewer to enjoy and appreciate the filmmaker's attempts in constructing an Iraqi equivalent of Soviet montage cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. The structure of the narrative, its highly elliptical and at times bewildering sjuzhet, alerts the audience to the self-conscious and overt presence of a narrator and author behind the text. The implied audience is encouraged to look at the message of

the narrative via the structure of the film and its use of highly polemic dialogue and music.

In a sense, the implied audience is made to be aware of the Levi-Strausian process of the formation of a community that the film is encouraging; a community in the political sense of those who agree on the same ideals. This is evident in the didactic content of the narrative which seems to show not only an exchange of women, as shown through the marriage of the teacher to one of the girls of the alley and the love affairs between the youth, but also the words- terms- that are exchanged between the teacher and his pupils. These words include 'imperialism', 'Arab Nation', 'Land Owners', 'Corruption' etc. The implied audience, in the economy of the film narrative, is the community to which the protagonists of the narrative strive; for the audience- real and implied- is living under the rule of those very thoughts and ideas that the teacher espoused.

By making the comprehension of the fabula such a demanding task, the filmmaker is inviting the implied audience to look at the narrational strategies he deploys in imparting the fabula. In other words, the very structure of the film and the manner of its narration becomes part of the message of the film; a message that is blinkered and one sided in the garishly white shades it presents its ideology of preference.

To make the structure of the narrative part of the message and experience of viewing the film, the filmmaker does away with the support to the implied reader that the omniscient narrator of the novel had provided. The guiding hand of the politically partial narrator is simultaneously rejected and embraced; so that while there is not a diegetic narrator in person or voice directing and accompanying the audience in the journey through the story, there is an explicit presence of an overall implied author who is conducting the progress of the narrative. The use of uniquely cinematic tools such as the slow motion and the freeze frame leave the audience in no doubt as to the presence of another reality,

in addition to their own in the auditorium, that is influencing the presentation of the fictional world on the screen.

The last point leads us to the use of music and *mise-en-scène* in the narration. The filmmaker uses an assertive type of music that sets the tone of the image and prevents the implied audience from any understanding of the scene at hand that is not in synch with the overall message of narrative. Scenes ranging from one depicting a visceral confrontation between a corrupt police sergeant and a progressive schoolteacher, a conversation in a prison cell, to a romantic rendezvous, all are given the political undercurrent via a mixture of soundtrack music and *mise-en-scène*. The highly overt presence of the non-diegetic music falls into the same narrational strategy that directs the attention of the audience to the structure of the narrative and the process of telling.

This strategy is based on a set of presumptions about the likely type and composition of the audience to whom the narrative is directed. In a sense, just as a Lacanian perfect mirror image can be applied to the characterization of the protagonists of the film narrative – impossibly appealing and strong willed-, the implied audience is also a perfect mirror image of the real audience that would watch the film in Iraqi film houses. This perfect audience would see in these protagonists ideal images of itself and would seek to emulate their behaviour and their world outlook.

The director chooses to compress the action of the narrative and its duration to a shorter period to create more impact on the implied audience. The compression of the time, and the suppression of an omniscient narrator in favour of a partly diegetic narration from the point of view of ʻAbbās helps accentuate this impact, given the supposed limitations of a first person narration. The limitation of using a single character as a point of reference for the narration, however, is counterbalanced by the use of the newsreels. These are a combination of news items that would have been screened in Iraqi cinemas at the time of, say, the signing of the Baghdād Pact, and a montage put together in

a manner that sits comfortably with the political message of the film. The latter category includes the footage of Nāṣir's famous speech declaring the nationalization of the Canal, and also of the attack on Egypt accompanied by his radio broadcasts.

As a final point, the classically sighted difference between text and film - that whereas the former tells, the latter shows - can be demonstrated most vividly in two aspects of the film adaptation. Firstly, the filmmaker's decision to add more prominence to events and characters to which the novel had alluded as part of its tapestry of the fictional world. This includes the insertion of the corrupt character of the merchant into the heart of the alley, and also the change in the characterization of the sergeant from a peripheral decent individual to a personification of the greed and sleaze with which the novel had associated officialdom. Similarly, the filmmaker shows scenes and events in this world to which the novel implicitly referred. These include the bribes a high official receives from the merchant in return for providing an export licence. Secondly, Jamīl opts to show the premier of the time, Nūrī al-Saʿīd in a highly staged and unrealistic conversation with his lieutenants. The meeting, the chorus nature of the monologue of one of his lieutenants, and the totally entrenched position of this 'mythic' and product of Ba'th propaganda image of the former premier, all point to an authorial intrusion by the filmmaker to complete the presentation of the negative aspects of the former regime by the inclusion of its head of government.

As a political act, Jamīl's *al-'Aswār* is a successful film adaptation of a similarly politically charged text by al-Rubayʿī. In fact, it could be argued that the film succeeds where the novel fails, within the context of producing a work of propaganda; as the film manages to take the argument of the novel to its logical conclusion by showing the final result of the trial and error process through which the characters of the novel went before arriving at the door of Pan-Arabism and Ba'th ideology.

Rīḥ al-Junūb / Wind from the South: The Shift from Rhetorical Narrative to Characterisation and Visual Representation

Even though at declaration of independence in 1962 Algeria had more than 300 film theatres in the country, "there was no Algerian Cinema in true sense, since Algerians had played very little part in it."[258] Film viewing and filmmaking to an overwhelming extent excluded the participation of Algerians. Cinemas were concentrated in cities with the larger European communities.[259] "Of the 1,400 feature films handled by the 37 Algiers-based film distribution companies in 1950, only 70 were Egyptian films, and these were subject to higher rates of taxation than imported or Hollywood films," comments Roy Armes in his analysis of a colonial system which "ignored the needs (and in a sense the very existence) of native Algerians."[260]

Film as an expression of Algerian identity and culture was born during the war for independence. Viewed by the Front de Liberation Nationale/ National Liberation Front as an integral part of the liberation struggle against French occupation of Algeria, the focus of the cinema that took root in Algeria was the

[258] Roy Armes, "Cinema in the Maghreb", in Oliver Leaman (ed.) *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2001), p. 426
[259] Roy Armes, *Dictionary of North African Filmmakers* (Paris : Editions ATM, 1996), p. 9
[260] *Ibid.*

war of liberation.[261] With this in mind, it is not surprising that the study of Algerian Cinema "is, at one level, a study of the transformation of both the national and individual perception of this identity," argues Sabry Hafez, adding, "The history of Algerian cinema, and the vision inherent in each of its films, is inseparable from those of the socio-political reality at large."[262]

After the liberation, the national government "played the major part in the organisation of all aspects of cinema, maintaining a monopoly on production, distribution and exhibition through an often bewildering succession of bureaucratic organisations," comments Roy Armes.[263] These film organisations were ultimately merged into the newly created Office Nationale du Commerce et de l'Industrie Cinematographic / National Office for Film Commerce and Industry (ONCIC). This production monopoly was "responsible for virtually all Algerian film production from 1968 until it was dissolved in 1984, except for television works produced- mostly in black and white and 16mm, by RTA and a tiny handful of independent works."[264]
In addition to being involved in internationally acclaimed co-productions such as *Z* (Dir. Costa-Gavras, 1968), the ONCIC's own Algerian productions continued along the themes of the national liberation struggle.[265] However, in the 1970s, the ONCIC began to focus on a new Arab identity in the productions it undertook, moving away from the earlier policy of co-productions.[266] The fruits of this shift towards an Arabic identity include three important works by the Egyptian director Yūsuf Shāhīn: *al-'Uṣfūr* / The Sparrow (1973); *'Awdat al-'Ibn al-Ḍāl* / Return of the Prodigal Son (1975) and *'Iskandariyyah Līh* / Alexandria Why? (1978).

Rīḥ al-Junūb / Wind from the South (1975) was produced by the ONCIC and directed by Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ. Born in 1932 in Algeria, Riyāḍ had had

[261] *Ibid.*
[262] Sabry Hafez, *Alif* 15 (1995), p. 54
[263] Roy Armes, "Cinema in the Maghreb", pp.445-6
[264] *Ibid.*, p. 11
[265] See Armes, "Cinema in the Maghreb", and Hafez, *Alif* 15
[266] *Dictionary of North African Filmmakers*, p. 13

first hand experience of living under French occupation and in fact was to suffer years of interment by the French authorities.[267] He Joined the newly established CNCA (Centre National Du Cinema Algerien / National Centre for Algerian Cinema) in 1966 and continued in his position after the CNCA was replaced by the ONCIC.[268] Riyāḍ made his feature debut with *al-Ṭarīq* / The Way (1968), which was 'based on the director's experiences as a detainee in France'.[269] *Rīḥ al-Junūb* was his third feature, after *Sana'ūd* / We Will Return (1972). While the first two features dealt with different forms of resistance- *Sana'ūd* is the 'story of a youngman recruited into the anti-Zionist movement and charged with an attack on a military camp in occupied territory'[270] - *Rīḥ al-Junūb* represents a change of emphasis away from dwelling on the nation's resistance to occupation, and in the process revelling in the achievement of a national government. The film, as is the case with the novel, attempts to look at the present, in post-independence Algeria, throwing into relief the social, political and economic issues that an independent nation and state need to address.

Riyāḍ went on to make another feature film, *Ḥasan Taksī* / Hassan Taxi (1982) which, like all of his feature films, was produced by the ONCIC. In an interview published in the online edition of the Algerian daily *al-Masā'*, Riyāḍ recalls with a sense of nostalgia the 1970s in Algerian filmmaking history, declaring, "In those days facilities were available and the atmosphere was conducive [for filmmaking]."[271]

The adapted text, *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, was written by the Algerian novelist 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Haddūjah, commonly spelt Abdelhamid Benhadouga, whom Sabry

[267] *Ibid.*, p. 52
[268] *Ibid.*
[269] *Ibid.*
[270] *Ibid*, p. 53
[271] Interview with Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ in the online edition of *al-Masā'* Algerian daily, dated January 16th 2009. Can be viewed at: http://www.el-massa.com/ar/content/view/16634/47/ My translation

Hafez sees as "the father of modern Arabic literature in Algeria".[272] This position in Algerian Arabic literature evolved through Ibn Haddūjah's long journey from his birth in 1925 in a small village in north-east Algeria, to joining the local Qur'anic school, to moving to continue his education in France, to returning to Algeria and Tunisia to continue his Arabic education.[273] While in Tunisia in the 1950s, he joined the National Liberation Front and in 1958 headed the Arabic section of the FLN's newly formed Voice of Algeria radio station.[274] According to Hafez, Ibn Haddūjah was "instrumental in developing the infrastructure for an Algerian national broadcasting organisation in which Arabic was dominant."[275]

Rīḥ al-Junūb was Ibn Haddūjah's debut novel, though it was preceded by collections of short stories and a large body of work that included over 200 radio plays for Radio Algiers.[276] He went on to publish four more novels.

Language: A question of identity

In her excellent study, Politics, Language, and Gender in the Algerian Arabic Novel,[277] Debbie Cox adroitly charts the history of the (re-) introduction of the written Arabic language to Algeria in the run up to independence and during the immediate post-independence period. She points to the extent to which the French language had been used in Algeria during French colonisation, spanning over one hundred and thirty years and penetrating almost every aspect of culture and the economy. French was used in the overwhelming majority of the written press, and with French being a prerequisite for social mobility through working in local government or business, gaining an Arabic education lost the status it had in pre-colonial times. The point is supported by Nāzlī Mu'awwad 'Aḥmad's

[272] Sabry Hafez, "Obituary Abdelhamid Benhadouga", *The Independent*, October 28th 1996, available at http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-abdelhamid-benhadouga-1360701.html
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Debbie Cox, *Politics, Language, and Gender in the Algerian Arabic Novel* (London: The Edwin Mallen Press Ltd., 2002)

study of Arabisation in the countries of the Maghrib.[278] She points to the French colonial authority's insistence that only French educated Algerians be allowed to work in its administration of the country, and to the similar situation in the world of business and commerce.[279] As Cox confirms, in this period some elementary education and literacy were offered in mosque-oriented schools, and any progress beyond this basic level 'implied further study of Islamic law and theology at the larger teaching-mosques, with the possibility of entering the Zaytūnah mosque' in Tunis.[280]

While the objectives of the two education systems seem so wide apart, they are united in seeking to bestow a status on their respective graduates; religious education created a middle class of its own whose members were viewed with respect in the community, while French education created a rising professional class of Algerians who were gaining a status based on their newly acquired knowledge that is relevant to the modern - French created - world of business and officialdom. In other words, a political dichotomy was created by this dual language system.

According to Debbie Cox, in this basic situation lay some of the foundations of the situation in which the Arabic language found itself in post-independence Algeria. For the values that were associated with the written Arabic language in Algeria were those of the religious classes that were normally associated with the teaching of the language and derived their status partly from their access to the religious texts that were written in Arabic. This meant that the Arabic language schools which began to appear in major cities in the pre-independence period were more religious in orientation; an orientation that was reflected in the emphasis of their curricula. The effects of this situation seeped over into

[278] Nāzlī Mu'awwad 'Aḥmad, *al-Ta'rīb wa al-Qawmiyyah al-'Arabiyyah fī al-Maghrib al-'Arabī*,/ Arabisation and Arab Nationalism in North Africa (Bayrūt: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1986 / Beirut: Arab Unity Studies Centre 1986)
[279] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-62
[280] *Ibid.*, p. 20

post-independence, continues Cox,[281] and the state's discourse of proclaiming Arabic as part of Algeria's unified identity sat awkwardly astride a business and official communications reality that saw French as the first real choice.[282] The situation was not to change until the end of the 1980s when the government brought to a head its policies of full Arabisation in the running of the civil service and government departments.[283]

The journey of the teaching and use of the Arabic language that Cox traces from the pre-independence period to the late 1980s has an immediate bearing on the film adaptation and the novel under discussion in this chapter. For while Ibn Haddūjah was already a published author in the Arabic language in the immediate period before independence,[284] the very act of publishing a novel in Arabic in post-colonial Algeria carried connotations and the baggage of the language's associations with the state discourse on the issue of Algeria's Arabic identity. The author was among the few writers in Algeria who chose to publish in Arabic during French rule. The two groups, those publishing in Arabic and those in French, had to address the question of identity. The writers in Arabic could claim to be working within a language that is more indigenous to the culture, while Algerians writing in French- such as Mauloud Feraoun, Mauloud Mammeri, and Mohamed Dib[285]- could claim to be using the language that would have a wider reach among educated Algerians and beyond.

Haddūjah's obvious unease with some of these connotations and with the baggage under which his text finds itself labouring is made clear in the attention that the text pays to the many types of written and spoken Arabic that are in existence in Algeria. The text seems to plead for a plurality to which the state discourse is wholly oblivious. For as stated above, the lack of a real attempt at untangling the language from its predominantly religious points of reference

[281] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-67
[282] Cox, p.67
[283] Nāzlī Mu'awwad 'Aḥmad, p. 120
[284] Short stories published in Tunis and Lebanon. Cox, p. 28
[285] Cox, p. 29

meant that the language was sitting uncomfortably at the heart of a discourse that was primarily aimed at breaking away from some of the very basis of this language.

The film adaptation is yet another element in the complex interaction between the text, the state discourse, and the text's attempt to criticise the state's discourse while being part of the discourse, as both the novel and its adaptation were achieved with total state support, in that the novel was allowed to be published in the country and the film made by the state's National Council for Film Trade and Industry (ONCIC). The author's meditation on language is reduced in depth and focus in the film, and is replaced by the filmmaker's own take on the issue of identity and the place of Arabic in a forward-looking Algeria.

Use of Language

The debate on the choice of language and the type and level of language used in Algerian literature has its echoes in *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, in both the film and novel.[286] Taking the process of adaptation to film as a point of reference, from the very first few words uttered on the soundtrack it is easy to sense traces of the above debate on language and the relevance of written Arabic to the everyday life of the population. The first exchange between the character of the father and son is in the Algerian dialect of Arabic. While this is to be expected in a film that attempts to provide a 'realistic' rendition of life in contemporary Algeria and so is unlikely to use standard modern or classical Arabic in a conversation between characters, it does point to the choices made by Ibn Haddūjah in the rendition of dialogue in a written interpretation, into modern standard Arabic- Fuṣḥā, of spoken Algerian Arabic.[287] The use of colloquial Arabic in literature had already

[286] 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Haddūjah, *Rīḥ al-Junūb* / Wind from the South (Tūnis: Mu'assasāt 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn 'Abd Allāh, 1988 / Tunis: The 'Abd al-Karīm Ibn 'Abd Allāh Fountation, 1988), first published in 1970; *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, directed by Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ, Algeria, 1975. Unless otherwise stated, all translation from both texts is mine.

[287] The Fuṣḥā form of Arabic is the 'news broadcast' register of language and it is almost totally absent from the day-day use of language in the contemporary Arab world. It is the language used in official correspondence and the press. The Arabic spoken across the Arab world varies in

been in existence prior to the publication of the novel. As Sabry Hafez states, the film's language falls into a pattern in Algerian cinema which

> uses in addition to the vernacular of daily interaction, three other languages, vehicular (used in official transactions), referential (which is strongly rooted in the oral tradition) and mythic (associated with the sacred), making cinema the only medium capable of negotiating the minefields of the tetra-glossique of this country.[288]

It could be argued that the filmmaker explicitly presents what had been implied in the novel; namely, an understanding between the implied author and reader that the dialogue in the novel is in the local dialect, given the improbability of contemporary villagers using modern standard Arabic in their daily communication.

Finally, the use of colloquial Algerian Arabic strengthens the film's hope of coming across as a realist text. The use of modern standard Arabic here would have added, to quote Viola Shafik in her discussion of *al-Mūmyā'* / Night of Counting the Years (Dir. Shādī 'Abd al-Salām, Egypt, 1969),[289] an 'impression of monumentalism' at the level of narration that could distract the spectator from the message of the film. This would be the result of the attention brought to the uncommon use of the Fuṣḥā, modern standard Arabic, in such a contemporary rural setting in Algeria.

In both film and novel, those of the villagers who are either totally or partly illiterate use a language that is rich with unwritten sources of knowledge (referential), the accumulated oral culture and literature that is passed from one generation to another in an effort by the community to reinforce its identity and its unity; as Will Wright states in a Levi-Strausian logic, 'a myth is a communication from a society to its members: the social concepts and attitudes

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the strength of the links it has with the Fuṣḥā, depending on the presence or absence of other ancient languages, colonial influences, tribal languages etc, and other cultural and historical factors.

[288] Sabry Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm", *Alif*, 15, 1995, p.49

[289] In Oliver Leaman (ed.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African film* (London ; New York : Routledge, 2001) p. 84

determined by the history and institutions of a society are communicated to its members through its myths.'[290]

This oral history is imbued with a mosaic of local heritage, tradition and a particular understanding of Islam. The language of the villagers is peppered with references to proverbs and religiously significant historic characters. The focus on the heritage behind the spoken language is made apparent in both film and novel by the juxtaposition of the villagers next to the city folk and the religious leaders. The points of reference that these three groups of people choose are interesting. While the character of Raḥmah, the old pottery maker summarizes her life experiences in the proverbs with which she weaves her conversation, the school teacher uses contemporary Arabic poetry to both – implicitly- declare his belonging to an Arab Algeria and the high degree of his learning, and between the two poles rests the young Nafīsah, the indigenous girl who has become alienated from the locale by the virtue of her education in the city. Her points of reference are the books with which she surrounds herself in her prison-cell-like-room. Her language is driven from these forward looking books whether in Arabic or in French. They address the self and the individual and freedom that the community, in its attempt to preserve harmony and unity, suppresses with its reliance on religion and tradition.

In its aforementioned awkward status of being part of the very state discourse that it is attempting to criticise or rectify, the novel pays a great deal of attention to the issue of the Arabic language by devoting part of the narrative to explaining the history and background that formed a section of the pro-Arabisation forces in Algeria. The school teacher, Ṭāhir, is used as a model for the adherents of this ideology. He is described as being symptomatic of a group that believes in the supremacy of the Arabic language, culture and people without being aware of any other languages or, indeed, having access to other

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[290] Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 16

cultures.[291] This damning assessment of the teachers of Arabic in Algeria is an evident call by the author to untangle the language from the baggage that weighs it down and prevents carrying the new generation to a more contemporary and potentially productive level of education in Arabic.

The manner in which the film adaptation portrays a scene that brings the different strands of Arabic into a confrontation in a meeting of the male villagers pushes into focus the somewhat different agenda of the filmmaker to that of the author- the former working within and on behalf of the state discourse, while the latter was working within the state discourse with a view of trying to rectify from within certain aspects of the discourse, such as the rushed move towards Arabisation without paying enough attentions to the social and educational repercussions of this policy. The discussion shifts from the local 'imām's apocalyptic description of the after life to a question about the meaning of 'socialism'. His answer is revealing in both novel and film, for he looks at the word purely from a grammatical point of view, and when pressed on providing a definition that covers the term's meaning, he is at a total loss.[292] The difficulty faced by the 'imām and his assumption of knowledge in all matters related to language is a reflection by the novel on the role of the religious establishment in teaching the Arabic language, as Sabry Hafez states,

> In pre-modern times, [...] the basic function of the leading centres of learning – the Azhar in Cairo, the Najaf in Iraq, the Ummayyad in Syria, the Zaytuna in Tunisia or the Qarawiyyin in Morocco- was to teach the Quran and transmit the concepts and rules of Muslim tradition. Most cultural production was grounded in religious concerns, and works of literature were deeply rooted in intellectual and stylistic competences acquired from the study of sacred texts.[293]

The scene in both film and novel shows how the religious order sees the language as its area of expertise and possibly of its hegemony, since they are taught and teach the most respected form of Arabic, that of the holy book. On the other hand, there are the modernisers and secular political forces that see in the language an integral part of their identity, an identity that wishes to stand

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[291] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 69
[292] *Ibid.*, p. 174
[293] Sabry Hafez, "The Novel, Politics and Islam", *The New Left Review*, No. 5, 2000, p. 118

apart from both the former colonial powers as well as the 'backward looking' religious authorities. The film adheres to the novel's view on the irreconcilability of the two sides. The possibility for a discussion that might lead to a third position out of the two poles in the meeting is suppressed – crucially - by the religious leaders who commence an ensemble recitation from the Qur'ān, thus forcing everyone in the meeting to join in an audible reading from the holy book and preventing any further discussion. The recitation signifies an implicit threat of unleashing the forces of religion against the modernisers in the room, represented by the government official, Mālik, should they not comply with the direction to which the religious order wishes Algeria to follow. Indeed, the scene in both film and novel revolves around Mālik as the representative of both the state in its present and of its past, as a member of the armed rebellion against French rule. The centrality and delicacy of his position, in conjunction with the novel's position of criticising from within the ruling discourse, explains Ibn Haddūjah's decision to use the narrator to impart the seething criticism against the 'myths' that govern the lives of the population.[294] The film, on the other hand, pointedly presents the thoughts of the character of Mālik in a stream of consciousness within the diegesis. By allowing the character the platform to express this unbending criticism of the hegemony of an archaic understanding of religion the filmmaker could be argued to be mimicking the voice of the narrator of the novel and giving it a focalized substance.

The interesting point here is that both of what the narrative of the novel and the film view as 'anachronistic', 'outdated', 'forward looking' and 'modern' is expressed in the same language, thus pointing to the inherent incongruous attributes of the language that is part and parcel of the identity of the nation: shackling and liberating.

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[294] *Rīḥ al-Junūb.*, p. 166

The City and the Country

At the same time, the narrator of the novel does not allow his socialist and egalitarian based quibbles with country life get in the way of criticising the city. He includes an anonymous young man on a visit to the village in the chorus of characters that form a psychological and social background to the narrative. The young man provides a link between the implied readership of the narrative, which obviously are city dwellers, and village life. The narrator dwells on the difficulty that faces the urban world in appreciating the time-old ties that link man to the land. The young man asks a local, who is yet another anonymous character and part of the chorus, about the land and the futility of toiling on such a barren soil. While delving into the thoughts of the young man and his total disregard for the villager's heartfelt exposition of the bonds that tie him to the land - this land in particular, the narrator is clearly incensed by the confluence of ignorance and arrogance displayed by the young man:

> The young man was quiet, for he was in one world and the old man in another... He was pondering a different life that was far removed from the one known by the village... A life that was based on the wheel and engine, and not on feet and the axe. He was thinking of taking charge of the land, in exploiting her with no mercy and taming her into a soil that did not complain, while the old man was following the thoughts of his fathers of thousands of years; he [the old man] was thinking in taking care of the land, helping her during the draught and during the flood... to help her recuperate should she be exhausted by the constant bearing and giving of birth. He was thinking of loving her, for he loves her.[295]

The narrator's discomfort with the thoughts of the young man is an unease with the urban centred state discourse. The exposition of the thoughts of the two characters is a description of the two Algerias, the urban and the rural, looking in different directions. The juxtaposition underpins the narrative's raison d'etre of entreating Algeria to look at itself with more compassion and humility, so that it can surpass its difficulties. This is confirmed by the implied author's decision to use the narrator to express the polarized thoughts of the characters, rather than allow the audience to deduce the gulf in the thoughts of the two. In fact, the dialogue between the two is far more akin to a father son chat (any father and any son) than a stranger visiting a forgotten village in a far-flung corner of the country.

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[295] *Ibid.*, p. 42

The exchange between these two characters is indicative of the space for debate allowed in the film between different viewpoints towards issues of land and its cultivation and ownership. Mouny Berrah suggests that while Algerian films dealing directly with the war give emphasis to "an ideal nationalism", films dealing with the land 'emphasize the contradictions of Algerian society in the same period.'[296] This plurality of viewpoints could arguably be seen as part of the state discourse of showing and blaming certain elements in society for holding back the progress of the national development project.

The distance between the city and the village is also highlighted via the oppositions in thought and the mutually distrusting and patronizing attitude of the two populations. The presence of the character of Nafisah becomes a stage over which these thoughts are played out. Her disappearance from her family home is discussed by the male villagers in the coffee house. The narrative uses the tool of the chorus to convey this distrust: after leaving Nafisah at home with his mother, Rābiḥ hears the men at the coffee shop talk about possible scenarios behind the young woman's disappearance. One of these is the possibility that she had escaped back to the city in the company of her lover. The suggestion is rejected on the grounds that city dwellers are not brave enough to come to the countryside and help a woman escape.[297] There is an implicit association in these assertions between village life and bravery and honour, while cowardice and dishonesty is the preserve of the distant urban world. The comments are mirrored by the narrator's commentary on the thoughts of Rābiḥ on the limited intelligence of inhabitants of the city: 'In Rābiḥ's estimation, Nafisah was more naïve than any other girl. For he shared

[296] Mouny Berrah, Victor Bachy, Mohand Ben Salama, and Ferid Boughedir (eds.), *Cinema du Maghreb*, (Paris: Editions Papyrus, 1981), p. 46, quoted and translated in Roy Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 97

[297] *Rīḥ al-Junūb.*, pp. 244-5

the view of villagers in this province that the city folk rarely have an intelligence that matches that of a countryman.'[298]

This view of the city, and the image of the rural as constructed in the urban imagination, creates a situation where each party feels less constrained by its rules of behaviour when in the space of the other. So that just as the European may look to the orient for exoticism and for the freedom to act away from the social codes of his native culture so too does the villager look to the city, and vice versa. This point links both texts to René Girard's 'triangle of desire,'[299] making the city and the village parts of two connected triangles. In the first, the city is an object of desire by subjects in the countryside and mediated through the idealistic image of city life, its libertine women, and relative ignorance of her folk as viewed from the countryside. The second triangle reverses the process and makes the city project certain aspects of the first triangle into the country and see the taboos of the village and tribe as the mediation for its desires and fantasies of what rests beyond the closed doors and windows of the rural world. In other words, the desire encompasses a reality and a vision of reality that has projected within it an inherited residue of suppressed desires and wishes that each community's respective rules and customs prohibit. It is an interesting point that in both cases women and the relationship one may have with them is a major focal point for living the fantasy by male members of each respective community. The point underlines the informed choices made by Ibn Haddūjah in assigning the thrust of the text to a woman. The centrality of the nation's attitude to women in the text is evident in Rābiḥ's conclusion that Nafīsah invites him to her bed by the mere fact that she smiles to him and 'allows' him to see her figure through the body hugging dress she wore: 'Nafīsah's gullibility was confirmed to him [Rābiḥ] by her smile as she spoke to

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[298] *Ibid.*, p. 93

[299] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, translated by Yvonne Freccero (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965) p. 48 and p. 73

him, and also by the way she made her breasts almost tear the top of her dress.'[300]

Rābiḥ's opinion is a reflection of the findings of the Pascon-Bentahar survey, as outlined by Fatima Mernissi, that 'when a rural youth visits a town he assumes that any woman walking down the street is sexually available.'[301] The narrator tries to explain the ignorance under which labour the inhabitants of the bādīyah:

> Obviously, Rābiḥ did not know that women, women of the city, use a tight cloth that prevents their breasts from withering away and adds more allure and magnetism to their femininity. However, to reveal what may indicate sexual and physical maturity in a woman is seen [in the bādīyah] as an incessant invitation to attempt what good upbringing would not countenance.[302]

The point of view of the narrator and the narrative is clear in the above two quotations. By explaining the ignorance from which stems the prejudice of both sides, the narrative is implicitly defending both sides' way of thinking and life and is calling for more understanding between the two population centres.

The film adaptation takes this point of view on board in so far as it fits its own agenda of supporting change; change being in the form of accepting more of the ways of the city and discarding a few of the practices of the bādīyah. The ending of the film, as symbolized by the success of the young woman in both escaping the clutches of her father and in helping the shepherd Rābiḥ overcome his lowly social position, confirms this reading.

This reading, however, should not ignore the attention the film pays to the issues raised by the novel in relation to life in a village in post-independence Algeria. The film takes its cue from the novel's focus on the minutiae of village life and the way the forces of modernity, political and social change are playing havoc with a way of life that has seen little change in many generations. This

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[300] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 93

[301] P. Pascon and M. Bentahar, '269 Jeunes Ruraux', p. 63 quoted in Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society*, revised edition (London: al-Saqi Books, 1985), p. 143

[302] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 93

way of life is questioned and cajoled to change by forces from within and without. Like the novel, the forces from within are represented by Nafisah, being a member of the community who has tasted and experienced what is seen by other inhabitants of the village as an abstract and distant entity. Those from without are represented, like the novel, by the visitors such as the anonymous young man who chats in the novel to a nameless old man in the village square. The difference between the two is the perennial gap between the written text and the image: whereas the narrator of the novel could limit himself to describing a character as a young man visiting the village, the filmmaker needs to put a face and a figure to this young man, attire him in clothes that would say even more about him than his physical attributes, and then make him utter the words of his counterpart of the novel. This could potentially create more empathy or hostility between the implied viewer and the character than was the case with implied reader. However, given the aforementioned agenda of the film narrative, it is not surprising that the young man is drawn in such a light that gives less emphasis to the arrogance of youth that is present in his character in the novel, and more focus on the ignorance of youth that is also present in the novel. Casting a charismatic actor to give a face and a presence to the anonymous old man of the novel, the interlocutor of the young man from the city, is another factor in creating the father and son relationship between the two anonymous characters.

The preaching nature of the film's take on this relationship has a two sided effect; on the one hand it acknowledges the novel's call for a more considered move forward towards modernisation and industrialisation; on the other hand, the film narrative falls on the side of the city and the state discourse by leaving the implied viewer in no doubt as to the shortcomings of the rural way of life. These shortcomings, the film implicitly suggests, need to be addressed by eradicating some of the structures that not only keep the rural in its state of backwardness but also weigh down the rest of the country in its efforts to progress.

A final point on the meditation in both texts on the dichotomy of the city, the urban, and the village and the rural would be to look at the significance of the route they both follow in portraying the countryside without the nostalgia and sentimentality that associates the village with the lost innocence and the land with the virginity and purity of the soul of the nation. For while the village is used here as in many instances in Arabic literature, as Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ states, as symbolic of the nation,[303] the aforementioned strategy of pinpointing the shortcomings of the status quo from within the state discourse means that the narrative has very little time for a rose tinted view of life in the village which is the image projected in many Algerian films.[304] This is not solely due to the obvious harshness of the reality on the ground in such a village - climate and way of life, but also because of the critical position of the narrative towards the direction to which post-independence Algeria has found herself heading. The old woman, Raḥmah, talks to her dead husband through his tombstone and laments how 'since [Algeria's] independence people know nothing but gossip.'[305] The comment is echoed by a member of the chorus of the novel; the old man in the village square, talking to Rābiḥ: 'Since independence, the people here have no interest in work. Every one of them expects to be granted a monthly income for what he did or did not do during the days of the revolution.'[306]

The use of two characters that are portrayed in a positive light in the narrative helps add weight to the sentiment and criticism being uttered and also affirms the narrative's position with reference to the debate raging within Algerian society on the reasons behind the failure of reality to sit comfortably with the ideals of the revolution. Therefore, the narrative's return to the village and the countryside is in a sense a return to the root causes of Algeria's failure in

[303] Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ, *Sarādiqāt Min Waraq* / Tents of Paper, Volume 2, Silsilat al-Kitābāt al-Naqdiyyah / The Critical Writing Series , (al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'ah al-'Āmmah li Quṣūr al-Thaqāfah, 1998 / Cairo: General Organization for Culture Centres, 1998), p. 362
[304] Sabry Hafez, *Alif*, p.62
[305] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 21
[306] *Ibid.*, p. 41

certain areas of its social, economic and political reform, and also a return to the basic components for any solution.

The film adaptation's take on this point follows in its earlier mentioned strategy of giving a more partial analysis of the problem than the novel; while the novel used the village as an analogy of the whole nation, the film does assure the viewer of the existence of the other Algeria to which strives the state discourse. This is an Algeria that is urban, moving and sure of its position within the modern world. This is achieved by the filmmaker's insertion of scenes in the prologue of the film that associates the capital city's life with the fast rhythm of the music on the soundtrack. The soundtrack is in contrast to the slow yearning and foreboding melody with which the filmmaker scores the opening scene of the narrative depicting sheep being herded outside 'Ābid Ibn al-Qāḍī's home. The sheep are herded along what appears to be a well-traversed route; movement is unhurried and seems to be part of a long established routine. The narrowness of the path through which the sheep are herded, in conjunction with the hill side that blocks any depth to the backdrop of the scene, inject a sense of gloom and harshness to the life of the characters inhabiting this land.

A further point stressed by the filmmaker is the freedom of movement in the city as opposed to the curtailment of movement in the village. This is especially the case for women, who are not to be seen in the alleys and pathways of the village, and who are present in the montage of the city included in the film prologue. In addition to the aforementioned point on the reality and abstractness of the city in the film and novel, respectively, the film's inclusion of women inhabiting the streets of the capital refers to the position of woman within the metropolis as opposed to her existence within the countryside. This gives rise to two points; firstly, the liberty and rights enjoyed by the female city folk, and the oppressive nature of the patriarchal control of women's life in the countryside. This is demonstrated through the shots of Nafīsah talking to her female student friends and her male teacher in the grounds of the college and her walk through the bustling thoroughfares of Algiers. It provides a contrast

with the total absence of such a use of public space in the village by a woman. The only woman that is relieved of this restriction is the old woman Raḥmah whose age has seen to the elimination of any physical sexuality on her part, and thus has given her the freedom to move unburdened by the community's customs and conventions. This seems to reflect the results of Mālika Belghiti's survey of rural Morocco, which reveal that elderly women are exempted from the restrictions of movement applied to women in general.[307] This freedom appears to have come at a high price, given her inability to really enjoy this privileged position without suffering from the pains of old age. Secondly, there is a dichotomy in the portrayal of a youthful and attractive woman walking unaccompanied in the city: on the one hand she represents the new generation of women who assert their presence in the urban universe by inhabiting its nerve centre, the street and public transport; an assertion that comes with the expanse, size of the population and the anonymity they bring to individuals in a major city like Algiers. On the other hand, the sight of such a striking young woman in a busy road brings to mind the associations that the city makes with women. As Elizabeth Wilson points out, the street is 'an arena of male adventure and observation [...] Woman is present in cities as temptress, as whore, as fallen woman, as lesbian, but also as virtuous womanhood in danger, as heroic womanhood who triumphs over temptation and tribulation.'[308] The point here is the manner in which the filmmaker captures the young heroine walking through the streets apparently enjoying the advantage over her village life, and yet is implicitly negotiating the pitfalls of being a single woman walking alone in a major street in the capital. We as the viewers are taking part, on the behest of the filmmaker, in subjecting Nafisah to our probing gaze. As Lou Charnon-

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[307] Mālika Belghiti, "Les Relations Feminines et le Statut de la Femme dans la Famille Rurale", *Collections du Bulletin Economique et Social du Maroc,* (Rabat: 1970), p. 57, quoted in Mernissi, Op. Cit., p.142

[308] Elizabeth Wilson, *Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, The Control of Disorder and Women* (London: Virgo, 1991), p. 103

Deutsch states in reference to a Spanish character, 'the space in which Ana Ozores is the moving figure is criss-crossed by probing gazes.'[309]

The Muslim and Arab identity of the city in *Rīḥ al-Junūb* links the sequence to Fatima Mernissi's assertion that public space is the universe of men and a woman who trespasses into this space is 'upsetting the male's order and his peace of mind. She is actually committing an act of aggression against him merely by being present where she should not be. A woman in a traditionally male space upsets Allah's order by inciting men to commit zinā.'[310]

So that the male is under threat by the mere fact of the presence of the female in 'his' space; 'the man has everything to lose in this encounter: peace of mind, self-determination, allegiance to Allah, and social prestige.'[311]

The contrast between the city and the village becomes somewhat blurred at least as far as the position of women is concerned, as both communities share a voyeuristic desire towards their female inhabitants. Moreover, given the symbolic weight under which labour the characters of the novel and its film adaptation, it would be justified to view the insertion of the montage of the city as a further symbolic layer added by the filmmaker to show what had been alluded to and formed the undercurrent of all that made Nafisah unhappy with her life in her parents' community.

Narrative Structure

The film adaptation follows the novel's linear structure and its general sjuzhet outline. Where the novel had relied on an omniscient narrator with access to the thoughts and dreams of the characters and who would provide a general overview of the opinion of the village, the film utilizes situations and meetings

[309] Lou Charnon-Deutsch, "La Regenta and the Sutured Subject", Revista de Estudios Hispanicos, Vol. 28, part 1, p. 68, quoted in Sally Faulkner, *Literary Adaptations in Spanish Cinema* (London: Tamesis, 2004), p. 112
[310] Mernissi, p. 144
[311] *Ibid.*

between characters to point to their thoughts and aspirations. The loss of an omniscient narrator creates limitations to the knowledge to which the implied viewer has access. Unlike his counterpart of the novel, the implied viewer of the film shares some of the ignorance of the characters, so that there is more synchronicity in the knowledge divulged at the sjuzhet and the fabula levels, between the story and the discourse. For example, the viewer finds out at the same moment as does Nafīsah that her father does not wish her to return to her studies in the capital in the autumn. This is in contrast to the novel where the narrator informs us through accessing Raḥmah's thoughts that the young girl may not get to return to Algiers as she expects. In fact, the old woman relates the whole affair and the reasons behind Ibn al-Qāḍī's decision to the tombstone of her late husband.[312] The fact the filmmaker decides to present both scenes without allowing us access to the thoughts of the old woman and the extent of her knowledge signifies his decision to limit the knowledge of the audience in order to slow the pace of the narrative and thus create more space for the unfolding of the fabula with a view of making the events and scenes pronounce the points and ideas that the narrator of the novel had imparted to the implied reader through his omniscience. Effectively, by limiting the knowledge, the filmmaker reduces the element of suspense that had existed in the novel and replaces it with a more focalized knowledge, from the character's point of view, to help create a more realist feel to the text.

The narrator of the novel and the manner in which the filmmaker treats him in the adaptation deserves a detailed consideration. This is a narrator with the omniscience and prescience that all characters lack, in addition to his often used method of direct address to the implied narratee/reader. He evokes the spectre of a traditional bard telling the story to an audience and pausing to explain points in the first person. This adds weight to the mythic and folkloric tale reading of the narrative. Examples of the narrator's direct address to the implied narratee and reader include: 'There is no need for us to talk at length about the village; the main point is that the latest news can be found in the coffee

[312] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 20

house...'[313] Similarly, in referring the implied reader to a previous introduction of a character: 'He arrived by sunrise and headed to the coffee house of al-Ḥāj Quwaydir [...] whom we have already introduced and so there is no need to go back to him.'[314] The narrator sports freedom of movement at all the three narrative levels, metalipsis, proposed by Gérard Genette: extradiegetic, intradiegetic and metadiegetic.[315] These move progressively from the diegetic level of the story as experienced by the characters, metadiegetic, to the level of an omniscient and omnipresent narrator hovering above the text, intradiegetic, to the narrator commenting on aspects of the narrative and addressing the reader directly. The latter style, as E.M. Forster argues, provides for intimacy with the reader 'but at the expense of illusion'.[316] This aspect of the style and its use by the author points to the rhetorical and didactic properties of Ibn Haddūjah's text; didactic both towards the reader and towards the state discourse. While suppressing the presence of a narrator of whom the viewer is aware, the filmmaker does not altogether abandon some of the fluidity and ease of movement of the narrator of the novel. The filmmaker gives the audience the privileges enjoyed by the narrator of the novel; so that the camera melts through the closed oriental windows obstructing from view the heroine as she reclines on her bed pondering the vacuous terrain and deafening silence of the mountainous region of her village. The audience are allowed to see what is not seen by anyone else in the diegesis; namely, Nafisah in solitude pondering her life and future. The stream of consciousness of the novel, conveyed via a direct report to the reader, is transposed into the adaptation. The filmmaker imitates a descriptive passage at the same point in the sjuzhet of *Rīḥ al-Junūb* by simply framing Nafisah in a medium close-up that speaks volumes about the attitude of the girl to life, her thoughts and her occupations. These connotations are

[313] *Ibid.*, p. 39
[314] *Ibid.*, p. 209
[315] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, translated by Jane E. Lewis (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 228
[316] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, 1955), pp. 111-112, quoted in Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 17

derived from the shared cultural values that connect the viewer to the language of cinema and to the diegesis.

In addition to the use of the direct mode of address to reader to provide a further level of redundancy, it is also deployed to elaborate on the narrator's own views explicitly, thus leaving the implied reader in no doubt as to the position he takes towards the issues at hand, and confirming the didactic nature of the text. This can be applied to the narrator's position towards both Rābiḥ and Nafisah; there is a sense of the narrator providing a counterpoint to the total lack of appreciation of the inner tumult through which these characters go respectively. From the moment of the introduction of Nafisah and the beginning of the implied reader's awareness of the ignorance that envelopes the character about her immediate future and return to the city the narrator begins the process of directly addressing the implied reader with a view of commenting or rather merely explaining the thoughts and feelings of the young woman. This is most vividly exemplified by the narrator's declaration of the 'incapacity' of words to express the feelings with which Nafisah struggles in the cemetery as she inadvertently finds herself witnessing the act of procreation taking place between two animals left loose in the area. The reluctance of the narrator to describe the exact feelings of this female virgin as she witness for the first time the reality of the male female physical relationship could be argued to be an act of censorship on the part of the implied author. The need to avoid alienating his readership by delving too deeply into the primal thoughts of an adolescent girl is submerged under an inability to find the words to express the thoughts of the character. Similarly, in relation to Rābiḥ, the narrator provides a counterpoint to the total lack of empathy from the villagers to the young man's desire for change from his badly paid and repetitive profession. The narrator bitterly mocks a villager's remark that 'Rābiḥ does not care for what happens in the village' by commenting, 'and how can he when he spends his days in the mountains and valleys herding the sheep?'[317] The narrator, thus, openly attaches

[317] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 40

his colours to his two main characters, whilst simultaneously taking the trouble to explain the ignorance from which their respective follies emanate.

This relationship is interpreted by the filmmaker in allowing the two characters a stream of consciousness that imparts the feelings to which the narrator had guided the reader. Furthermore, in attempting to follow a facet of this close relationship as rendered in the novel of the implicit presence of the narrator in the room with the young woman and the studied nature of his interrogation of Nafisah's views and aspirations, the filmmaker chooses to show his first shot of the character through a reflection in her bedroom mirror. The reflection provides an extra layer in the narration, as she is being viewed through an introspective device that acts to both reflect her physical existence and also to act as the space on which are projected the impressions and desires that form the patriarchal construction of femininity. The viewer is aware of this character's physical attributes, as she is framed in her nightgown, whilst being conscious of the constructed nature of this reality as implied by the use of the reflection in the mirror. The mirror becomes an agent for the filmmaker who is capturing this pro-filmic event for the benefit of the viewer. This is a point that is addressed most aptly by Laura Mulvey's now well-known article on the nature of the act of viewing films in which she turned to Freud's theory of scopophilia and voyeurism to contend that the very nature of watching a film in a cinema and the manner in which the film content is conveyed to the spectator encourage a feeling mostly of voyeurism and later of fetishistic scopophilia.[318] Film presents 'a hermetically sealed world which unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy,' she states. Moreover, 'although the film is really being shown, is there to be seen, conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world.'[319]

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[318] Laura Mulvey "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), re-printed in Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*,(Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 28-40
[319] *Ibid.*, p. 31

This voyeuristic aspect encouraged by the conditions of watching a movie in a film theatre is also coupled by what Mulvey deems to be scopophilia intertwined with narcissism. The narcissism aspect of this is arrived at through cinema's fascination with the human form, as vouched for the endless supply of medium and close-up shots of characters in film. The looking at one's like in real life is taken into a different dimension in film, given the latter's encouragement of voyeurism. This is to say, while the interest in anthropomorphic aspects of the real world may be a natural consequence of the social and biological conditioning that individuals go through, the extremes to which film takes this fascination creates a whole new level of voyeuristic and narcissistic synchronization.

The above goes to shed light on the bedroom and mirror scene in Nafisah's introduction to the film text; the relationship of the filmmaker, the viewer and the narrator to the filmic rendition of this scene is made doubly interesting given the point that precedes the bedroom sequence. For like the novel the scene appears after the father figure leaves the front yard of the house and heads to the market. In the novel, he looks towards the bedroom window as the narrator delves into his thoughts and informs the reader of the man's plans for his daughter.[320] The fact that the author chooses to position the introduction of the character of Nafisah and her thoughts directly after revealing Ibn al-Qāḍī's thoughts over her marriage is indicative of the position of the scene inside the bedroom as partly a rendition of the thoughts and imagination of the father as to the world beyond those closed oriental shutters. The film's depiction of this scene uses the tool of the close-up to offer a cinematic equivalent of the text's assertion that 'an old thought occurred to him as he saw the still shut window of Nafisah's room.'[321] A close-up of the rugged time-touched features of the father as he looks towards the window furnishes the audience with the character's thoughts towards what rests beyond those windows. A zoom-in from the father's point of view towards the window helps connect the man, his

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[320] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, pp. 5-6
[321] *Ibid.*

thoughts and the somewhat dark demeanour to the window and the realm it veils. In the film version, the connection between the man outside and the woman inside takes a further more explicit dimension: the public space, with its connections with the wild world as represented by the sheep, mule and the harsh mountain in the background, is the domain of the male that has the ability to look and move as he wishes, while the woman is enclosed in a small space with many a barrier to the outside public world. Moreover, the filmmaker's visual connection between the gaze of the father and the sequence inside the room creates the impression of the latter being part of the hovering thoughts and impressions of the former, a rendition of the mindscreen of the father. Crucially, through the use of the zoom-in, we, the audience, become implicated in the process of forming a set of expectations as to what lies behind the window.

A final point on the character of Nafisah is the use of the mirror in both the novel and its adaptation in allowing the reader and spectator access to the inner being of the character. The novel uses the medium of the stream of consciousness to allow the girl to inspect her flowering womanhood, seeing in her blossoming physique the seeds of her desire to be free, as an adult and a child no more, as well as the curtailing of her freedom, as a young woman in a patriarchal community.[322] The filmmaker retains the character's stream of consciousness and uses the device of the mirror to replicate the descriptive parts of the narrative of the novel. She looks at her image in the mirror and contrasts her fully grown body with her parents' treatment of her as a little girl. Through the mirror the character is entering into discourse with society at large and questioning the dogma that sees in the very body of a woman a 'shame' that needs to be hidden, or a lack that has to be veiled behind layers of walls, curtains, and head-to-toe garments. Given the urban nature of the readership of the text, it would be reasonable to argue that the text is empathetic with the character's grievances against the 'rule of the father'. However, the text makes a clear distinction between its critique of the position of women in this village, and in the rural areas generally, and its lack of empathy for the arrogance and

[322] For example p. 8 of the novel.

ignorance of this young woman. As mentioned above, the narrator's direct address to the reader begging him to imagine the mother's inner tumult at the behaviour of the daughter is one of many examples where the text distinguishes between the character of the young woman and the issue of the liberation of woman.

The mirror in the film becomes a far more instrumental and effective tool in weaving the multitude of relationships between Nafisah, her inner being, Nafisah as imagined by the community in the diegesis, the manner in which these many layers of the image of the character affect us in the audience and the manner in which this effect translates into the opinion and fantasy that we project into the image on the screen and see the character in the light of this extra layer. Laura Mulvey's critique of the masculine nature of the gaze in the classic Hollywood narrative is relevant in this context on two levels: firstly, in view of Nafisah's awareness of her sexuality and appeal as she inspects her image in the mirror in a close-up that brings the viewer closer to the process of self-inspection on the part of the character; and secondly, the inability of this departure from the Hollywood classic narration- the character looks at herself feeling her figure- to diminish from the extent to which the image is subject to the male gaze.

The masculine nature of the gaze is emphasized even in the context of a confrontation between Nafisah and a female chorus from the village; the young woman's appearance and demeanour is subjected by the women to a deconstruction similar to the famed montage of Rita Hayworth dancing in *Gilda* (Dir. Charles Vidor, USA, 1946) that included close-ups of different parts of her figure. The women's scrutiny in the novel of Nafisah's face and appearance is to some extent patriarchal in its nature due to the implicit jealousy and insecurity felt by the women in the presence of this youthful fertile unmarried young woman.[323] The fear is derived partly from the desperate need of women in such communities for men for support and protection. The words of the women of

[323] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, pp. 177-178

the novel act as scrutinizing close-up shots of Nafisah, a point that is replicated in the film by the use of the medium shot of her as the women talk disdainfully about her. Their off-screen diegetic words direct the spectator to form extreme close-ups of Nafisah's appearance. The divergent agenda of the filmmaker from the novelist prompts him to give the young heroine, unlike her counterpart of the novel, the chance to answer back the accusation of her detractors and use the logic and free thinking faculties gained through modern education to turn the tables on the women and invite them to look into some of the follies of their way of life. In the process, however, Nafisah is shown to be even more alien from her village and community than in the novel, for Nafisah of the film gives voice to a preaching feminist point of view that could not be farther from the daily concerns and worries of the villagers. The effect of the film's scene is to create more empathy for the character among the projected urban viewers, whereas the scene in the novel served to underline further the manner in which the city is viewed from the countryside, as lacking both in hardship and wisdom.

Having been made under similar social and political constraints and conditions as those under which the novel was published, the film follows to a great extent the strategies devised and deployed by the narrator in the novel. So that the self-censorship exercised by the narrator is all too obvious to see as the same scene in the cemetery is depicted with a couple of animals in the background. Indeed, the demands of the visual device to present and to depict what is alluded to in the novel puts the filmmaker at a greater disadvantage than the novelist. The narrator had allowed the reader to imagine the mating act being watched by Nafisah, the filmmaker is in no position to show the image, thus the viewer and he are left in a disadvantage in this regard. The filmmaker opts for abandoning the primal and physical inquisitiveness of the young woman underscored in the novel and opts for reading the scene as the discomfort of the city dweller with the chaos and lack of respect for the dead in allowing animals to roam freely in the cemetery. The scene gives rise to two points, one general and another specific to the situation. The general point is the paradox of a film text rhapsodising about taking the country and society forward and away from

some of its customs and traditions and, yet, is constrained by these very traditions and social conventions in the manner of its imparting of the progressive message.

On another occasion, Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ chooses to put into a visual rendition the narrator's description of Nafīsah taking her clothes off in the middle of a particularly hot night. In fact, the camera pans across her naked torso and legs as she sleeps. The decision in the latter case to 'show' that which had been described in the text of the novel is indicative of the director's wish to follow the freedom of the narrator of the novel in his omnipotence and his access to the private world beyond those closed oriental shutters outside Nafīsah's room. Moreover, the showing of nudity helps add drama and tension to the sequence of Rābiḥ visiting the young woman in her room. In the process, the director shows a willingness to take on some of the taboos addressed by Ibn Haddūjah.

Specifically, the filmmaker chooses to adopt a strategy to which he adheres throughout the film of assuring the audience of the redeemable nature of the character of Nafīsah, and later of Rābiḥ. In the case of Nafīsah, he portrays her in the cemetery scene in the manner of an ignorant, yet caring, preacher who complains about the lack of a collective responsibility in the village as symbolized by the state of the cemetery, while in the second scene Riyāḍ mixes the sexual undercurrent in her act of taking off her dress in the heat of the night, with the impetuous behaviour of a teenager. The latter rendition is a departure from the novel's explicit linkage of the girl's nudity to her sexual frustration. The change is part of the filmmaker's strategy of making Nafīsah a redeemable and sympathetic character.

Position of Women

This episode in the novel and its rendition in the film is an interesting departure point for assessing both texts' treatment of women's issues. For while the text of the novel ostensibly stands for the rights of women and for an opposition to

the oppression of women in rural areas, its overall position on women is ambivalent. This is evident in the above instance when Rābiḥ invades the privacy of Nafisah's bedroom and subjects her to an unimaginable amount of fear, and yet the concern of the Ibn Haddūjah text, as points outs Debbie Cox,[324] is solely with Rābiḥ's feeling of humiliation and anger at being called a 'dirty shepherd' by the distraught Nafisah. The film narrative follows the novel's emphasis on this feeling of anger by following Rābiḥ as he runs out of the room and depicts him burning his shepherd's clothes to the rhythm of the young woman's angry voice on the soundtrack calling him 'dirty shepherd'. The extra-diegetic voice replicates the novel's depiction of Rābiḥ's thoughts as he licks his wounds of total rejection.

Both narratives use this brutal rejection as a catharsis for Rābiḥ to change his life and stop being a servant to an antagonist within the narrative. There is no mention whatsoever of how Nafisah felt after the encounter. Furthermore, the process through which Rābiḥ develops his rejection of his way of life is a fascinating coming together of the novel's different guises in its treatment of women: for the rejection of the young girl prompts him to shout aloud, 'my mother is the most beautiful of all existence! She may be mute, but she is able to express herself better than any other creature.'[325]

And so, the inability of the mother to talk is a bonus when it prevents her from uttering what the young man may not wish to hear. She is contrasted in the novel to this Westernized young woman whose harsh words to Rābiḥ are in line with her lack of sympathy for her mother or indeed her community's way of life. Furthermore, the Freudian connotations are not to be missed in this stream of consciousness, for what is at stake is the relationship of the young man to his mother and his search for someone to partly replace her position. The filmmaker does away with this outburst and focuses on the rejection felt by the young man and the impetus it creates in him for a new direction in life.

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[324] Cox, p. 153

[325] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 102

In the absence of space in both the novel and its adaptation for the suffering and trauma that Nafisah endures in this episode is an implicit acceptance, unconscious perhaps on the part of the writer and filmmaker, of the 'fitna' attributes of the woman and the inability of a simple rural man to resist her. Fatima Mernissi explains the sexual aggression of Muslim women in comparison with the male:

> The Muslim woman is endowed with a fatal attraction which erodes the male's will to resist her and reduces him to a passive acquiescent role. He has no choice; he can only give in to her attraction, whence her identification with fitna, chaos, and with the anti-divine and anti-social forces of the universe.[326]

The paradoxical aspect of this episode in the novel is its contrast to other parts of the text where the reader is encouraged to assume a particular understanding of the mentality of women and the manner in which they are viewed by their men folk. The narrator refers to the meanness of the male view of women in the rural areas by quoting an average conversation between two male villagers where one says to the other, "'my wife, excuse me for mentioning her [a woman] in your presence', or when infuriated by someone [male] he would say, 'woman face' or 'I would have you like I would a woman.'"[327]

This point happens to be part of a long section in the narrative in which the narrator addresses the reader directly by attempting to place the locale and specificity of rural life within the context of the position of women universally and throughout history. The narrator here talks at an extradiegetic level and with some distance from the diegesis. The significance here is not so much the information being imparted, but the choice of the author to impart this knowledge within the setting of a fictional narrative; the fictional derives its authenticity from the real context within which it is written. The narrator ends by stating, 'as I said, we can appreciate the difficulty and the depression that Nafisah endures, with one caveat: we believe that the femininity of women is

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[326] Mernissi, Op. Cit., p. 41
[327] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 191

not a natural shortcoming, just as the masculinity of the man is not a natural advantage.'[328]

The overt narration and direct address to the reader is a point that is addressed in the film adaptation by the use of reflexive cinematic devices such as the exploitation of the stream of consciousness within the diegesis with the aid of the non-diegetic soundtrack and music. Whereas the novel had explained and analysed, the film presents and encourages a specific understanding. On women's position within rural society, the filmmaker distances himself from the belligerence of the young heroine towards her mother, the representative of the average woman in rural areas. Instead, the filmmaker chooses to present women's life in the village through vignettes that echo the novel's urban viewpoint towards this simple way of life. For example, the scene between the mother, the elder woman of the village, Raḥmah, and Nafisah at the latter's home is a scene transposed from the novel[329] and given an interesting depth by the filmmaker. Whereas the novel had used the scene to provide an exposition of the characters and their standpoints within the narrative, the filmmaker takes this point further and uses the demands of the visual medium of clothing the characters, creating the *mise-en-scène* and camera position and movement to provide the expository information and to underscore the different worlds of Nafisah on the one hand, and her mother and Raḥmah on the other. The filmmaker presents the act of offering coffee to be both part of a long-standing tradition, as alluded to in the novel, but also gives the impression of a court being held here by the mother. He frames the three women in three separate close ups to indicate the different states of mind and extent of life experience enjoyed by each woman in the scene. The simplicity of the compliment Raḥmah pays her hostess over the coffee betrays both nostalgia to bygone carefree times unencumbered by the pressures of the contemporary world, and also a meditation on the nature of the life led by women in the countryside. The fact that the young woman is positioned in the frame between the two serves to

[328] *Ibid.*
[329] *Ibid.*, p. 16

underpin the hereditary and ethnographic nature of this way of life being preserved by the two women on either side of Nafisah. Her position as the continuum of these two women's heritage and history is underlined by her depiction at the centre of the frame in the shot of the three characters that is juxtaposed to the individual shots of the women.

The scene delineates another aspect of daily life of women; namely, the segregation of space. For the three women are only seen once walking together outside the home: on the way to the cemetery. The domestic space in which the women are depicted here, and later indoors during the feast and finally during the wake for Raḥmah, is clearly separated from the space occupied by the men. The male villagers in the film are seen in the coffee shop, in the village square, out in the open air part of the Ibn al-Qāḍī household and in the streets of the village. This segregation in the space in the film, which replicates that of the novel, creates a situation where the domestic space becomes the world of women, of the sexualized beings that are not seen in public. As Mernissi states, 'strict space boundaries divide Muslim society into two sub-universes: the universe of men (the umma, the world of religion and power) and the universe of women, the domestic world of sexuality and family.'[330]

Interestingly, the filmmaker deems unnecessary the inclusion from the novel of another instance of this exposition on women's position in rural society where the narrator at length explains the centrality of ownership and rearing of hens and birds in women's livelihood. The narrator of the novel directly addresses the reader, an urban reader by implication, in explaining the great sense of sacrifice involved in a woman's serving up one of her reared birds for dinner to a guest. He states,

> In the countryside, hens form the woman's wealth that is beyond men's control. These hens are the wealth of an adversary [as far as men are concerned]..., for they survive on the grain and beans that are man's property, and they give a woman a sort of arrogance as she is able to use the proceeds from selling the eggs to see to those of her needs that she does not wish to beg her husband to purchase for her. Moreover, the hens are seen by

[330] Mernissi, p. 138

men [in the countryside] as part of the war that the women constantly wage on them: they [hens] survive on his wheat and grain and roam over his land unhindered and free to cause damage. In other words, they form a state within a state![331]

The ethnographic, social, and anthropological questions raised in this passage are of particular interest, especially in view of the filmmaker's decision to do away with it in the adaptation. The points raised here interconnect a web of issues that are at the heart of the novel; namely, issues of gender, the challenging of certain urban preconceptions about the 'down trodden' women of the rural communities, the eternal attraction between the sexes, despite all the differences; the allegory of woman as the creature that lives off the man's economically recognized work in a patriarchal economy and yet is able to hold on to a form of freedom of behaviour, and finally the clear delineation between the public space, controlled by men, and the domestic realm held together by women. The passage seems to take the urban reader on a disorientating journey beyond the walls of those distant rural communities and confronts him/her with an aspect of a husband and wife relationship that is diametrically opposed to the expectations of the reader. At another level, the relationship of men and women as husband and wife in the other Algeria is linked to human history and the manner in which man and woman came to organize a civil society by cohabiting with one another and using the wealth of nature to survive and perpetuate the species.

Characterisation

Echoing David Bordwell's emphasis on the centrality of characterisation in the construction of ideologically charged and didactic films,[332] Sabry Hafez links the creation of character in Algerian cinema of the 1960s and early 1970s to the armed and political struggle that had inspired the inception of film production in Algeria: 'its birth in the battlefield left its lasting mark on its structure and vision for many years after independence. It became a militant cinema, a cinema

[331] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 202

[332] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (London: Routledge, 1997), p.235

with a cause and an educative mission, brimming with metaphors of change, rebirth and the forces of nature.'[333]

Early Algerian cinema, he continues, saw as part of its raison d'etre the exorcising of 'the ghosts' of the construct that is the colonial subject, the Algerian as viewed through French and Francophone culture evolved over 130 years of French rule.

> This is the reason for the prevalence of a strong, and often simplistic, binary opposition between the positive hero, the mujahid (revolutionary or freedom fighter), the peasant and/or the intellectual, and his counterpart, the antagonist, who is either a French soldier or an Algerian collaborator.[334]

This characterisation is carried over into films dealing with issues of life in independent Algeria, and into *Rīḥ al-Junūb.* For both the Ibn Haddūjah and Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ texts have a place in the narrative for the mujāhid, the character of Mālik, the former revolutionary fighter turned local mayor. The link of the present to the war of independence continues via the characterisation of Ibn al-Qāḍī as a local landlord who 'stems the trend for change [in post-independence Algeria] and undermines its forces.'[335]

The filmmaker follows the manner in which Ibn Haddūjah uses characters to underscore the ills and potential strengths of his contemporary Algeria. The characters of the film, like those of the novel, are close to an arrangement of a chorus that mostly reads from different song sheets and whose members are generally unaware of the need to synchronize their voices. This array of contradictory, and yet similar in their innate contradictions, characters provides the link that the implied author hopes to establish between the diegesis and the reader. However, the novel's obvious doubts over its position within the state discourse are weakened by its adoption of state discourse sponsored character stereotypes; types that fall within the range of the two camps: pro-progress, and those whose existence depends on the failure of the state's attempts at change.

[333] Hafez, *Alif,* p. 55
[334] *Ibid.*, emphasis in source
[335] Hafez, *Alif,* p. 58

In the novel, the characters of Ibn al-Qāḍī, Mālik, the Arabic teacher, the religious leaders, and the mother fall into this type of rendition. Between the two poles that these characters fall there rest the characters of Rābiḥ, Nafīsah and Raḥmah and the owner of the coffee shop. These characters seem to start from within the bipolar-system of stereotypes, and move on to acquire a semblance of individuality and character depth. Their individuality and depth is countered, however, by the very roles they are given in the narrative: Nafīsah needs to go through the journey of appreciating the village and its life, as a way of appreciating rural Algeria, and by extension Algeria's roots; Rābiḥ is to look beyond his status in the village, and Raḥmah and the Ḥajjī of the coffee shop provide the link to the heritage and history of the community. In other words, the characterisation falls yet again within the didactic, thus lessening the individualistic effect of each character.

The character of the old lady, in combination with that of the old man running the coffee shop, represents the elements of stability and continuity of the village. They provide the grounding for the new generation and a point of reference. The novel uses them to provide a diegetic witness for the crucial points in the narrative with the sole purpose of providing a counterpoint to the marauding forces of modernity as represented by the state, the rebellious nature of youth and the ignorance of the urban world. The film follows the same technique in combination with the omnipresent camera that has access to every diegetic space. The filmmaker replicates Ibn Haddūjah's positioning of the old man at points in the narrative when Rābiḥ gives up his job as a shepherd and joins the several unemployed young men whiling away the day at the coffee shop, and also at the point at which Mālik reflects over his life experience. By choosing to limit the number of instances in which the old man appears in the film in comparison to the novel, the filmmaker adds significance to the instances presented. The scene in which Ibn al-Qāḍī attempts to return Rābiḥ back to his employment is dropped in the film adaptation. For where the scene in the novel had served as a platform for a redundant expository dialogue about the irreconcilable positions of the poor of the countryside on the one hand and

the landed old order on the other, the filmmaker prudently opts to use the visual narrative to transpose the underlying message of the scene of the novel to film. This is evident in the Spartan dress, home, and existence of Rābiḥ and his mother in comparison to the relative comfort of Ibn al-Qāḍī and his family.

The old man resorts to the same pool of accumulated knowledge with which Raḥmah is fully versed in counselling the younger generation and providing gentle guidance. Both of their conversation is laced with proverbs and local history to the extent that they appear as commentators observing life from a place within and yet removed from the diegesis. This position is acquired through the factor of old age and the lack of any apparent family attachments. There is no reference in the novel, or the film, to any family ties that the coffee shop owner may have in the present, and Raḥmah is clearly shown to be an old widow who makes her living from the age-old profession of making ceramic objects. The filmmaker's strategy of shifting more emphasis towards the main two characters of the text, that of Nafīsah and Rābiḥ, reduces the extent of introspection allowed for the coffee shop owner, as well as Mālik and Ṭāhir. This is evident in the absence in the adaptation of two exceptionally inward looking expository sections where the narrative uses the *mise-en-scène* and livelihood of two elders to respectively shed light on their inner beings and their basic life philosophy. In the case of the coffee shop owner, the narrative provides the literary equivalent of the extreme close-up of the face and hands of the Ḥajjī as he washes the coffee cups. The narrator internalizes the routine experience of washing the cups by informing the reader, in direct address, of ten years being the average age of a cup:

> He does not wash his cups to merely clean them but in order to converse with them. For despite their being inanimate objects that lack feeling, it would be hard for even an inanimate object to rest oblivious to emotions when touched by your hands every morning and every minute...and share your living [space]...[336]

In fact, the narrator goes on to directly link the two characters: 'In the way he washes his cups, the old man is similar to the old woman Raḥmah, for her care

[336] *Rīḥ al-Junūb.*, p. 149

in moulding the pots and his care in cleaning the cups is characterized by a form of serenity that is almost like a prayer.'[337]

The reader is soon made aware of what amounts to the value of a whole character's life and experience being projected onto these very inanimate objects, for Raḥmah is 'seen' by the villagers via the pots and dishes that she has over the years sold and presented to every home in the village,[338] and during her fatal illness her subconscious slips into the diegesis via delirium,'[...]once in the grave, I'll turn into the earth that would be suitable for pottery.'[339]These references to her work, combined with her role as the village female elder bestow on Raḥmah the role of 'the protective mother figure at everybody's service, but she also personifies the power of art and creativity that penetrates many aspects of everyday life. Her fine ceramic objects are in every house, items of aesthetic and practical value.'[340]

For Raḥmah and Ḥajjī of the coffee shop, the lack of family extension and support carries with it the implied weakened position within such an agricultural community, but also it gives them an ease and deftness in interacting with other members of the village without the burden of possible family and clan related commitments and rivalries. In short, the two characters are stripped through their age and their loneliness of the desires and competitive traits of the average member of the community, and consequently become safe and unthreatening backdrops to village life.

These characteristics materialize in the film most visually in the manner in which the character of the old woman is privileged with the ability to negotiate the public and private space of the community. She is the only female who is seen walking alone in the dusty lanes of the village and is thus able to move from one home into another to sell her goods. In fact, her mere presence creates

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[337] *Ibid.*, p. 149
[338] *Ibid.*, p. 159
[339] *Ibid.*, p. 145
[340] Hafez, *Alif*, p. 68

the context for temporarily breaking the barrier between the public domain, preserved for men, and the female private world as seen during the visit of Mālik to the home of Ibn al-Qāḍī. The latter uses the visit of the old woman to invite Mālik, a non-family member, into the sacrosanct enclosure of his home. Indeed, the narrator of the novel underscores the aberrant nature of the situation by explaining that, 'The place to which Mālik was led was not the room in which the family [normally] gathers, as this was crowded with [visiting] women and children; it [the room to which he was led] was Nafīsah's bedroom.'[341]

The exceptional nature of the situation is evident in the film in the way the director depicts Ibn al-Qāḍī's wife and Nafīsah receiving Mālik themselves in their domestic unveiled clothing, rather than the fully covered head to toe white costume used by the women on their earlier outing to the cemetery. Raḥmah's desexualized persona in the village provides a space for potential mutual sightings of members of the opposite sex. To make certain that the reader and viewer realize the highly unusual occasion that brought Mālik into the home of Ibn al-Qāḍī, both narratives include the character of the teacher, Ṭāhir, asking Mālik whether he had 'seen her'. The filmmaker adds significance to the question by the dreamy and wistful look on the face of Ṭāhir as he asks about the girl. Interestingly, in both texts the character does not appear to know the name of the 'her', indicating the impossibility of having contact with members of the opposite sex in these close-knit communities, and also underlying the fantasy and sexual charge with which women are viewed, despite- as a result of- the barriers created by the social system between the sexes. The point is echoed by Fatima Mernissi: '[...]sexual segregation intensifies what it is supposed to eliminate: the sexualization of human relations.'[342]

The relative freedom of movement and association that old age and the loss of fertile feminine attributes invest in Raḥmah is paralleled with the centrality of the social scene that her male mirror image is allowed; the coffee shop owner.

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[341] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 56
[342] Mernissi, p.140

The Ḥajjī reaps the benefits of a livelihood, an income and interaction with male members of society without having to move from his place of choosing, the coffee shop. His centrality in the social life of the community and position as arbiter and father figure to the male youth of the village who congregate in the coffee shop do not lessen from the stereotypical nature of the character of the Ḥajjī. The film follows the novel's depiction of the character in the vain of the community elder bestowed with the status and respect derived from age and experience. Raḥmah, on the other hand, is given more space in both texts to derive more empathy from the reader and viewer. This is evident in the film's inclusion of a monologue that she tearfully delivers at her husband's grave. The monologue, stream of consciousness and interior section is a privilege that is granted in the film narrative to only three other characters: Nafīsah, Rābiḥ and Mālik. The diegetic stream of consciousness of Raḥmah is designed in the film to illuminate more of the character and less to help provide a narrator oriented text about Nafīsah, as is the case in the novel. The latter uses the occasion in the cemetery to elaborate on the public secret of Ibn al-Qāḍī's decision to keep his daughter in the village and prevent her return to the capital. Raḥmah introduces the girl to her dead husband, by pointing to her sitting a few feet away with her mother.

Interestingly, the filmmaker also does away with the novel's tearful reproaches with which the mother admonishes – character assassinates, even- Nafīsah. The mother of the novel is distraught by what she perceives to be her daughter's lack of empathy and appreciation of the toil and work involved in keeping up the family home; she wishes for Nafīsah to shoulder the housework and spend less time in her room. Implicitly, the mother seeks a daughter whose behaviour does not break with the norm of village life and thus guarantees the perpetuity of the community. The narrator of the novel joins in with the grievances of the mother and appeals to the reader to imagine the feelings of a mother thus rejected by her daughter.[343] This agreement in opinion between the mother, the narrator and, implicitly, Raḥmah, on the personality and behaviour of Nafīsah

[343] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 83

reverberates in the novel's ending as Nafisah is made to face up to the consequences of her rebellious conduct in a bid by the narrative to question the urban and state discourse that seeks to modernize at all costs. The film, on the other hand, chooses to eliminate these internal parts of the character of the mother that would encroach upon the character of the daughter. The ending of the film follows in this decision, as Nafisah succeeds in leaving the village without causing bloodshed. Her escape from the hegemony of her father's honour, and from the pre-set route for her life, and for parts of the Algerian nation, signifies the film narrative's call for a departure of Algeria from aspects of her past that hold her back. This falls in line with the purging in the film narrative of the reflective building blocks of the novel and their substitution with a more monolithic point of view that seeks to create a single trajectory for the characters and the narrative.

This is evident in the gulf in the respective dramatic arcs followed by the character of Nafisah in the novel and her counterpart of the film; whereas in the former she starts from the point of questioning the way of life of the village and the ideology that underlies it, reaching the zenith of revolt by leaving the parental home and causing a crisis in the family and community at large, and ending with querying her own motivation and the motivation of her parents, the film moves the peak of character trajectory from the escape from her parents' home to the escape from the whole village, thus removing the space or occasion for self-reflection and introspection for the young woman and inviting the audience to empathize with this representative of a young Algeria. In this the filmmaker departs from the novel's portrayal of the young woman as representative to some extent of Western values. The narrator of the novel clearly has more sympathy with the mother, and Raḥmah, than this new generation of young women who do not seem to have the horizon for appreciating the culture and heritage of the country.

The brush strokes with which Nafisah is drawn in the film are equally coarse and wide. She is moulded with an overt rhetorical agenda to the extent that the

reader and viewer are left negotiating the 'realist' and symbolic, and often, as Debbie Cox points out, finding the 'realist' withdrawing into the shadow of the symbolic. Thus, the characterisation of the female protagonist in the film adaptation follows a similar pattern to Debbie Cox's description of the novel's:

> Nafīsah is presented as being ignorant of the treatment of women in Algerian society in spite of studying in Algeria and her sister's experience before her. She is presented as a stranger to her parents because of her absence in Algiers, and yet expected to relate to her mother as a friend and confidante.[344]

Although Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ replicates these incongruities in forming the character of Nafīsah, he does so without following the novel's implicit emphasis on the partly Western inspired aspirations of the young girl. As part of his strategy of creating more empathy with the character, he reduces the prominence of the partly Western or European values influenced wish for change in the character and infuses to some extent her desire for change with Mālik's discontent with certain 'backward' aspects of the customs and traditions of the countryside. The Nafīsah of the film is far closer to the way of thinking of the former mujahid than her counterpart of the novel. Nafīsah, therefore, does not read mainly French language books as in the novel,[345] but in her debut appearance in the film narrative is framed in a medium close-up shot reading an obviously Arabic language book. The implication being that the rebellion against certain aspects of the village life, standing her for aspects of Algeria, does not emanate from a desire to mimic the Western – French- way of life, but rather from a renaissance of Arabic Muslim oriented ideology that seeks to blend elements of the local tradition with an understanding of modernity inherent in Pan-Arabism.

As a consequence of Nafīsah's choice of books and the language in which she reads in the film, the filmmaker has the option of doing away with the scene in the novel in which the teacher, Ṭāhir, is depicted reading Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and al-Wisādah al-Khāliyah / The Vacant Pillow, a novel by 'Iḥsān 'Abd al-Quddūs.

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[344] Cox, p. 152

[345] The mother is full of foreboding about the French education received by Nafīsah. *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 10

The novelist uses the difference in the language and cultural origin of the books being respectively read by the two characters to emphasize the gap in outlook and vision between the characters in particular and the different strands of thought in Algerian society in general. The existential nature of the questions being asked by the female character in the novel through her reading aloud certain passages of Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, are contrasted in the nature of the books being read by the schoolteacher. These show a concern with Arab literary history in general and with the teacher's own loneliness and isolation within this far-flung corner of the country. In other words, whereas her concerns revolve around the issue of identity and anxiety over her future, the teacher's identity is a settled issue and his concerns are more personal and share in the general difficulties of the post-independence generation in, among other worries, settling down and starting a family.[346] Nafīsah's thoughts of marriage, in both texts, fall into her desire for change: her future husband must be one of her own choosing and must be at one with her way of thinking.

Conveniently for the filmmaker, the novelist does not allow Ibn al-Qāḍī's plan of marrying off his daughter to Mālik to come off the ground, thus setting the scene for her successful revolt against her father, the representative of a social system that oppresses women and denies them the right for progress. He is also the representative of the classic antagonist of Algerian cinema, the collaborator and the small minded landlord. For although the film does not delve into the history that covers Ibn al- Qāḍī's role in informing on the FLN operation (unbeknown to Ibn al-Qāḍī that it had been led by Mālik) which had destroyed a bridge and unintentionally caused the death of Nafīsah's older sister and Mālik's fiancée, Zulaykhāh, the filmmaker transposes key scenes from the text to the screen to underscore the aloof and self-serving interest of Ibn al-Qāḍī's character and his true intentions behind his wish to marry his daughter to the former mujāhid, Mālik. His fear that agrarian reforms would lead to the loss of

[346] While admitting to himself that he is in love with this young woman whom he has not met or seen, the schoolteacher reprimands himself for thinking of marriage when he does not have a proper home or the income to support a family. *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 71

his lands are portrayed in a scene taken directly from the novel.[347] Through his portrayal of the two characters and the use of wide shots and close-ups, the filmmaker emphasises the subtext of the same scene in the novel which emphasised the position of the land as a symbol the whole of Algeria and that what is at stake is the relationship of its different social and economic classes towards her and towards each other.

Part of this spectrum that forms the Algerian nation is the character of the shaykh of the novel who survives the adaptation. This is a holy man-come-exorcist-come-ghost-medium. He is brought in by the girl's parents to treat her from what they assume to be the encroaching of evil spirits that have produced in her this rebellious nature and led to the deterioration of her physical health. The so-called shaykh stands at the juncture in which the novelist meets the filmmaker; the character is drawn with equally disparaging and derogatory tones by both authors. While following the novel's focus on aspects of the relationship between the shaykh, the parents and the girl that have echoes of Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī's Qindīlu 'Ummu Hāshim - the hegemony of age-old non-scientific superstitious remedies in the day-to-day life of the community, the filmmaker has the advantage of presenting the shaykh to the spectator in a way that the novelist could not achieve without spending time on descriptive narration. The decision of the novelist to withhold a great deal of the description could be argued to fall within the narrative strategy of addressing an urban readership. The character is allowed to fall into the template of expectations of the city dweller of the appearance and demeanour of the village doctor. The filmmaker, on the hand, is obliged to provide the physical attributes to the character. These include an appearance that blends the Western style jacket and trousers with a colourful turban that works in conjunction with his somewhat camp manner of speaking and behaving to discredit him in relation to the educated young woman. The character's dress sense seems to signify a lack of integrity; his attempt to combine the traditional with the Western modern while preserving with a community-based pre-industrial profession provides an

[347] *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81

analogy of certain aspects of contemporary Algeria: keeping aspects of the past that negate the nation's attempts to modernise.

The presence of the shaykh in the novel and his survival in the adaptation is echoed by the other shaykh of the text, the religious figure who suppresses any further discussion about socialism by commencing a group reading of the Qur'ān. These two representatives of the non-secular class that exerts an influence with which the reader and viewer are invited to feel total discomfort help emphasise the basis from which stems the criticism of both texts towards the power and influence exercised by the traditional authorities of religion and quasi-religious groups in society. The texts do agree in not having, overall, an issue with the heritage and history of the nation, difficult and unfathomable certain parts of it though may be for the urban reader and viewer. They do, however, disagree in the extent to which they rhapsodise about modernisation and change as blindly espoused to by Nafīsah in the novel, and Rābiḥ and Nafīsah in the film. The film takes this point further by replacing the novel's questioning of the power behind the espoused change, the state and its discourse, with a more unequivocal support.

Mise-en-scène

One of the features of the Ibn Haddūjah text is the use of description of the setting of the scene to add texture and emotion to the characters involved. For example, there is particular attention to the colour and shape of the engraved pattern over the bridal wooden suitcase/chest and an implicit contrast is drawn between the sharp and visible colours of the box that Raḥmah's father bought her the day of her marriage and its present dark and eroded engravings:

> The box was bought for her by her father the day of her wedding [...] At the time, the box was green in colour and beautiful with drawings of flowers and golden fish and geometric patterns... She was then a youthful girl carrying her young age in her full bosom, her smiling lips and her dream and hope filled eyes, and in her clear and delicious voice... How distant is that girl from this old broken woman, and how far is that green box from this black splintered one.[348]

[348] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130

Fertility, old age, the passage of time and memories are reflected through this inanimate object that helps put into perspective the trials and tribulations of the main characters of the text. The mother of the young girl, relatively young in comparison with Raḥmah, also has her own bridal box that has not yet lost its green colour or the clarity of the patterns and shapes that adorn it.[349] These instances can be taken along with the aforementioned description of the coffee cups and pots in the possession of the coffee shop owner and of Raḥmah to act as mirrors reflecting character history and life. The same could be said of the first appearance of Nafīsah in the novel where she is depicted counting the slabs of wood in her ceiling. This follows a detailed description by the narrator of the size of the room, the ancient bed and the even older closet. A similarly detailed description is given of the living room of the Ibn al-Qāḍī household, with a view of grounding the characters in their locale, but also of explaining to the urban readership the village way of life: 'there are no distinguishing features in this room, for it is like thousands of rooms in village households designed for the gathering of family members.'[350]

The filmmaker takes to heart this device of adding an extra pointer to the substance of the character by using *mise-en-scène* to flesh out the characters and signify certain messages within scenes without the overuse of expository dialogue. This is evident in his transposition of the scene in which Nafīsah counts the wooden slabs, and of his inclusion in the composition of the frame items that add poignancy to the simple and everyday words being exchanged in the diegesis. For example, when Mālik meets Raḥmah at Ibn al-Qāḍī's home, she is drawn in a medium close-up shot with a stack of old suitcases as an indication of her age and experience. The suitcases in conjunction with the age of Raḥmah help add an extra layer to the usual polite exchange between the man representing the revolution and the old woman representing the collective memory and histories of the nation.

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[349] *Ibid.*, p. 15
[350] *Ibid.*

The act of giving an inanimate object and its acceptance as a gift that takes place when Raḥmah gives Nafīsah a pot of her own making is used by the director to point to the links of history, tradition and custom that connect these women of different education and, to some extent, social background. The point is underlined in both novel and film, as the young girl thanks Raḥmah and says, 'I will take it with me back to Algiers.'[351]

The same distance between the two halves of the nation is stressed visually in the film narrative through privileging Nafīsah with being the only character seen reading a book. Her points of reference are in a sense more grounded in science and contemporary Arab culture, unlike the villagers who draw on age-old traditions and oral narratives. She is framed in a medium close-up shot reading a book, thinking, writing a letter to her aunty in the capital, totally out of kilter with her mother shown washing dishes, preparing food and serving her husband. The image of Nafīsah reading a book is emphasized further in the film in view of the aforementioned decision of the filmmaker to do away with the contrast implied in the novel between Nafīsah's Western sources of literature and Ṭāhir's solely Arabic oriented learning.

Furthermore, the use of the wide shot in acquainting the audience with the inner courtyard of Rābiḥ's home, the hill outside Nafīsah's bedroom window, the front of the coffee shop and other locations in the village help localize the respective scenes within the diegetic space. They also form the Spartan and harsh backdrop to the equally harsh and rigid nature of the male villagers. The filmmaker makes the inhospitable nature of the landscape a precursor to the terseness of exchange between Ibn al-Qāḍī and his son. Similarly, the barren and abject poverty of the Rābiḥ household is reflected in the limited communication between the son and his mute mother. There seems to be no instance of a sociable exchange in a home teetering on the border of the bread-line. In this, Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ is reflecting the attention Ibn Haddūjah pays to describing the climate, the land, the mountains and the leitmotif of the southern

[351] *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, p. 15.

wind, or al-Qiblī as the locals refer to it, to create a certain dark harsh ambience. Indeed, the novel uses a descriptive language that gives a wonderfully panoramic view of the village:

> ...the village would appear to a foreign visitor like a sad scene that would cause pain in soul and sight. It resembles villages captured by the lenses of photographers after suffering the traumas of war or natural disasters. And if the village were seen from a helicopter it would appear like a valley full of cavities, devoid of water and filled with dust and heat.[352]

While the film does not resort to an airborne point of view of the village, it certainly uses the different shots of the streets, valleys and woods that surround the village to allow the audience to construct a similarly panoramic view of the landscape and its residents.

Finally, the filmmaker uses the *mise-en-scène* to add further depth to Ibn al-Qāḍī's shame and anger at Nafīsah's escape: he is filmed in a wide shot as he is greeted by people in the village square before entering the coffee shop. His position and status in the community is threatened by the unruly behaviour of the teenage daughter. This status is evident in the feast given out by Ibn al-Qāḍī to the villagers and visitors from the city on the day of opening the memorial for martyrs of the revolution. The feast confirms his wealth and centrality in village life. Moreover, the feast emphasizes the public and private spaces and their respective links to gender: while the men are filmed eating in the open space of the courtyard, the women are confined in the inner rooms of the household preparing food and chatting.

Conclusion

Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ's adaptation of the Ibn Haddūjah text is an excellent demonstration of the strategies deployed by filmmakers to evolve an ideologically charged text and rhetorically constructed narrative into a more character focused film narrative that seeks to show more than tell and use the visual medium to its optimum in expressing the ideas and views which the

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[352] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73

narrator of the novel had either imparted in a character focalized expository commentary or via directly addressing the reader.

Rather than reducing from the rhetorical and reflexive nature of the text, the film's reliance on the visual language produces an equally symbol-rich text that works within the filmmaker's strategy of stressing the positive in the state discourse sponsored campaign for modernization of the country. As a consequence of the synchronicity of the position of Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ with that of the state on such fundamental issues as the agrarian reform, Arabisation, and industrialisation, the film text is far more didactic in its assessment of the ills of Algeria and the remedies and solutions it espouses. This is demonstrated in the divergent ending of the two texts, where Nafīsah's plan to escape the hegemony of the backward aspects of the rural life is given the nod of approval and so she is allowed to write for herself and for Rābiḥ a new and happy future. The pause for thought for which calls Ibn Haddūjah at the end of the narrative is replaced by the glorification of progress, industrialization and freedom of thought as represented by the coach carrying Nafīsah and Rābiḥ pulling away from Ibn al-Qāḍī's galloping horse. The fact that the filmmaker chooses to position the camera inside the bus capturing Ibn al-Qāḍī in the frame of the windows underscores the position he takes on the situation, he is clearly on the side of the two characters travelling on the bus. The final frame of the film depicting Nafīsah and Rābiḥ smiling to each other is a joyous moment that is stretched by freezing the frame on screen allowing the audience to construct a happy ending after the two characters reach their respective destinations, Rābiḥ to a nearby model village and Nafīsah to the capital.

The use of the freeze frame at the end of the film can also be argued to throw some doubt over the future that awaits these two young Algerians; the future of Algeria. The device seems to capture a euphoria and naiveté inherent in any new ideology or a system brought in through revolution. The filmmaker is arguably loading the ending here with his own awareness of the shortcomings of the

urban post-independence world to which the young heroine is returning. The fact that the filmmaker succeeds in adding a point of doubt and meditation at odds with the state's discourse stands as testament to the filmmaker's independence and also to the film medium's potential for subverting the very message that it appears to propagate.

The fact that Nafisah succeeds in taking with her another oppressed and downtrodden character to a state sponsored model village to help him gain literacy and the skills necessary to take part in the country's developing economy serves to underline the symbolism that the filmmaker attaches to the character of Nafisah and to stress his position of seeing her in an almost wholly positive light in comparison with the novel's questioning of certain aspects of her character and philosophy in life.

Despite the presence in the film adaptation of the flashback that provides the background to the friendship and respect with which Mālik treats Raḥmah, the filmmaker avoids the web of intrigue that had led to the death of Nafisah's older sister, Zulaykhāh, who happened to be Mālik's fiancée. Through the editing out of this episode, and other analepses in the narrative of the novel, the filmmaker makes the narrative more focussed on the character of Nafisah, and to some extent on Rābiḥ and Raḥmah. The absence of the Zulaykhāh factor in the film draws the character of Mālik more in the guise of a brooding former revolutionary too busy contemplating the ills of the nation to think of his own happiness.

This rationale can also explain the almost total absence in the adaptation of the intertextuality of the novel. For example, there is no mention of the story of the man who sacrificed his life in order to save the village and prompt the heavens to pour with rain on the draught suffering land.[353] The filmmaker abides by his method of presenting rather than relying too often on dialogue for exposition.

[353] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124

Moreover, as the scene has no bearing on the main protagonists, the filmmaker avoids it altogether.

Finally, the contrasts, differences and contradictions between the urban and rural that are brought to a head by the presence of Nafisah in the village provide an interesting interaction between the two texts. For where the novel had sought to draw the reader to the symbolic position of the village and Nafisah as representative of the Algerian nation as a whole, as Ḥafiẓ states, echoing Haykal's use of land and woman as representatives of Egypt,[354] as in *Zaynab*, the filmmaker is interested in linking this Algeria to the other Algeria of the capital, of the large metropolis and also of the development sought by the state discourse. Ibn Haddūjah used the text to point to the misunderstanding between the two centres of population, the filmmaker points to the positive in the distant life of the city. The difference in approach is most eloquently summarized in Raḥmah's monologue, in the novel, explaining to Nafisah the limitations of village life as opposed to living in the city:

> Each area has its own standards. Is our village equal to the city of Algiers in everything? In the city is the light, the houses, the cars and the parks... and here, my daughter, what you find were you to leave your house? Here there is nothing: simple dwellings, mountains, day and night. Men here are like monsters that devour with their eyes if they saw you; for they do not see a girl like you in their own homes nor in their surroundings.[355]

The scene depicted in the film does not include the conciliatory tone of this speech, and thus is constructed like two overlapping dialogues between a young educated girl and an old woman incapable of relating to the depth of isolation and solitude in which lives Nafisah. As the text of the novel begins and ends with this young woman's concerns and aspirations, so too the film ends with an implied happy ending for her and for Algeria. The difficulties and possible consequences of her escape are suppressed in this symbolic ending, reflecting the significance attached in the novel and film to Nafisah, despite the changed final direction of the narrative in the latter.

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[354] See Ṣabrī Ḥāfiẓ, Op. Cit., p.362
[355] Op. Cit., p. 36

Conclusion

In journeying with the five filmmakers as they negotiate a path for the studied literary works to the screen, it has been possible to put the more prominent and time-honored positions and critiques of film adaptations to the test. The Arabic aspect of the thesis and the works studied has added a further dimension to the study of such issues as fidelity to the adapted text, the ability of film to convey thoughts and inner voices of characters and other tools of narration deployed in the novel.

As a starting point, the thesis endeavoured to bring together a set of tools and parameters to help guide the process of analyzing film adaptations in general and the five included Arabic texts in particular. The analyses and theoretical background provided by luminaries in this strand in the study of film and literature, such as George Bluestone, Geoffrey Wagner, Andrew Dudley, and Robert Stam, were used to provide an induction to the reader, and to this author, of the research, debates and positions that have provided the backbone for studies in the field.

Without revisiting in detail the full scope of debate covered in the introduction, certain elements stand-out and bear another look in the light of the five case studies that have followed the introduction. At the level of the diegesis and the fictional world of the novel, the five case studies have aptly demonstrated the ability of the filmmaker to mediate to the film's audience the story narrated in the novel with varying degrees of fidelity to the tools and strategies adopted by the authors of the respective novels.

At the start of the process, the filmmaker appears to be more interested in the story, the fabula, as opposed to how it is related and conveyed by the novelist - the sjuzhet. In an echo of the strategy that Anthony Minghalla followed in

adapting novels to the screen, the five filmmakers seem to have decided on the elements in the story that stand-out for them, depending on their sense of storytelling, views on dramatic arc, and the identity of characters in the novel that they feel would be most supportive to the relating of the story to the audience through the film medium.

This is most salient in the structure with which the film narratives are created; Ṣalaḥ 'Abū Sayf opts for a linear narrative that presents events in the chronology in which they occur, as opposed to Maḥfūẓ's adoption of flashbacks in his imparting of the story. For example, in *al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah* the reader shares the shock of Maḥjūb in finding that it is 'Iḥsān to whom he is to be married. The events that led to 'Iḥsān becoming the mistress of the Bey and the bride of Maḥjūb are related by the narrator retrospectively. In the film adaptation we live those events antecedent to the moment of the wedding with both characters respectively - Maḥjūb attempting to survive on his very meagre resources, and 'Iḥsān as she reluctantly succumbs to the unrelenting pressures of poverty, her parents' wish for her to be involved with the wealthy Bey, and the Bey's charms and infinite supply of gifts and financial security. The film, however, does not lose the element of surprise for the audience at the moment in which Maḥjūb meets his future wife.

Similarly, in *al-'Arḍ* the point at which Yūsuf Shāhīn chooses to end the film, is one that alters the dramatic arc of the narrative, ending as it does in the film at the climax of the struggle of the village against the distant authority of the state. The novel had an ending that was far less dramatic and more agnostic as to the side which the implied reader is encouraged to support - the fallāḥīn or the government's new road and the potential benefits it would generate for the village.

In *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* the filmmaker's focus on the story, as opposed to the tools Ḥannā Mīnah deploys in its telling, is evident in the film's disposal of the enframing narrative that provides an elevator-like tool to move between the

temporal layers of the narrative - the world of the hero as a child and his present as an adult reminiscing his childhood experiences. The result is a film narrative that follows a far steeper dramatic trajectory than the novel's where the voice of the narrator and the reader's awareness of the enunciated layers of the narrative add a meditative and introspective element - aspects that are arguably absent in the film.

The most dramatic manipulation of structure in the texts studied above is Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl's adaptation of *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār*. Not only does Jamīl choose to discard large elements of the story imparted in the novel, doing away with characters and sub-plots, but he imposes a new non-linear narration style. The success or failure of Jamīl in creating an artistically accomplished film based on the novel is open to debate; he does, however, show some real flair for style and structure.

Related to the choices made in terms of narration and structure is also the choice of characters that survive the adaptation, those who are left behind on the page, and those who are created and added in the film narrative. All the films studied have shown a tendency to focus the narration on fewer characters, in order to allow more space in the narrative for those characters who survive the journey from page to screen. This is evident in the almost total absence of Ma'mūn Raḍwān in *al-Qāhirah 30*, and the complete expunging of the character of Taḥiyyah from the film.

In *al-'Arḍ* the number of eligible male characters for the hand of Waṣīfah are reduced considerably; so that the handsome dandified Bey is not allowed in the film to have any encounters with Waṣīfah, and the strong and feared character of 'Alwānī of the novel is turned into a sweet and peaceful youngman who in no way poses a threat to 'Abd al-Hādī's position as the most suitable potential husband for Waṣīfah.

Similarly, in *Rīḥ al-Junūb* the character of the Arabic language teacher is not allowed the space in Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ's film for a more rounded portrayal as in the novel. The extent and number of scenes in which the character appears are reduced in order to focus more on the characters more directly connected with the leading female character. Even the brooding former anti-French occupation fighter is deprived of his back-story and of his relationship with the family of Nafīsah. The result is more attention directed on the story of the young woman who has returned to her village from the city.

At some level, the relationship between the urban and rural is part of the space and the choice of mise-en-scène that the filmmakers make in relating the story. For example, in *al-Qāhirah 30* 'Iḥsān's poverty and vulnerability are thrown into relief through the abject poverty of the home she shares with her parents and siblings. The claustrophobia of village life for Nafīsah in *Rīḥ al-Junūb* is underlined in the choice of location for her home opposite an imposing mountain that seems to physically block the house from contact with the rest of the village.

The use of space as a tool in storytelling is evident in the decision of Nabīl al-Māliḥ in *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* to place the home of the family of the hero as a child in close proximity to the home of the woman who is attacked and raped by bandits. By locating the two homes in the same street, the director allows for a more direct interaction between the family and the event, allowing for the character of the father to come to the fore, and also doing away with the need of creating a scene, as in the novel, where news of the incident is related to the mother of the hero.

The space is also complimented by the manner in which it is presented on screen - the manner in which it is dressed, but also the way it is lit. For example, the pools of light and darkness that envelope the office of the police chief in *al-'Aswār* add more layers to the scene and help create a visual rendition - expressionistic - of the malevolence of the wealthy merchant and his role in

stoking the anger of the authorities against the character of the barber and that of the high school teacher.

This is also complimented by music, for the non-diegetic choir-delivered song that accompanies the credits at the start of *al-'Arḍ* leaves the audience in no doubt as to the importance of this - Egyptian - land in the country's struggle against its own demons and those of the outsider. Similarly, the military marches music that accompanies that the montage introducing the prison walls and iron bars at the start of *al-'Aswār* completely affects the message that the audience is expected to derive from the images. The viewer in retrospect realizes that the music at the start of the film seemed to assign to prison the position of a step and a staging post for nationalists in the path for liberating the country from the monarchist regime.

This last point brings us to the issues and factors that were explored under the "extrinsic" heading in the introduction. For the political climate surrounding the making of these five film adaptations has been shown to have had a major influence. As outlined earlier, the political climate became more influential at some level in the making of these films due to the fact that the films were funded by the film arm of the respective states. In other words, in nations where democratic institutions have varying degrees of limited development, the state's decision to fund a film production undoubtedly has links to the said state's political agenda.

Although the above point has been aptly demonstrated through the events, characters, lines of dialogue, historical points depicted and the structure of the narrative created by the filmmaker in each of the five film adaptations, it is important to note the subversive aspect of these films made by filmmakers who do not necessarily agree and support the political agenda of the state from which they received funding for the making of their films. For example, the searing questions that Shāhīn raises over the reasons for defeat in *al-'Arḍ* arguably point an accusatory finger at the government of the day. The non-

linear structure of *al-'Aswār*, for example, could be argued to highlight the constructed nature of this highly rhetorical film text and thereby draw the attention of the audience away from the message the state expects the film to deliver.

Indeed, they work in countries with very different levels of freedom of expression, and their relationship to the state's film arm ranges from being fully employed by them and receiving a monthly salary, as was the case with Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ when making *Rīḥ al-Junūb*, to the far more "freelance" understanding that brings Yūsuf Shāhīn together with the Egyptian states film arm. In fact, in the case of Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf, he was the head of one of the state's production companies at the moment that he began making *al-Qāhirah 30*.

In addition to political considerations, the filmmakers have also shown a keen awareness of the development and progression of social and economic debates in their respective societies at the time of making the films. For example, the decision in bestowing a linear narration to the story of 'Iḥsān in *al-Qāhirah 30* arguably is part of the filmmaker's support for a more independent and strong female character that carries the audience with her as she reluctantly succumbs to the relentless pressures of poverty and her circumstances. By being given an equally linear chronology in the story, similar to that of Maḥjūb, 'Iḥsān is granted more empathy by the filmmaker. In the novel, unlike Maḥjūb, 'Iḥsān's harsh circumstances and difficulties in the period immediately before the wedding to Maḥjūb are related in flashback by the narrator. The result is that in the novel the reader is already aware of 'Iḥsān's surrender to the Bey and her acceptance of the position of mistress – the reader is interested in the how she will give in. In the film, on the other hand, there is the how and if element – would she give in to the Bey? The decision of the filmmaker, arguably, goes in tandem with the overall portrayal of 'Iḥsān as a young woman who grows into maturity and an awareness of the corrupt nature of the social, political and economic regime with which she has gone to bed. The difference between the

two 'Iḥsāns, as has been outlined, is aptly demonstrated in the almost identical scenes in the novel and film where Maḥjūb asks 'Iḥsān whether she is happy. In the film she responds with a melancholic tone that betrays loss of hope and despair. In the novel she had replied, 'yes', to the same question with what the narrator described as a 'smiling face'.[356]

The support the filmmakers have shown for stronger and independent female characters can also be seen in the change that occurs to the depiction of women from page to screen in *al-'Aswār*, *al-'Arḍ* and *Baqāyā Ṣuwar*. The post-colonialist, and – on paper - progressive nature of the respective charters of the four film organisations behind the five films studied can be seen to have had an influence. The ideals and political viewpoints of the respective filmmakers is arguably at play here too. The position of the five filmmakers, and their individual status can be seen to have influenced the degree to which their personal political points of view found their way into films funded by the state.

As to the ubiquitous questions over the ability of film to convey the richness and texture of the written narrative, the thesis has highlighted the array of tools and techniques available to the filmmaker to achieve a work of art autonomous to varying degrees of the adapted text, and which is capable of conveying to the film's audience the diegesis present in the novel. Where film is thought to be have limitations when compared to the novel, such as the ease with which a novelist can describe the inner thoughts of a character, it has been demonstrated that filmmakers have developed, and are developing, narrational tools that help overcome such perceived limitations. The use of the inner voice, for example, has been shown to be most elegantly utilized in *al-Qāhirah 30*, with the character of Maḥjūb being given the privileged position of the ability to share his inner-most thoughts with the audience without risking antagonizing his fellow characters. His thoughts are heard on the soundtrack as a voiceover, which only the audience can hear.

[356] *Al-Qāhirah al-Jadīdah*, p. 147

Obviously, there are elements in the narrating repertoire of a novelist, such as the omniscient narrator, that filmmakers have been shown to avoid or use as a stylistic choice. Making a paradigmatic choice among narrating styles for a filmmaker has been shown to be straddled with further issues in the case of films produced by the state in the Arab world. In a film laden with politically charged dialogue and story-line, such as *al-'Aswār*, it may be that having a narrator similar to the novel's would make the film too obvious a propaganda piece - almost like a newsreel.

In summary, the above case studies have demonstrated the innumerable factors involved in adapting a novel to the screen. These factors have been shown to be shaped by narrating styles and strategy, as well as by issues and events surrounding the making of the film. The film adaptations have been shown to have acquired varying degrees of independence from the written narrative on which they are based. Stylistic and filmic choices, as well as the historical moment at which the film was made, have been shown to have had a key role in shaping the film adaptations.

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Writer: Najīb Maḥfūẓ
Translation: *Cairo Modern: An Arabic Novel*
Film: *Al-Qāhirah '30 / Cairo '30* (Egypt, 1966)
Director: Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf (b. 1915)
Producer: Jamāl al-Laythī
Screenplay: Ṣalāḥ 'Abū Sayf, Wafiyyah Khayrī and 'Alī al-Zarqānī
Dialogue: Luṭfī al-Khūlī
Production: Sharikat al-Qāhirah Li al-Cinama / Cairo Film Company

Novel: *al-'Arḍ* / The Earth (1954) — Egypt
Writer: 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī
Film: *Al-'Arḍ* / The Earth (1969)
Director: Yūsuf Shāhīn (b. 1926)
Screenplay: Ḥasan Fu'ād
Production: al-Mu'assasah al-Miṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Sīnamā / Egyptian General Organisation for Cinema

Novel: *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* (1975) — Syria
Writer: Ḥannā Mịnāh
Translation: *Fragments of Memory*

Film: *Baqāyā Ṣuwar* / Fragments of Memory (Syria, 1979)
Director: Nabīl al-Māliḥ (b. 1939)
Screenplay: Nabīl al-Māliḥ, Samīr Zikrā,
Production: al-Mu'assasah al-'Āmmah li al-Sīnamā / General Organisation for Cinema

Novel: *al-Qamar wa al-'Aswār* Iraq
Writer: 'Abd al-Raḥmān Majīd al-Rubay'ī
Translation: None. "The Moon and the Walls"
Al-'Aswār / The Walls (1976)

Film: *al-'Aswār* / The Walls (1979)
Director: Muḥammad Shukrī Jamīl (b. 1937)
Screenplay: Ṣabrī Mūsā
Dialogue: Muwaffaq Khuḍur
Production: Mu'assasat al-Sīnamā wa al-Masraḥ / General Organisation for Theatre and Cinema

Novel: *Rīḥ al-Junūb* (1970) Algeria
Writer: 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Haddūjah
Translation: French only: Abdelhamid Benhadouga, *Vent du sud* (Algiers: SNED, 1972)
Film: *Rīḥ al-Junūb* / *Wind from the South* / *Vent du sud* (1975)
Director: Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ (b. 1932)
Screenplay: Muḥammad Salīm Riyāḍ
Production: ONCIC (National Office for Film and Commerce and Industry)

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Barsūm Yabḥath 'An Waẓīfah / Barsūm Searches for Work (Dir. Muḥammad Bayyūmī, Egypt, 1923)

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