The History of Egyptian Cinema

Hilary Term 2008
St. Antony's College
Hilda Bess Building, The New Room
2-4pm, weeks 1 and 3-7

Walter Armbrust
(http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/Armbrust.html)

Film Documents Website: http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/EgyptCinema.html

Lecture 1 (Week 1, January 16th): The Early Years and Discourses of Nationalism

Lecture 2 (Week 3, January 30th): Patriarchy and Love

Lecture 3 (Week 4, February 6th): Musicals, Dance Films, and Cultural Canons

Lecture 4 (Week 5, February 13th): The Public Sector, Ideology and Economics

Lecture 5 (Week 6, February 20th): Cracks in the Façade: Scepticism Toward the Project of Modernity

Lecture 6 (Week 7, February 27th): Location in Contemporary Egyptian Cinema

No lecture in weeks 2 and 8
Lecture 1: The Early Years (*Determination* and *The White Rose*)

I. National cinema and colonialism

II. Egyptian cinema and "Arab Cinema"

III. Media in Egypt

IV. Studio Misr and the early phase of Egyptian cinema

V. *Determination* (al-Azima), directed by Kamal Salim, 1939
   A. The archetype of national identity in Egyptian cinema
   B. The "popular quarters," the effendis, and the aristocracy

VI. *The White Rose* (al-Warda al-Bayda‘), directed by Muhammad Karim, 1933
   A. Stars
   B. "Art appreciation" and the emergence of high/low distinctions

VII. Additional films and stars from the early years
   A. Umm Kulthum; *Anthem of Hope* (Nashid al-Amal), directed by Ahmad Badr Khan, 1937
   B. Nagib al-Rihani; *Salama is Fine* (Salama fi Khayr), directed by Niyazi Mustafa, 1937
   C. Yusuf Wahbi and Layla Murad; *Layla Daughter of the Countryside* (Layla Bint al-Rif), directed by Togo Mizrahi, 1941
   D. *Black Market* (al-Suq al-Suda‘), directed by Kamil al-Tilmisani, 1946

VIII. End of the era: the "cinema of war profiteers"
Lecture 2: Patriarchy and Love (*Long Live Love*)

I. Patriarchy

A. Constructs of family
   1. "Honor and shame" and rhetorics of modesty
   2. Parallel cousin marriage
   3. Arranged and companionate marriages

B. Patriarchy as a construct of authority
   1. "Neopatriarchy" (Hisham Sharabi)
   2. "Master and disciple" (Abdellah Hammoudi)

C. Patriarchy as a construct of love
   1. Connectivity (Suad Joseph)
   2. Coercion vs. love

II. *Long Live Love* (Yahya al-Hubb), directed by Muhammad Karim, 1938

A. The dandy and the man of honour

B. Love refracted through the patriarch

C. The film (clips)

D. Mimicry

E. The teleology of companionate marriage

III. Additional films depicting discourses on patriarchy

A. *Girls of Today* (Banat al-Yaum), directed by Henri Barakat, 1957

B. *My Father is Up the Tree* (Abi foq al-Shagara), directed by Husayn Kamal, 1969

C. *A File in Vice* (Milaff fi al-Adab), directed by Atif al-Tayyib, 1986

D. *First Time in Love* (Awwil Marra Tihibb), directed by Alaa` Karim, 2005
Lecture 3: Musicals, Dance Films, and Cultural Canons

I. The emergence of "high/low" canons

   A. Modernity as a plural phenomenon
      1. The West and "creative destruction"
      2. Egypt and the value of continuity
      3. Modernity in colonial societies

   B. Rationalization and the construction of "taste"

II. Backstage musicals and fear of mimicry

III. Music: the battle of the bands (Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab and Umm Kulthum)

   A. The phonograph, the film, and the radio (aka the gatekeeper and the carnival barker)

   B. From takht to orchestra; The White Rose, Anthem of Hope, The Flirtation of Girls (Ghazal al-Banat, directed by Anwar Wagdi, 1949); the television series Umm Kulthum (1999)

IV. Dance: R-E-S-P-E-C-T

   A. "They all have to have a dancer."

   B. The "Golden Age" (but not for critics): Samiya Gamal, Tahiyya Karioka, Na'imma 'Aki; The Beau's Hanky (Mandil al-Hiluw, directed by Abbas Kamil, 1949); Tamr Hinna (directed by Husayn Fauzi, 1957); I Love You (Bahibbak Inta, directed by Ahmad Badr Khan, 1949)

   C. "Proper dance" (but not for audiences); Love in Karnak (Gharam fi al-Karnak, directed by 'Ali Rida, 1967)

V. More musical and dance films

   A. Films starring Farid al-Atrash and Samia Gamal

   B. Films starring Abd al-Halim Hafiz

   C. Post "golden age" musical and dance films
Lecture 4: The Public Sector, Ideology and Economics

I. Postcolonial Egypt

A. Politics

B. Economics

C. Culture

II. The 1950s (private sector, Nasser-era)

A. Genres

B. Nationalism and state subsidies

III. The public-sector era, 1964-1970

A. Economics

B. Institutions

C. Agendas

D. End of the era

IV. Films

A. Literature adaptations; *Chitchat on the Nile* (Tharthara foq al-Nil, directed by Husayn Kamal, 1971, based on Mahfouz); *The Sin* (Al-Haram, directed by Henri Barakat, 1965, based on Yusuf Idris); *Diary of a Country Magistrate* (Yaumiyat Na`ib fi al-Aryaf, directed by Taufiq Salih, 1969, based on Taufiq al-Hakim); *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* (Qindil Umm Hashim, directed by Kamal Atiyya, 1968, based on Yahya Haqqi); *The Earth* (Al-Ard, directed by Youssef Chahine, 1970, based on Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi)

B. History and nationalism; *The Victorious Salah al-Din* (Al-Nasir Salah al-Din, directed by Youssef Chahine, 1964); *Palace Walk* (directed by Hasan al-Imam, 1964); *Sayyid Darwish* (directed by Ahmad Badr Khan, 1966)

Lecture 5: Cracks in the Façade: Scepticism toward the Project of Modernity

I. Cracks in the modernist façade in the 1970s and 80s
   A. War and cold peace
   B. The (re)emergence of Islamism
   C. The *infitah* ("open door," aka neo-liberalism)
   D. Privatization and the cinema

II. The turning point
   A. *My Father is Up the Tree* (Abi foq al-Shagara, directed by Husayn Kamal, 1969)
   B. *Mind Zuzu* (Khali Balak min Zuzu, directed by Hasan al-Imam, 1972)
   C. The play *School of Troublemakers* (Madrasit al-Mushaghibin, directed by Galal al-Sharqawi, 1972 to ~1980)

III. The past and the present
   A. War; *The Bullet is Still in My Pocket* (Al-Rasasa La Tazal fi Gaybi, directed by Husam al-Din Mustafa, 1974); *The Bath House of Malatili* (Hamam al-Malatili, directed by Salah Abu-Sayf, 1973); *Fear* (Al-Khauf, directed by Sa'id Marzuq, 1972).
   B. The Nasser legacy; *We Are the People of the Bus* (Ihna Bitu' al-Atubis, directed by Husayn Kamal, 1979); *Al-Karnak* (directed by Ali Badr Khan, 1975); *The Guilty* (al-Mudhnibun, directed by Sa'id Marzuq, 1976).

III. *Infitah* films

IV. "New Realism"
   A. The "old realism"; *Determination; Black Market; Foreman Hasan* (al-Usta Hasan, directed by Salah Abu-Sayf, 1952); *A Beginning and an End* (Al-Biday wa al-Nihaya, directed by Salah Abu-Sayf, 1960)
   C. Mainstream commercial realism; films starring 'Adil Imam, *Ragab on a Hot Tin Roof* (Ragab foq Safih Sakhin, directed by Ahmad Fu'ad, 1979); *Sha'ban below Zero* (Sha'ban taht al-Sifr, directed by Henri Barakat, 1980); *Ramadan on the Volcano* (Ramadan foq al-Burkan, directed by Ahmad al-Sab'awi, 1985).
Lecture 6: Location in Contemporary Egyptian Cinema

I. The city in Egyptian audiovisual culture
   A. Cairo as the centrepiece of modern life
   B. The city as the centrepiece of modern life → modern life located "anyplace but here"

II. The brave new world
   A. Sleepless Nights (Sahar al-Layali, 2003); film clip
   B. Dreamland; suburbia; television advertisement

III. Before the brave new world
   A. Link to the familiar; Determination (al-Azima, 1939); film clip
   B. The vibrant city; Love in Karnak (Gharam fi al-Karnak, 1967); film clip
   C. Anti-city; The Guilty (al-Mudhnibun, 1976); film clip
   D. Mainstream dystopia; Sha'ban below Zero (Sha'ban taht al-Sifr, 1980); film clip

IV. The new (neo-liberal) aesthetic of location
   A. Life in Dreamland; "I Swear to God" (Yamin Allah by Asala, ~2004); the erasure of class; music video
   B. The most beautiful place in the world (but I'm embarrassed to show it to you); "How Beautiful is the Country" (Qamar al-Balad by Ahmad Barada, ~2004); the erasure of the urban jungle; music video
   C. Gender and religion; the bourgeoisification of Islam; the erasure of women
      1. "The Teacher" (al-Mu'allim, by Sami Yusuf, ~2005); music video
      2. Uncovering the Hidden (Kashf al-Mastur, 1994); film clip
      3. Fayza Ahmad hymn, 1994 vs. Fayza Ahmad hym, 2003 (televised before the call to prayer)
Readings:

**Lecture 1: The Early Years and Discourses of Nationalism**

*Readings:*


*Further Readings:*


Social Anthropology readings weeks 7 (Language and Standardized Identity) and 8 (National Identity): http://users.ox.ac.uk/\%7Esant1114/MPhilSocAnth.pdf

**Lecture 2: Patriarchy and Love**

*Readings:*


*Further Readings:*

Media and the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere.
Social Anthropology readings weeks 1 (Men, Women, and Family), 2 (Moral Rhetorics of Honor, Shame, and Modesty), and especially week 2 alternative (What's Love Got to Do with It? Case Studies in the Practice of Patriarchy):
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilSocAnth.pdf

Lecture 3: Musicals, Dance Films, and Cultural Canons
Readings:

Further Readings: Mass Media readings, Week 5 (Authenticity and the Formation of Canons: Umm Kulthum and Abd al-Wahhab) and Week 6 (The Problem of Dance):
http://users.ox.ac.uk/%7Esant1114/MPhilMassMedia.pdf

Lecture 4: The Public Sector, Ideology and Economics
Readings:


*Discourse* 1999. v. 21 (1) ("Middle Eastern Films Before Thy Gaze Returns to Thee"; special issue including translation of script of *al-Mumiya*")


*Al-Qahira* 1996. no. 159 (February). (special issue on Shadi Abd al-Salam, director of *al-Mumiya*; includes script)


Sharaf al-Din, Duriyya. 1992. *al-Siyasa wa al-Sinema fi Misr*, 1961-

**Lecture 5: Cracks in the Façade: Scepticism Toward the Project of Modernity**

*Readings:*  


**Lecture 6: Location in Contemporary Egyptian Cinema**

*Readings:*  


