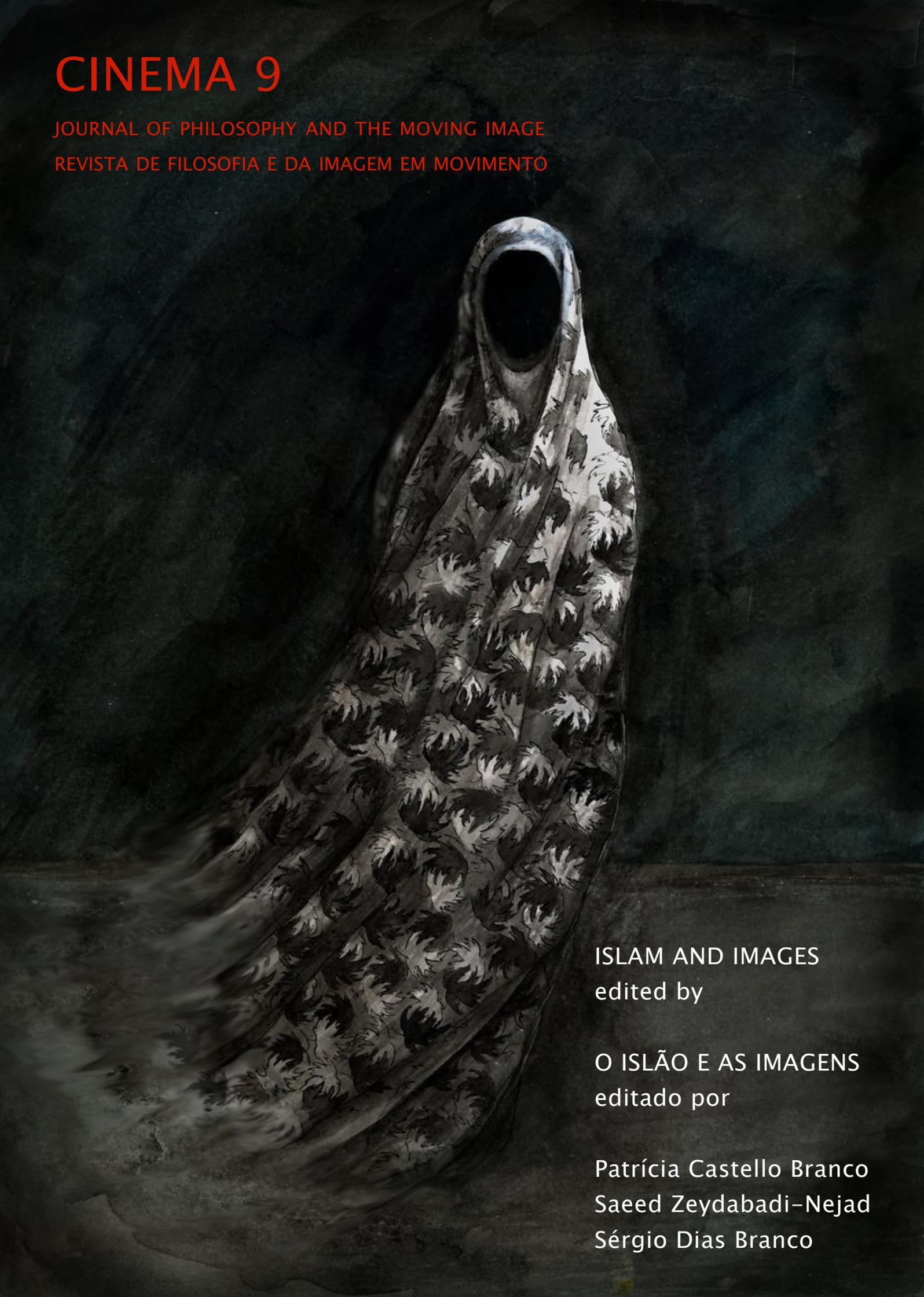


CINEMA 9

JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE MOVING IMAGE

REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA E DA IMAGEM EM MOVIMENTO

A woman wearing a patterned hijab with a dark, featureless face, standing against a dark, textured background. The hijab has a repeating floral or leaf-like pattern in shades of grey and white. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the fabric and the silhouette of the woman.

ISLAM AND IMAGES
edited by

O ISLÃO E AS IMAGENS
editado por

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PUBLICATION

IFILNOVA - Nova Institute of Philosophy
 Faculty of Social and Human Sciences
 Nova University of Lisbon
 Edifício ID, 4.º Piso
 Av. de Berna 26
 1069-061 Lisboa
 Portugal
www.ifilnova.pt

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www.cjpmi.ifl.pt

CINEMA: JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE MOVING IMAGE 9, "Islam and Images"

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Cover: Rhiannon Fraser's concept art for *Under the Shadow* (2016)

Publication date: Dec. 2017

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1647-8991

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 Emerging Sources Citation Index, Clarivate Analytics (ESCI) Web of Science™
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 The Philosopher's Index
 Sistema Regional de Informação em Linha para Revistas Científicas da América Latina, Caribe, Espanha e Portugal (Latindex): 23308

PUBLICAÇÃO

IFILNOVA - Instituto de Filosofia da Nova
 Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
 Universidade NOVA de Lisboa
 Edifício ID, 4.º Piso
 Av. de Berna 26
 1069-061 Lisboa
 Portugal
www.ifilnova.pt

SÍTIO ELECTRÓNICO

www.cjpmi.ifl.pt

CINEMA: REVISTA DE FILOSOFIA E DA IMAGEM EM MOVIMENTO 9, "Islão e Imagens"

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Capa: arte conceitual de Rhiannon Fraser para *Under the Shadow* (2016)

Data de publicação: Dez. 2017

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EDITORIAL:

(RE)THINKING ISLAMIC IMAGERY

Patrícia Silveirinha Castello Branco (IFILNOVA)

Saeed Zeydabadi-Nejad (SOAS University of London)

Sérgio Dias Branco (University of Coimbra/IFILNOVA/CEIS20)

This issue of *Cinema* is dedicated to the topic of Islam and images. In proposing this topic we were particularly interested in discussing the philosophical understandings of Islamic imagery production, their roots in the history of philosophy, the Islamic tradition of aniconism and anti-ocularcentrism, its influences on styles and movements in the history of art (namely abstract imagery), their development in contemporary societies dominated by new technologies of the moving image, the relationships between the classical and the contemporary, the manual and the digital, artefacts and technologies.

In releasing an issue on this theme we aimed at offering an open debate to the academic community and, mostly, we aimed at trying to understand what kind of aesthetic and political bias could be found in particular images originating from Muslim contexts and diasporas. At the same time, we were making an effort to explore how such images encompass forms of visibility, ways of doing and making, and ways of conceptualizing the world that can enrich our contemporary debate on aesthetics and politics. Can a better understanding of Muslim traditions of visual art, old and new, that rely on astonishing traditions of thought, making and experiencing, function as a fruitful contribution within our global contemporary art and politics? We certainly believed it did.

The selection of essays that compose this issue reflects our aims and are a direct response to our initial intentions, developing the topic in several directions.

The first essay, entitled "The Role of Images in al-Fārābī's Political Thought" by Sara Virgi, directly responds to some of our most important aims and intentions, addressing the concept of image in Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's philosophical thought. In her essay Virgi carefully and consistently considers how for al-Fārābī's images are taken as a decisive instrument for the legislator and religious leader to guide people towards "political happiness," or the "achievement of ultimate perfection," that is, "the perfection of the community as a whole." She demonstrates that for al-Fārābī virtuous images have a

particular potential to “inspire the audience’s will to follow moral values and obey political rule,” and the way the philosopher constructs his influential insight into this matter.

Dario Tomasello’s “An Unexpected Imagery: The Heart’s Vision and Other Synesthetic Functions of the *Dhikr* into the Islamic Tradition” directly addresses the various layers of the complex issue of Aniconism in Islamic Tradition, questioning the common sense idea that Islamic Tradition operates a general denigration of images. This idea draws upon the Islamic aniconistic bias. Instead, Tomasello argues for the tremendous importance of imagery in Islamic tradition, by relying on the synesthetic and multi-sensuous ritual of invocation (*dhikr*) and the way it encompasses a visual dimension that, nevertheless, it is neither reducible to a fixed representation of the Divine nor to figurative deceptions of earthly or divine realms. Drawing mostly on the Sufi tradition within Islam, Domasello tries and demonstrates how the Divine is experienced, not represented, and how that experience is also strongly imagetic, favouring a crucial role for images as part of a global synesthetic experience within Islamic mysticism.

M. Javad Khajavi’s “Calligraphic Animation as Visual Music: A Genealogy of Islamic Synchronization of Sight and Sound” traces a new genealogy line for visual music calligraphic animations “all the way back to the relatively widespread comparisons between Islamic calligraphy and music that existed for centuries.” This article explores musical analogies used in describing calligraphy throughout the history of Islam and reviews some calligraphic artworks that establish a correlation between sight and sound, showcasing diverse artistic approaches. The genealogy line includes visual music calligraphic animations contextualized in the same broad historic-cultural background.

From philosophical and mystical insights we move on to investigate how aesthetic and political prejudices can be embodied in particular images. Mani Saravanan’s “Seeing the Unseen: The Invisible Worlds of Jafar Panahi’s Cinema” discusses how contemporary cinema of a Muslim-majority country like Iran, mirrors the political, ethical and aesthetical tensions of an Islamic state, through the “intersection of visibility and ethics” and, at the same time, functions as a mirror, reflecting Islamic seemingly paradoxical attitude towards visible images in Islam. Saravanan focuses on Jafar Panahi’s exploration of the unseen and unseeable in two of his docufiction films: The video-essay style documentary *This is Not a Film* (2011), and the film *Taxi Tehran* (2015). By drawing on an extensive analyses of the two films, Saravanan argues that, “Panahi’s subversion of the

visual medium to seek the invisible resonates with Levinas' call for an art that is incomplete in its completion and thus for an art that can question the certainty of the world within which it is set."

The following essay, Shrabani Basu's "The Foil and the Quicksand: The Image of the 'Veil' and the Failure of Abjection in Iranian Diasporic Horror" further explores the issue of the unseen and unseeable, this time dealing with the complex question of the "veil" and fear in two contemporary Iranian diasporic "horror" films: Babak Anvari's *Under the Shadow* (2016) and Ana Lily Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014). Basu's argument raises several issues related to revelation/occultation in Iranian and Islamic culture and approaches this topic simultaneously from an aesthetic, social and political perspective.

From film to new media, and from Islamic culture centred analysis to a broader mediatic panorama, Taida Kusturica's essay focuses on the cultural and ideological hegemony of capitalism and imperialism as constructed by digital media representations. In "Post-Cinematic (Mis-)Representation of Islam," Kusturica further argues that from World Trade Center attacks in 2001 "a mutual agency between digital media and religion, has become ever more intertwined in a re-employment of the old orientalist trope against Islam and Muslims." The essay develops the idea that new digital media in the 21st century shape and reflect new hegemonic forms of visibility that excludes Islam as a cultural and religious phenomenon.

This issue also includes an interview with Laura Marks, who has been discovering in the last several years an aesthetic of enfolding and unfolding, not only in classical Islamic artworks, but also in a body of contemporary independent film and video from the Arab world. Such an aesthetic is also as a way to understand the diverse modes in which images can function and turn the events perceptible. Marks's latest book *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* (The MIT Press, 2015) specifically examines a comprehensive body of independent and experimental cinema from the Arabic-speaking world within the particular political, social, cultural, economic, and historical contexts of the last 20 years.

ABSTRACTS

THE ROLE OF IMAGES IN AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Sarah Virgi (SOAS University of London)

This essay examines the concept of image in Abū Nasr al-Fārābī's philosophical thought and the relevance of this idea within his envisioning of the perfect state. Through careful analysis of his writings concerning the arts and methods of representation and his political works, I shall demonstrate that images provide an essential key for the supreme legislator and religious leader to guide people towards happiness or the achievement of ultimate perfection. However, this relies on a redefinition of the author's idea of happiness in the terms of what one could call a "political happiness," that is the perfection of the community as a whole. Hence, I explore the way in which, in al-Fārābī's thought, images contribute to this ultimate goal through their ability to inspire the audience's will to follow moral values and obey political rule. This is built upon his understanding of images from a psychological perspective, rather than from a scientific approach to them, which was common in Ancient philosophical texts. Furthermore, it also relies on a defined methodology of production of virtuous images, which I elaborate in this article.

Keywords: Community; Image; Islam; Perfection; al-Fārābī.

AN UNEXPECTED IMAGERY: THE HEART'S VISION AND OTHER SYNESTHETIC FUNCTIONS OF THE *DHIKR* INTO THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

Dario Tomasello (University of Messina)

Islamic Tradition is known for its aniconic heritage that is the result of a religious perspective which excludes the use of images in places of worship. Anyway, the discussion about the prohibition of images in Islam must be presented in such a way as to point out the multi-faceted complexity of the issue. This prohibition has its source in some *ahadith* of Prophet Muhammad, but it is complicated, not contradicted, by a constant recourse to the

unexpected value of the images. In this regard, a special attention has been devoted to the implication of imagery as a privileged instrument of the heart's vision and the seat of the intellect, which mirrors the Divine Presence. The way the heart's vision is displayed deals with the ritual practice of God's remembrance. That is why, traditional Sufi Masters like Shaykh Abu-l-Hasan 'Ali Ash-Shadhili (d. 1258) and Shaykh Darqawi (d. 1823) attach considerable importance to the repetition of the Name of God, as a tool of salvation and a great life-altering experience. The aim of this paper is to survey how synesthetic craftsmanship of the *dhikr* (ritual invocation) has been passed on until the present day and how this technique has favored a crucial role of the images in the Islamic Tradition.

Keywords: Aniconism; Image; Islam; Ritual.

CALLIGRAPHIC ANIMATION AS VISUAL MUSIC: A GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC SYNCHRONIZATION OF SIGHT AND SOUND

M. Javad Khajavi (Volda University College)

In this article, the author traces the genealogy of calligraphic animations (here defined as animations in which Islamic calligraphic elements are the only or one of the main visual components of the film) that establish a correlation between Islamic calligraphy and music. Within the past few decades a number of time-based artworks that establish such a correlation have been created. These artworks — in the form of films, animations, interactive art pieces and performances — can be considered visual music, following a broad definition of the term. While Visual music calligraphic animations may be considered a direct continuation of earlier European visual music films (such as the works of Oskar Fischinger, Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, and others), a detailed study of their historic-cultural context reveals a different genealogy line that goes back to the earlier centuries of Islamic civilization. It is argued in this paper that these visual music calligraphic animations and time-based artworks seem to be inspired by the putative comparisons between various aspects of Islamic calligraphy and those of music (or aural arts). The author begins the article by exploring different modes of musical analogies that were used to describe Islamic calligraphy throughout the history of Islamic civilization. He continues to review the influences of such analogies on calligraphic art,

especially in the contemporary context. Then, he studies the influence of musical analogies on calligraphic time-based artworks, and contextualizes visual music calligraphic animations within such a historic-cultural background.

Keywords: Animation; Calligraphic time-based art; Islamic art; Visual music.

SEEING THE UNSEEN: THE INVISIBLE WORLDS OF JAFAR PANAHİ'S CINEMA

Mani Saravanan (Nanyang Technological University)

This paper examines the intersection of visibility and ethics through Jafar Panahi's exploration of the unseen and unseeable in two of his docufiction films. In 2010, Panahi was arrested and banned from making films for the next 20 years. In response, Panahi made films which directly engage with the significance of the prohibition. *In film nist (This is Not a Film, 2011)* is a video-essay style documentary, where the director describes scenes from a film he would no longer be able to make. *Taxi (Taxi Tehran, 2015)* features the director driving a taxi in Tehran and interacting with his passengers. Panahi's inventive use of technology is necessitated by his physical confinement. In these films, Panahi demonstrates an iconoclastic function of film which destroys narratives of fixed visual certainty in favor of narratives of possibility. French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas protests the closed nature of art as it precludes the ethical question by fixing the image permanently and preventing further interaction. Panahi's subversion of the visual medium to seek the invisible resonates with Levinas' call for an art that is incomplete in its completion and thus be able to address the world within which it is set.

Keywords: Docufiction; Film ethics; Iranian cinema; Islam; Levinasian ethics; Jafar Panahi.

THE FOIL AND THE QUICKSAND: THE IMAGE OF THE "VEIL" AND THE FAILURE OF ABJECTION IN IRANIAN DIASPORIC HORROR

Shrabani Basu (Adamas University)

The present study attempts to explore the dynamics between the image of the “Veil” and the “fear” in contemporary Iranian diasporic “horror”: for example, Babak Anvari’s *Under the Shadow* (2016) and Ana Lily Amirpour’s *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014). With references to Julia Kristeva’s idea of the abject through which objects of horror can be evicted, Freud’s concept of *der unheimlich* (uncanny) and the exploration of the modern weird, the paper would look into the proliferation of the recurrent image of *Chador*, a stiff moving triangular stretch of dark fabric or yards of floating floral, as a threat to the figures within the screen, but something that cannot essentially be cast away as the “other,” as it appears right on sync with the backdrop offered within the celluloid canvas. The characters cannot purge themselves of the image, as it willy-nilly becomes a part of their essence.

These cinematic depictions of the veil defy the ongoing controversy of whether it is an empowering choice for women or a symbol of domestic and societal oppression (Kensinger and Abu-Lughod amongst many), as it acts as either a foil to the terror of the disconcerting nonchalance amongst the urban populace or a complement to it. It is just “there” — an unisolatable part of the panorama. The image becomes nigh impossible to be singled out as the essential object of uncanny, which, can be efficiently isolated and then evicted from the “self” to sustain its health.

The two films in question challenge the time honored understanding of the “uncanny” or the “un-home-like” sensation of horror, as the object of fear ceases to be an abjection that can be cast out from the self. As an incongruent female figure skateboards her way through the dark alleys in a *chador*, the object of fear shifts from the “vampire in veil” to the ennui and isolation of “Bad City.” The vampiric spreading of the burqa loses its element of terror as The Girl looks almost benign as she bares her fangs to prey upon the bad as laconic citizens amble past a ravine full of decomposing bodies. Conversely, Anvari’s *Under the Shadow* essentially functions around the suffocation of a stay at home mother Shideh with her recurrent nightmare of a demonic presence draped in yards of chadari in a derelict bombed out building during the Gulf War. The jump scares are intensely built up through flashes of a floral print *chador* which in turn throttles Shideh, scares off her neighbors, confuses her daughter, disembowels her CDs and absconds with her treasured book of medicine. The all pervasive yards of the “unreal” presence complement the reality of what Barbara Creed calls the eternal conflict between the maternal authority in the per-

sonal space of a female figure and the paternal laws which conditions the taboos and fears of the space.

Keywords: Abjection; Islam; Psychoanalysis; Julia Kristeva.

POST-CINEMATIC (MIS-)REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM

Taida Kusturica (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)

This paper examines the post-cinema production of the political and cultural antagonism towards Islam in an era of the emergence of digitally generated “new media.” Digital technologies have pushed the boundaries of what counts as cinematic, which is not simply a passive material or substance in its ontological materiality, it is rather a new kind of reality, a programmed and self-generated sensory shock-affect, already incorporated in the future narrative of representations, what Wendy Chun has termed *programmed visions*. The dissolution and extension of the cinematic in terms of its mediality, coincide with contemporary neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. Thus, the question of cinema could be investigated from a shifted view, not from the question of medium, but from its “digital” viewer/s. The post-cinematic mode of production will be related to the cinematically directed and image-manipulated visual drama of the Twin Tower attacks (also referred to as the “war on terror” launched by the U.S. government after the September 11 attacks in New York in 2001). This article argues that from Twin Tower Attack, such a mutual agency between digital media and religion, has become ever more intertwined in a re-employment of the old orientalist trope against Islam and Muslims.

Keywords: Digital image; Islam; (Mis-)representation; Post-cinema representation.

THE ROLE OF IMAGES IN AL-FĀRĀBĪ'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Sarah Virgi (SOAS University of London)

For the ancient Greek philosophical tradition in general, and especially for Plato and his followers, scientific objects, that is substantial ideas or concepts which one should seek in order to reach true knowledge, are irreversibly distinct from images. These include not only visual images, but also other sorts of representation, such as melodies, poems and theatre. Such a distinction echoes the notion that representations are subject to deviations from their original ectype and, thus, likely to become merely distorted reflexions of the latter with no epistemological value. Ultimately, this deviation from science is intimately related to ethics and contains the perilous possibility of leading human beings to illusions on what concerns virtue and moral corruption and what distinguishes a good action from a bad one. It follows that, according to this current of thought, images should be avoided in the path for true knowledge and a virtuous life.

However, the Arabic reception of Greek philosophy in the 9th and 10th centuries seems to have significantly altered this perspective. With the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Organon*, his *Poetics* were considered alongside with his logical treatises. This factor had a remarkable impact in the way the *falāsifa* (philosophers) of this period in Baghdad came to approach the arts of representation.

Yet, even more interesting is the way in which Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (852, Fārāb-950/51, Damascus), one of the most prolific figures of the *falsafa* circle in Baghdad during this period (also named "The Second Teacher" by his attentive reader Ibn Sīnā, following the incontestable authority of Aristotle) recognized in them a political significance. "Legitimately regarded as the founder of the tradition of political philosophy in Islam,"¹ namely in what concerns the role of the political community as a means for human beings to achieve perfection, Fārābī embraces the challenge of envisioning the perfect state. In this experiment, one finds the recurrent idea of the relevance and effectiveness of poetic statements and images in a political and religious context.

In this article, it is my aim to explore Fārābī's idea of image in order to determine the role that it plays within his political philosophy and, particularly, within his idea of the virtuous city. To do so, I will focus on his main political writings: *Kitāb al-Millah* (*The Book*

of Religion); *Mabādī Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍila* (Ideas of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City); *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* (The Political Regime); *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda* (The Attainment of Happiness); as well as his *Summary of Plato's Laws*. Through these essential readings, I will show how, in his philosophical system, imaginal representations and artistic similitudes provide a remarkable ground for the supreme legislator and religious leader to inculcate in the citizens' souls the virtuous theoretical and practical knowledge that will enable the community (in a comprehensive way, which includes the elite and the multitude) to achieve its ultimate perfection.

As I shall demonstrate, images do not carry the same illusory signification given by Plato in his critical judgement of poetry. On the contrary, for Fārābī, as long as they follow the appropriate rules of the art of *mimēsis*, which he develops in his works dedicated to the poetic arts, such as the *Risāla fī qawānīn ṣinā'ah al-šī'r* (Canons of Poetry) and *Kitāb al-Mūsīqā al-Kabīr* (Great Treatise of Music), they will observe a continuity between the intelligible realities known by science and their correspondent homonyms found in nature. Nonetheless, I will show that their importance does not reside in the ability of producing valuable knowledge, but rather in their psychological effect on the audience and inspiring will and obedience to religious and legislative prescriptions.

Furthermore, I will analyse the techniques and conditions through which these images must be produced in order to contribute to the virtuous harmony of the ideal city without leading to ignorance and illusion. It will also be the occasion to examine Fārābī's definition of the perfect leader and of the perfect philosopher-teacher, who should be able to create and transmit those to the general public.

First, however, I will start by presenting the fundamental signification that Fārābī's attributed to philosophy and knowledge and its relation to happiness, which will be helpful to understand his further views on the government of the virtuous city and the formation of a religious imaginary.

1. THE VIRTUOUS CITY AND THE WAY TO AL-SA'ĀDA (HAPPINESS)

Happiness as a Theoretical Perfection

Fārābī's conception of the state and of political philosophy is very closely related to the nature and place of human beings and of their individual perfection (*kamāl*) set out in his

theological-cosmology. Thus, *al-madīna al-faḍīla*, or the perfect city, is the model institution of governance, not actually existent, but aiming to be “a measure of the world- city,”² in which humans are able to achieve this ultimate end, that is *al-sa’āda* (happiness).

Although it is difficult to give an exact definition of Fārābī’s perception of *al-sa’āda*, it is possible to agree upon his consideration of humans’ rational activity as their highest perfection, as it is stated by most scholars dedicated to this subject³. Indeed, intimately connected to the emerging Neoplatonized Aristotelism of his time, our philosopher emphasises the role of science as the key to perfection⁴ and, therefore, to happiness. This perspective clearly reflects the ancient idea that knowledge of the divine things and leading a contemplative life allows human beings to detach themselves from their material and perishable dimension and to direct their actions towards the development and enrichment of the soul. In the context of Islam, this is crucial, for it guarantees the preservation of the soul in the afterlife. However, there is one particular part of the soul which remains after the corruption of the body: the intellectual faculty (*al-’aql*). This constitutes a central idea which will be discussed, disputed and developed after him across the entire history of Medieval Noetics, for the reason that *al-’aql* possesses the singularity of participating in what he designates as the first intelligibles, or divine essences, lasting eternally without corruption⁵ and closer to the true meaning of being.

In this sense, *al-sa’āda* is depicted as “identical to theoretical perfection”⁶ in Fārābī’s major political writings, such as in *Mabādī’ Ārā’ ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍīla*, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* and *Fuṣūl al-Madani*, as well as in other minor works, as the *Risāla fī l-tanbīh alā sabīl al-sa’āda*, where he defines it in the following way:

As we can only attain happiness when the beautiful things are in our possession, and as they can only be so through the discipline of philosophy, it follows necessarily that it is through philosophy that we achieve happiness. Concerning the latter, it is through excellent reasoning that we obtain it.⁷

In other words, *al-sa’āda* can only be accessed through reason and the study of the science whose method is the most intellectual of all, that is conception and demonstration⁸. Through these methods, philosophers are, in fact, lead into a deep and comprehensive awa-

reness of their origins, of the causes that engender all the effects which are manifested in nature, as well as a profound understanding of what is being and its goodness and beauty.

M. Galston claims⁹, in addition, that happiness for Fārābī comprises a “combination of theoretical and practical perfection,” which occurs, for instance, in *Tahṣīl al-sa’āda*. In this text, the Islamic philosopher includes among the various means of achieving it “the deliberative virtues, moral virtues and practical arts, along with the theoretical virtues.”¹⁰ Indeed, they are the fundamental requirements which allow humans to discern good actions from bad ones and to act accordingly in benefit of others, and are portrayed by the author with high consideration as inseparable from reason and playing an essential role in the attainment of human perfection. Yet, it is important to notice that practical perfection still necessarily depends on rationality and practical philosophy, and cannot be attained only through virtuous action.

The Possibility of a Political Happiness

However, if one were to consider this claim in an unconditional sense, one should conclude that only the ones who study and practice this discipline, the philosophers, are able to achieve their ultimate perfection as human beings and survive beyond their temporal existence. Indeed, under the scope of Fārābī’s anthropological views, not everyone is likely to become a philosopher or has the natural capacity to understand it. Although this is not an absolute condition, it remains that the disposition of psychological and intellectual faculties (their *fiṭra*), varies from one human being to another, as one can read on the following passage of his *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*: “Not every man is created with a natural disposition to receive the first intelligibles, because each man is by nature generated with certain faculties with a more or less great degree of excellence.”¹¹

The nearly exclusive access to philosophical objects attributed to a specific class of citizens, as it is described here, inevitably leads, in Fārābī’s system, to the formation of a selected learned elite. This exceptional minority is essentially distinct from the common people or the multitude, who seem to be fated, by the default of their souls’ faculties or by their occupations, to an imperfect understanding of reality and, consequently, to a limited (or even inexistent) possibility to achieve their perfection as human beings.

Nevertheless, although these conclusions agree with an accurate reading of our philosopher’s anthropological views, to make a deeper sense of the author’s thought, one must

consider them within his philosophical system as a whole. Indeed, as A. Benmakhlouf noted in his introduction to Fārābī's thought, he follows a combined hypothetical and deductive method¹² indicating that a sequence of ideas derives and develops from and within an essential framework of concepts. Hence, one should complement the previous theological-anthropological premises by the following necessity of a political order in Fārābī's thought.

For the philosopher, it is within the structures and dynamics of the community that each human being, in an inclusive perspective which comprises the common people, the elite, and the ways in which they are related, may be guided towards the achievement of their ultimate perfection. Thus, the exact nature of this perfection will be according to their "rank," as presented in the following extract of *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*:

For every being is made to achieve the ultimate perfection it is susceptible of achieving according to its specific place in the order of being. Man's specific perfection is called *supreme happiness*, and to each man, according to his rank in the order of humanity, belongs the specific supreme happiness pertaining to his kind of man.¹³

For instance, the philosopher will not attain perfection unless he becomes a teacher and transposes his theoretical and practical knowledge to the benefit of others¹⁴. In their turn, the common people will not achieve their supreme happiness unless they become the receptacles of that knowledge, although this is of a different nature than the science possessed by the philosophers.

Moreover, according to Ibn Bājjah, "The Second Teacher" would even have declared in a lost commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* that the only existing happiness is "political happiness" (*al-sa'āda al-madaniyya*).¹⁵ Hence, there is a possibility of achieving supreme happiness, even for those who do not possess the theoretical and practical principles, within and by means of the existing political structures.

The Role of al-Millah (Religion)

Although one cannot assure the validity of Ibn Bājjah's reference, as the mentioned commentary is lost, an attentive reflexion upon Fārābī's political writings indicates one evident institution which is specifically designed to contribute to the attainment of perfection

in the perfect state: the virtuous *millah* (religion). The *millah* is in charge of defining and regulating people's opinions and lives in their path towards happiness. As he stipulates at the beginning of *Kitāb al-Millah*: "Religion is opinions and actions, determined and restricted with stipulations and prescribed for a community by their first ruler, who seeks to obtain through their practicing it a specific purpose with respect to them or by means of them."¹⁶

This definition accounts for a conception of religion from the perspective of political philosophy, that is in the quality of a political institution, and not as a result of revelation. It follows that if the government that establishes it is virtuous, the purpose of the first ruler (*ar-ra'īs al-awwal*) here mentioned will be for the political community to obtain *al-sa'āda* by means of religious methods. However, one should acknowledge that these are not limited to practical regulations, prescribing virtuous behaviours and actions, but also include important theoretical content which is meant to define opinions and modes of understanding reality, regarding, for instance, the cosmology of the created world and its generation by God, among other principles,¹⁷ that aim mainly at inspiring the soul.¹⁸

Now, these virtuous opinions and actions are not exclusive to men "in the position to understand the purposes which are only accessible through [philosophy],"¹⁹ but to all the citizens of the perfect city. Religion is originally intended to be transmitted to the common people and, in this sense, it assumes the role of philosophy in the political context. This is essentially allowed by its capacity to "imitate" philosophical objects and methods of research by means of things which are more directly related those people's habits, and, simultaneously, to teach and inculcate them in the citizens' souls, an idea which is repeated and developed almost throughout all political writings by Fārābī.

It is evident that this scheme is problematic, for it considers science in a superior position in relation to religion. However, this statement will not be approached here from a historical or religious perspective, but rather as an intellectual experiment on "the different possibilities of confluence between philosophy and religion," as suggested by J. Langhade in his study of Fārābī philosophical terminology.²⁰ One of them, which will be our main focus in this article, is the way in which religion resembles or imitates philosophy in the path to happiness, for, according to our philosopher:

religion is an imitation of philosophy. [...] In everything of which philosophy gives an account based on intellectual perception or conception, religion gives an account based on imagination. In everything demonstrated by philosophy, religion employs persuasion. Philosophy gives an account of the ultimate principles [...] as they are perceived by the intellect. Religion sets forth their images by means of similitudes [...].²¹

In other words, the relationship between religion and philosophy is that existing between an image and its model, or between a copy and its original. As such, the imitation (*muhāka*) performed by religion primarily aims at making intellectual concepts correspond to mental representations, by imprinting “in the human soul the mental images of beings, their ectype representations (*mitālātu-hā*).”²² Hence, there is for each philosophical content a religious one, which reproduces it in a mimetic way through a physical or sensible correspondent appearance, which is closer to the mental habits of the majority, as, “for instance, some imitate *matter* by *abyss* or *darkness* or *water*, and *nothingness* by *darkness*.”²³

Before developing the role of these representations in the transmission of essential concepts and virtues and, ultimately, the attainment of happiness, in what follows, I will examine the author’s concept of image and the way in which it is *in potentia* to represent things that are not accessible to the senses by analogue symbols in nature.

2. TRANSMITTING VIRTUE THROUGH IMAGES

Imagination and Mental Representations

In order to grasp the concept of image, it is useful to first analyse the faculty which uses it as the object of its activity, in this case the faculty of representation or, simply, imagination (*al-mutakhayyilah*). According to *Al-sayāsāt al-Madaniyya*, it “preserves the imprints of the sensibles when these are no longer present to the sensitive faculty” and, contrarily to the latter, it has the power to “combine some of those imprints with other ones and to fraction some others in a number of combinations.”²⁴ In other words, it performs a double function: on the one hand, it retains imprints, that is images or representations of things which are accessed by the senses and the sensitive faculty in their absence; and, on the other hand, it combines and rearranges them in the soul. These images taken from natural ob-

jects, the first objects of imagination, can be described as forms which are purified from their sensible dimension or dematerialized. It is for this reason that they can be manipulated freely, without having to refer to their previous natural structures. Moreover, as D. Black suggests in her analysis of Fārābī's *Poetics*, imagination could also be qualified as "judgemental, and labelled true or false in respect to the accuracy with which [it represents] an external object,"²⁵ although this does not imply an assent, that is the affirmation or the negation of the object, as it would involve an intellectual performance.

Furthermore, in *Mabādī' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍila*, Fārābī adds a third activity to this faculty, namely "reproductive imitation" (*muḥākāh*, *mimēsis*), and, more specifically, the capacity to imitate the intelligibles²⁶ through sensible objects. Thus, contrarily to Ibn Sīna, who considers another distinct faculty for this purpose,²⁷ he attributes to imagination a power near to conception. This confirms its status as "intermediate between the faculty of sense and the rational faculty,"²⁸ since to imitate the intelligibles consists mainly in the act of "imprinting in the human soul mental images of the essences," which are the highest forms known by means of reason.

Images, Similitudes and Analogies

In sum, images are mental representations reproduced by imagination illustrating the sensibles and, sometimes, the intelligible forms, by means of imitation. Moreover, according to the author, the latter are:

similar to what happens in the case of reflexions, as, for instance, the man, which we may see in person, or in his statue, or in his appearance (*ḥayāla-hu*) <reflected> in water, or in the appearance of his statue <reflected> in water or in any other reflexive surface.²⁹

This example refers immediately to the "shades [...], reflections in water and in all closed-packed, smooth and shiny materials"³⁰ (*eidolon*) belonging to the most obscure segment of knowledge in Plato's analogy of the divided line, as well as to the illusory shadows in the "Allegory of the Cave."³¹ Indeed, as images, the representations produced by the imitative function of imagination are "excluded from existence,"³² and thus, from knowledge and reason.

However, for the Islamic scholar, they remain significant in the sense that they are similar (*šabih*) to or resemble (*tašābaha*) their original, although with different degrees of similitude. More importantly, they share an intelligible signification with their original.³³ Such a view is not surprising considering the fact that Fārābī was familiar both with Plato's other major work, the *Timaeus*, as well as with Aristotle's *Poetics* and, particularly, to an Arabic translation by Abū Bišr Mattā, Fārābī's mentor in Baghdad, which included it as part of the *Organon*'s corpus. This version, which circulated since approximately 932, contributed to a "logical coloration"³⁴ of poetical activities, namely of *mimēsis*. Fārābī may be considered the first philosopher emerging from this context to seriously observe this contiguity between imitation and demonstration.³⁵

To prevent representations from falling into the shade of illusion, the mimetic resemblance must be guided by reason, instead of being simply informed by the senses. According to *Kitāb al-Mūsīqā al-Kabīr*, his major work on music, which is also an imitative art representing emotions and moral virtues through notes and melody, the transmission of similitude must follow two main methods, namely proportion (*ṭarīq al-muqāyasa*) and analogy (*ṭarīq al-muqāyasa*).³⁶ These two techniques of representation are able to transpose intelligible forms by their rational mode of operation through similitudes, assuring an arithmetic relation between the model and its image. According to P. Vallat, analogy, in particular, is responsible for observing a mimetic continuity between the ectype and the image,³⁷ as shown in the following passage of the *Risāla fī qaṭwānīn šinā'ah al-shi'r*, concerning the excellence of this method in creating metaphors in poetry:

[poets] compare A to B, and B to C, because there is a close resemblance between A and B, which is congruent and well-known, then they develop gradually their discourse in way that allows them to bring to the audience's and to the reciters' minds the idea of a similarity between A, B and C, although the latter is initially distant.³⁸

Hence, Fārābī's analogy, also designated as the "poetic syllogism,"³⁹ differs from that of Aristotle's *Poetics*⁴⁰ in the sense that it introduces a common property shared by all three terms of the comparison, which develops gradually from A to C. The continuity between the reality and the image representing it leads the audience to identify the two extreme

terms. In this sense, still based on Vallat's analysis, here, Fārābī is closer to the *Timaeus*, namely in the myth of the formation of the ordered world.⁴¹

Nonetheless, as M. Aouad and G. Schoeler have argued, the poetical syllogism remains an incorrect syllogism,⁴² assuming that, for instance: "*major* – x is beautiful; *minor* – the sun is beautiful; *conclusion* – x is a sun."⁴³ Indeed, our philosopher also recognized this, asserting that, amongst all syllogisms, the poetical syllogism is the only one which is always false.⁴⁴ As such, it does not possess any epistemic value *per se*, but remains a "potential syllogism."⁴⁵

Yet, the relevance of poetic syllogisms and of images in general does not reside, for Fārābī, in their epistemic validity. In fact, they do not intend to produce an assent (the affirmation or negation of the representation). That role is attributed to *Rhetoric*, which causes the audience to believe in the existence of the represented object,⁴⁶ but imagination and imitation simply aim at illustrating ideas. Furthermore, as demonstrated by D. Black, "validity is ultimately not an issue" here, since "the principal function of the imaginative syllogism is to provide an explanatory model illustrating the underlying logical structure of metaphoric discourse [...] [and] it remains only implicit in the actual poetic product."⁴⁷ As I shall demonstrate in what follows, they become relevant from a psychological perspective.

Tahīl: A Glimpse of Wisdom

As previously mentioned, the value of images within Fārābī's philosophical thought, becomes irrelevant when approached from a strictly epistemological point of view. Rather than producing an assent to the illustration in question, it seems to reside in the way through which they affect the soul, bringing something to the audience's mind⁴⁸ which is fundamentally based on an original intelligible form. "One has committed a mistake in stating in respect to the subdivisions of logic books that poetry is pure falsity, because poetry's aim is not that of being false, but that of affecting the soul's imagination and passiveness [...]"⁴⁹ Thus, imaginative evocation, or *tahīl* in the philosopher's own terminology, is significant in the sense that it provides a sign or a preview of true knowledge, suggesting to the mind symbols of what is truly conceived by philosophy.

Firstly, this is particularly convenient, without doubt, in facilitating conception in the process of learning for those who still have not been introduced to philosophy,⁵⁰ as it al-

lows to disrupt the dichotomy existing between the level of scientific knowledge possessed by the teacher and the simpler complexion of the student's mind. One may also view it in an Aristotelian perspective, where "the soul never thinks without an image."⁵¹ Secondly, yet more importantly for our argument, they offer those who, by their natural constitution or their occupations are not able to access knowledge through rational conception, the possibility of having a glimpse of wisdom.⁵² Hence, images, alternatively to intellection, allow their simple souls to grasp:

the intelligibles of utmost perfection, like the First Cause, the immaterial things and the heavens, with the most excellent and most perfect sensibles, like things beautiful to look at; and the defective intelligibles with the most inferior and defective sensibles like things ugly to look at.⁵³

For instance, the image of "angels" constitutes a possible representation of the "celestial spheres" and the demiurgic myth of the formation of the world and the cosmos seems to be, for Fārābī, an adequate imitation of the Agent Intellect's generational action.⁵⁴

Yet, although he seems to support that representation is, in a certain way, an alternative to conception, that is to scientific knowledge,⁵⁵ it is important to notice that it remains implacably inferior to the latter, since, as developed before, philosophy and intellectual reflection are the only real paths to human's theoretical knowledge, which is rationally demonstrated and necessary. Images, by contrast, are multiple and variable, depending on the sensibles chosen by religion to represent reality at a specific place and time. Thus, there may be several religions equally virtuous among themselves,⁵⁶ which use different images to represent the same perfect realities.

Inspiring Will

Additionally, *taḥīl* is even more relevant in the political and religious context from a practical perspective. For instance, in *Fuṣūl al-Madani*, another text which succinctly formulates Fārābī's ideas on political philosophy, he refers to it in respect to its psychological effectiveness "inspiring the audience's soul" and, simultaneously, inducing them to seek or to avoid what is evoked imaginatively⁵⁷ according to the feeling that it suggests. For example, if one feels disgusted when looking at something which resembles something

else which is really disgusting, one would not seek it, but avoid it, and the inverse would happen with a beautiful evocation. In other words, images are not only able to suggest something to the mind, but also to produce emotion and, simultaneously, motivation and will. In this sense, they act as a stimulus to the practical and deliberative mind to act virtuously.

Also important for this purpose is Fārābī's account on Plato's *Laws* in his *Summary*. According to P. Koetchet's introduction, in this text, the title of which seems only to indicate a paraphrase of Plato's work,⁵⁸ the Islamic *faylasūf* gives an entire "new conception of law" and "expands the basis of the existing convictions" of the reader regarding this subject.⁵⁹ For instance, he retains Plato's association between law and poetry⁶⁰ to demonstrate the importance of metaphors, fables and all sorts of marvellous and extraordinary images in the legislator's discourse introducing the law.⁶¹ It is through them, that he is able to suggest to his citizens the benefits of a virtuous rule and, thus, inspire their motivation to observe the law and obey.

Finally, one should recognize that, despite the fact that evocation is a powerful instrument, by itself, it is not sufficient to achieve practical reason, that is to truly know what a virtuous action is and to distinguish it from wrong, which would involve intellectual engagement. Instead, imagination merely is an orientation tool for the citizens of the perfect state, and allows the supreme ruler, who is equally the founder of the community's religion, to create a harmony of behaviours and actions under his government.

3. THE ROLE OF THE SUPREME LEADER

A Philosopher-king

For evocation to be effective, the virtuous legislator, who is in charge of applying it in the perfect state and religion, has responsibility of finding this articulation between the intelligibles and their sensible homonyms. This requires special skills both in "[recognizing] the ground for uniting A to C imaginatively"⁶² in the type of poetic syllogism presented previously, and, more importantly, in adapting the original model to the audience's psychological complexion⁶³, that is to their sensible and mental habits. As stated in *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*:

It follows, then, that the idea of *Imam*, Philosopher and Legislator is a single idea. However, the name *philosopher* signifies primarily theoretical virtue. [...] *Legislator* signifies excellence of knowledge concerning the conditions of practical intelligibles, the faculty for finding them, and the faculty of bringing them about in nations and cities.⁶⁴

On the one hand, he must be in perfect possession of rational knowledge, and, thus, have studied and practiced its science, philosophy, which allows him to support his imitative activities on a truthful model and not on a false one. Clearly inspired by Plato's conception of the *philosopher-king* in the *Republic* and by its Neoplatonic variations, he is the one who has achieved the level of the "acquired intellect" (*al-'aql al-mustafād*), in a way that he has a perfect vision of the real order and knows profoundly how to discern good from evil. However, his exceptional deliberation in the choice of images reveals the necessity of a complex and meditated connexion between the real notions and their sensible images, which must not admit any contradiction.

In addition, this task also involves an art of composing, since the representations are not immediate, unlike the physical objects which do not present this ontological separation.⁶⁵ Thus, he must be able to create the analogue correspondences, for instance, between the rhythm or the form of a sensible and its semantic content.⁶⁶ For P. Vallat, this should be the result of a calculation⁶⁷ and of the imitator's capacity to direct his attention simultaneously to the eternal and to the sensible worlds, which enables the analogical intuition to reproduce the former's idea or virtue.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, according to Fārābī, some people, namely the "prophets," seem to be able to receive the intelligibles in their imagination "without the intervention of deliberation."⁶⁹ According to the philosopher, this happens when their faculty of representation is "extremely powerful" and "developed to perfection"⁷⁰ to the extent that they are able to receive the essences immediately in their souls in the form of mental images. In this sense, the images delivered would be perfectly adequate to their ectypes, although these cases are extremely rare. This association between imagination and prophecy is the ultimate key for understanding Fārābī's high perception of images and their moral and political role, as it is through images that prophets receive revelation and are called to spread the word of truth.

On the other hand, these representations must also appeal to the psychological and imaginative constitution of the audience. Thus, their effectiveness resides in the choice of the religious and political leader to evoke images shared by the majority. For instance, as indicated in the *Summary*, he must refer to “fables which the citizens use in their discourse [...], or animals and their dispositions,”⁷¹ in order to enable a wider receptivity among the citizens and, consequently, a more operative suggestion of the virtues transmitted.

This feature accounts for Fārābī’s conception of religion and of law as fundamentally political and human institutions. Hence, the images used by the supreme ruler, although ultimately referring to essential ideas, are bounded to the categories of the particular needs, interests and habits of the citizens. It is only by means of the “conversation” between these two dimensions,⁷² one universal and one particular, that the mind becomes the receptacle of its own perfection. Thus, the legislator and religious leader must be the facilitator of this interaction by appealing to the habitual and imaginative universe of his nation or locality.

Moreover, the supreme leader’s responsibility and power exceed that of the moral guide or pedagogue and embraces challenges which involve an actual religious and political leadership. Therefore, he must employ complementary methods to representation and imaginative evocation: rhetoric and prescription. Indeed, rhetoric is unlike *tahīl*, a persuasive method and able to cause the adherence of the audience to a certain statement, “[establishing] it in the soul, so that the mind can believe in its ultimate existence.”⁷³ This belief remains, nevertheless, inferior to the result of philosophical demonstration, and, in this sense, it is merely a form of “conviction” (*al-qanā’ah*).⁷⁴ Finally, in the quality of political commander, the *philosopher-king* will also be in charge of prescribing actions through legislation.⁷⁵

Yet, images remain the fundamental condition for these methods to arise and be established in the virtuous city.

CONCLUSION

To conclude our reflexion upon this subject, according to Fārābī, images, understood as mental representations, as well as as poetic similitudes, do not constitute the most excel-

lent method of attaining perfection from an individual perspective. Yet, they embody one of the major conditions for the establishment of the virtuous state as a place where humans achieve their political happiness, since they create the possibility for the community as a whole to engage in a collective awareness of theoretical and practical premises.

Implemented by religion, their role consists, thus, in transposing through sensible homonyms the knowledge conceived and demonstrated by science, namely by means of careful and meditated imitation. The particular relevance of these homonyms lies in their psychological effect, evoking and suggesting to the imaginative mind the essences which are only obtained by reason, in the form of images and sensibles well-known and adapted to the audience's complexion. In addition, this ability to suggest is a powerful tool in creating motivation and will, allowing to accord citizens' behaviours in a regulated harmony. Furthermore, this is guaranteed only by the excellence of the supreme ruler, who is in charge of conducting religion, in reproducing the harmonious structure of the universals into the particular political order.

Overall, images constitute a fundamental element for understanding Fārābī's political philosophy and his concept of religion as a human institution, subject to the variations of its local needs and interests, unlike philosophy which aims at attaining knowledge of the eternal essences.

1. Fauzi M. Najjar, "Fārābī's Political Philosophy and Shī'ism," *Studia Islamica* 14 (1961): 57.

2. Ali Benmakhlouf, "Présentation: Philosophie, religion, poésie," in *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle*, ed. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 25. See also Leo Strauss, *Le Platon de Fārābī*, trans. fr. Olivier Sedeyn (Paris: Allia, 2002), 81.

3. Miriam Galston, "The Theoretical and Practical Dimensions of Happiness as Portrayed in the Political Treatises of al-Fārābī," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. C. Butterworth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 97-98.

4. Abū Nasr al-Fārābī, *Mabādi' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila (Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Perfect City)*, trans. R. Walzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 15-16.

5. *Ibid.*, 204-206.

6. Galston, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 101.

7. Fārābī, "Risāla fī l-Tanbīh 'alā Sabīl al-Sa'āda (Le rappel de la voie à suivre pour parvenir au Bonheur)," trans. fr. Dominique Mallet, *Bulletin des Etudes Orientales* 39/40 (1987-1988): 135-136.

8. Conception and demonstration are the philosophical methods by excellence, as claimed, for instance, in Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda (The Attainment of Happiness)*, trans. Muhsin Mahdi (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), 44.

9. Galston, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 103.

10. *Ibid.*, 103. See also, Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*, 13.

11. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya (The Political Regime)*, trans. fr. P. Vallat (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2012), 139-140.

12. Benmakhlouf, "Présentation," 24.

13. Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*, 37.

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14. Ibid., 43.
 15. Galston, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, 100; see original reference: *Rasā'il Falsafiyah li-Abī Bakr Ibn Bajjāh, Nuṣuṣ Falsafiyah ghair Manshūrah*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-'Alawī (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1983), 197.
 16. Fārābī, "Kitāb al-Millah (Book of Religion)," trans. fr. S. Diebler, in *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle*, ed. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 43.
 17. Ibid., 45.
 18. Benmakhlouf, "Présentation," 27.
 19. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah*, 55.
 20. Jacques Langhade, *Du Coran à la philosophie. La langue arabe et la formation du langage philosophique de Farabi* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1994), 284.
 21. Fārābī, *Tahṣil al-Sa'ada*, 44.
 22. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, 175.
 23. Fārābī, *Tahṣil al-Sa'ada*, 45.
 24. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, 11.
 25. Deborah Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 197-198.
 26. Fārābī, *Mabādī' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍila*, 211.
 27. Ibn Sina distinguishes between the "retentive" or "formative" faculty, responsible for retaining the images from the sensible faculty, and the "cogitative" faculty, which is in charge of combining those images, in *Kitāb al-naḥs al-Ṣifā*, I, 5, explained by Meryem Sebt in *Avicenne, L'âme humaine* (Paris: PUF, 2000), 62-66.
 28. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, 175.
 29. Ibid., 175-176.
 30. Plato, *Republic*, VI, 510a, trans. G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve (New York: Hackett, 1992), 183.
 31. Ibid., VII 514a-515e, 187.
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 40. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b.7, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 102.
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 42. M. Aouad and G. Shoeler, "Le syllogisme poétique selon al- Fārābī: un syllogisme incorrect de la deuxième figure," *Arabic sciences and philosophy* 12 (2002): 185-196.
 43. Vallat, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie*, 318.
 44. Fārābī, "Risāla fī qawānīn ṣinā'ah al-ṣī'r," 121.
 45. Ibid., 121.
 46. Fārābī, "Kitāb al-jadal," 100.11-12, quoted in Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 177.
 47. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 225.
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 49. Fārābī, "al-Mantiqiyāt li-l-Fārābī (Discours d' Fārābī sur la proportion et l'agencement)," trans. fr. S. Diebler, in *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle*, ed. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 110.
 50. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 189.
 51. Aristotle, "De Anima," 3.7.431a 16-17, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
 52. Najjar, "Fārābī's Political Philosophy and Shi'ism," 72.
 53. Fārābī, *Mabādī' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍila*, 219.
 54. Vallat, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie*, 309.

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55. Fārābī, *Mabādī' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍīla*, 219.
56. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, 179-181.
57. Fārābī, "Fuṣūl al-madānī (Selected Aphorisms)," trans. C. Butterworth, in *Alfarabi, The Political Writings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 36.
58. The fact that al-Fārābī had access to a translation of Plato's *Laws* is actually controversial. According to Joshua Parens, *Metaphysics as Rhetoric: Alfarabi's Summary of Plato's Laws* (Albany: State of University of New York Press, 1995), xxvii-xxxi, the Islamic philosopher had access to the entire text; whereas Dimitri Gutas argues, in his review to Parens' book — *International Journal of the Classical Traditions* 3/4 (1998): 405-412 — that the historical transmission of the text in the Arabic world is problematic.
59. Pauline Koetschet, "Présentation: Comment lire le *Compendium?*," in *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle*, ed. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 132.
60. *Ibid.*, 134.
61. Fārābī, *Summary of Plato's "Laws,"* 84, trans. fr. Pauline Koetschet, in *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle*, ed. Alain Badiou and Barbara Cassin (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 177-178.
62. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 215.
63. Vallat, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie*, 329.
64. Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*, 46.
65. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, 22.
66. Vallat, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie*, 328.
67. *Ibid.*, 328-329.
68. Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a-b, trans. Robin Waterfield, ed. Andrew Gregory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61.
69. Fārābī, *Mabādī' Ārā' ahl al-Madīna al-Faḍīla*, 211.
70. *Ibid.*, 213.
71. Fārābī, *Summary*, 177.
72. Vallat, *Farabi et l'école d'Alexandrie*, 340.
73. Fārābī, "*Kitāb al-jadal (Book of Dialectics)*," 100.11-12, quoted in Black, *Logic and Aristotle's "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" in Medieval Arabic Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 177.
74. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Khaṭābah (The Book of Rhetoric)*, 249a, trans. L. E. Ezzaher (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015) 17.
75. Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Millah*, 43.

AN UNEXPECTED IMAGERY:
THE HEART'S VISION AND OTHER SYNESTHETIC
FUNCTIONS OF THE *DHIKR* INTO THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

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The aim of this paper is to survey how synesthetic craftsmanship of the *dhikr* (ritual invocation) has been passed on until the present day and how this technique has favored an unexpected but crucial role of the images in the Islamic Tradition.

The discussion about the prohibition of images in Islam must be presented in such a way as to point out the multi-faceted complexity of the issue. Islamic Tradition is known for its aniconic heritage that is the result of a religious perspective which excludes the use of images in places of worship.

Modern secular society tends to view worship as irrelevant in the greater context of human activity, which is diametrically opposed from the way Muslim civilization has established the absolute dominance of worship in every aspect of human life.¹ It is important to remember that we are referring to a society which “expresses itself in and through religion. Religion was far too central a reality to be, as in our day, merely a personal matter or an affair of the [mosques].”²

It seems, in this regard, that the act of worship is viewed as the main vocation of the human being — “*wa ma khalaqtu-l-jinna wa-l-’insa illa li-ya’buduni* (We created not the Jinn and Mankind except that they should worship Me)” (*Qur’an, adh-dharyat*, 56) — therefore the presence of images (i.e., statues, icons etc.) which could mislead believers and seduce them instead of inspiring a pure consideration of the Divine Unity (*Tawhid*) should not be allowed.

The prohibition of images has its source in some *ahadith* (as it is widely known, the narration reporting the incomparable nature of prophetic model). One of the most influential of these *ahadith* concerns Muhammad’s beloved wife, ‘Aisha, who reported: “God’s Messenger came back from a journey and I had screened my door with a curtain having (images) of winged horses on it. He commanded me (to remove them). So I pulled them down.” This is the wording narrated by Muslim, 3/1158, no. 5256 whereas Al-Bukhari’s

narration refers: “I had hung a thick curtain having images (*tamathil*). He commanded me to remove them, so I pulled them down” [Al-Bukhari, 7/542]

Jamal J. Elias has reexamined this account of the Prophet’s life:

A famous hadith account describes how Muhammad’s wife, “Aisha, acquired a tapestry with images on it which she hung on a wall in their home while the Prophet was out of the house. When he protested about the tapestry on his return, Aisha cut up the fabric and used it to make cushions, which subsequently were used in their home without any objection from him [...].”³

Previous to this work, Hans Belting recognized an experimental vocation to imagery in Islamic tradition as part of a broader vulgate on the primacy of Medieval Arabic science, in particular looking at the invention of the darkroom.

Yet the German scholar’s opinion does not seem to be entirely convincing — for instance, when he provides a very formalistic explanation of the Divine Word as a subject of debate in Muslims scholarly circles. Belting, indeed, judges in a narrow perspective, the supremacy of Word as supremacy of writing that is not:

Dans l’Islam, le Verbe comme révélation de Dieu par lui-même exigeait un monopole qui excluait les images. On y voyait la manifestation authentique de Dieu, que seule l’écriture pouvait restituer et sauvegarder. Un Dieu invisible, qui ne se manifeste pas sous une forme corporelle visible, «parle» dans l’“Écriture” qui est donc son médium approprié.⁴

The fact is, according to the highest Muslim authorities, the Divine Word has nothing to do with writing and, mainly, is not Allah’s favorite medium, because, being uncreated, it is not a medium at all.⁵ Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali said in his *Foundations of Islamic Belief* (*Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id*) published in his *Rasa'il* and his *Ihya' `Ulum al-Din*:

The *Qur'an* is read by tongues, written in books, and remembered in the heart, yet it is, nevertheless, uncreated and without beginning, subsisting in the Essence of Allah, not subject to division and or separation through its transmission to the heart and

paper. Musa — upon him peace — heard the Speech of Allah without sound and without letter, just as the righteous see the Essence of Allah Most High in the Hereafter, without substance or its quality.⁶

Considering that the disproportion between man's desire and the unattainable height of God which can be reduced only in the case of Divine Mercy, it is necessary to devote now our attention to the implication of imagery as a privileged instrument of the heart's vision. It is well known how the term "heart" has multifaceted features in the Islamic tradition. It is not simply the organ of emotions, "feelings" and desires, or decisions and opinions, but entails the soul, knowledge, bravery and more. When purified, it is the seat of the intellect, which mirrors the Divine Presence, as is clarified in the *hadith qudsi* (sacred tradition or report): "God created Adam in His image (*khalaqa Allah 'Adam `ala suratiHi*)," narrated from Abu Hurayra by both al-Bukhari and Muslim.

The word "image (*sura*)," here refers to man's "attributes," such as hearing, seeing, knowledge, and so on. Hence, Adam was created possessing attributes by which God has also attributed to Himself with the difference being that those of Adam are contingent and relative while the attributes of God are eternal and absolute.

As the seat of all the cognitive activities, the heart has been called the "true essence of a human being" (Al-Jurjani, 11th century), containing "all levels of inner being" (al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi 9th century), and for the Prophets it is the place of Revelation itself. At first, the "heart" (*qalb*) is something unstable, unreliable, easily changing. There is a *hadith* in which Prophet Muhammad makes a *du'a* (a special act of supplication) to God: "*Ya Muqallib al qulub thabbit qalbi `ala dinik* (O Turner of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your Religion)." The etymology of *qalb* comes from a trilateral root (Q-L-B) which refers to something that turns around and upside down. The nature of the heart is constantly changing.

The heart can allow a man to reach the highest stations (*maqam*) as the lowest degree. That is exactly the way it is introduced by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi in *Bayan al-Farq bayn al-Sadr wa-al-Qalb wa-al-Fu'ad wa-al-Lubb* (*The Explanation of the Difference Between the Breast, the Heart, the Inner Heart and the Intellect*).⁷ Concerning God-consciousness, the Prophet Muhammad said, while pointing to his heart: "God-awe is right here" (*al-taqwā hunā*)."

So it is quite clear how pivotal the role of the heart is concerning the opportunity to witness God's Presence.

Although, as it has been reported in the well-known *hadith* "Jibril," it is impossible to see God directly, by an extraordinary paradox, the feature of *ihsan* (the spiritual excellence, as it is expressed in Arabic) consists of looking at God as if you can really see Him even if you cannot really see Him: "*an ta'abud Allah ka annaka taraHu fa in lam takun taraHu fa innaHu yarak*" ("*ihsan* is to worship God as if you see Him, because even if you don't see Him, He sees you").

This excellent degree reveals the Islamic acknowledgment of what perfect faith actually is and allows us to understand why we choose, in particular, the *taḥawwuf* perspective in explaining the subject of the heart's vision which is a specific trait of Sufism.

The attitude of Islamic thought is, in this sense, nothing new or original in a Medieval mentality shaped by a search for Truth, shared by the three branches of Abrahamic Tradition, on the basis of a gaze strategy.⁸ What really changes is the absolute relevance provided to the wide range of the Divine Word's synesthetic possibilities in the Islamic perspective. Is it just something related to the endemic lack of a figurative culture or rather the symptom of a more sophisticated concept?

To answer the question, it is useful to step back to the early time of Muslim civilization.

As it is referred since *Sirat an-nabawiyya* of Ibn Ishaq (8th century), the original experience of Quranic Revelation is recalled as a challenge with the Image that, as God's Presence, is not immediately repeatable nor speakable. So once, at night, during the month of Ramadan, when the Prophet Muhammad was forty, standing in solitude in a cave on Mount Hira, the Archangel Jibril came to him commanded three times: "Read!" and he always answered: "I cannot read" referring to the same, unbearable, weight Moses experienced: "Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.' / And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. / But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live'" (*Exodus*, XXXIII, 18-20).

The ritual and performative nature of this narration has in its core a synesthetic theatricality marked by the quranic term "*Iqra!*" which evokes a more complex meaning than what we merely translate as "read." In fact, *Iqra* implies the notion of recitation in terms of

an embodied consciousness of what one is reading. Despite the Prophet's refusals, Jibril embraced him so hard that Muhammad got hurt intolerably (this recalls very closely the fight between Jacob and the Angel, when, winning though beaten, the biblical Prophet argues: "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (*Genesis*, XXXII, 31).

During Jibril's last hug, the unreadable image finally becomes a sound: "*Iqra bismi Rabbika Alladhi khalaq!* (Read in the name of your Lord Who Created!)" (*Qur'an*, *al-'alaq*, XCVI, 1). The text of Ibn Ishaq goes on, then, quoting Muhammad's words: "It was as those words were engraved inside my heart."⁹

Then, the image conceived by the Islamic Tradition lies in a possible relationship between the eternity of the Divine Word and the ephemeral words of creatures. Thus the encounter with a higher level of knowledge, reenacted by the invocation (*dhikr*), becomes possible by its synesthetic function and it is addressed to magnify the strength of this archetypal image, far from dispelling its value (that it will be clearer further).¹⁰

In fact, the result of this encounter is an alchemic possibility of turning the ineffable into a language that everyone can easily understand ("*Innā 'Anzalnāhu Qur'ānān 'Arabīyān La'allakum Ta`qilūna* [Surely We have revealed it — an Arabic Quran — that you may understand]" [*Qur'an*, *Yusuf*, 2]). So, what occurs is properly a transposition from one language into another — something which only synesthesia could accomplish. In fact, Jibril asks the Prophet Muhammad to convey *al-ma'ani l-qadima* (the metaphysical, eternal, entities) and their divine conversation beyond time (*al-mukalamatu al-azaliyya*) and space. Then the Prophet's answer ("I cannot read"), actually means: "I cannot communicate the eternal Word and the Divine speech beyond time using temporary language." So, Jibril taught him how to achieve this. Jibril's hug is sealed by an expression of the Prophet Muhammad: "He held me so tight as to exhaust me" that sounds enigmatically in Arabic language: "*faghatta-ni hatta balagha minni al-jihadu*" that means "he pushed me into that hug pushing me so far past my capacity for pain." Is there just a hint to the ineludible bodily involvement in the Revelation? It may be. In any case, according to the Islamic Tradition, the human being is made up of body, soul and Spirit (*corpus, anima, spiritus: jism; nafs; Ruh*), so the basic ability of the ritual invocation (*dhikr*) is to convene all the sensory characteristics through the pronunciation, rhythmically and repetitively, of a ritual formula. Given this prerogative, maybe another concrete example could serve to acquire

an increasing consciousness. In fact, it is not by accident that the *dhikr* brings into play its synesthetic property as ultimate proof of efficacy:

the good believer who reads the *Qu'ran* is like a lemon, his fragrance is good, his taste is good; the one who does not read the *Qu'ran* is like the date which has not fragrance though his taste is good; the hypocrite who reads the *Qu'ran* is like basil, his fragrance is good, but his taste is bitter; the hypocrite who does not read the *Qu'ran* is like colocynth which has not fragrance and its taste is bitter. (*hadith* reported by Abu Musa Al-Ashari, in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī 4732, *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim 797)

Therefore, when approaching the Divine Revelation the good believer achieves qualities that are summed up of a vast array of different senses. However, appearances can be deceptive, this is the reason why the best believer is he who only reads the *Qu'ran*, and plays back the Prophet's experience, tasting the fullness of God's Presence. This invocation (*dhikr*), conceived by the heart, convenes all the sensorial range and has the potential to be a great life-altering experience. Such is the authority of this invocation, into the visual field, that the prayer itself is properly defined as "*qurrata 'ayunin* (eyes' relief)" or by another tradition: "*wa ju'ila qurra 'aynī fī salāt* (into the prayer was established my eyes' relief)."¹¹ The synesthetic horizon of this invocation has been identified with "*alam al-mithal* (world of the archetypal forms)" or "*alam al-khayal, mundus imaginalis*" as Henry Corbin called it in his work,¹² inspired by *Kitāb Hikmat al-Ishrāq* written by the shaykh Yahya Suhrawardi (12th century).¹³

In Suhrawardi's perspective, the *'alam al-mithal* is an intermediate world between that of concrete phenomenal reality and the realm of pure intellectual abstraction. Possessing form but not substance, he referred to this intermediate world (*'alam al-mithal*) as the world of likenesses. Connecting it back to the foundations of the Muslim faith, he also frequently referred to it by the *Qur'anic* term of isthmus or interface (*barzakh*). Through its custody of symbols as its mode of communication, this cosmic sphere (or, alternatively, level of existence) was seen to act as an intermediary between God's non-delimited knowledge and our own fragmentary understanding of the universe. It was also seen to act as the interface between the living and the dead and was in this sense understood as acting as the visionary meeting ground for living Sufis and their dead predecessors. As a

proper realm of existence that mediated between different levels of being, the *'alam al-mithal* thus played an important part in the cosmological model which underpinned Suhrawardi's wider mystical epistemology.¹⁴

In this intermediate world ("*isthmus, barzakh*"), as many Shuyukh showed by their teaching method, the Word, because of the heart's invocation, becomes Sign, Icon, Vision:

we deal with the imaginary form of the sound, that is sound itself . So it is conceivable to have sounds and melodies in the heavenly spheres [...] In fact, they have a hearing not conditioned by ears, a sight without eyes, a smell without nose.¹⁵

On the other hand, the imagery's mastery turns invocation into Sign, Vision, gnostic realization. This mastery according to the secrets of *'ilm al-huruf* (Science of Letters) belongs to the distinctive charismas of this realization, as Sahl al-Tustari (11th century) demonstrated. In an emblematic episode of his existence, told by Al-Tustari himself, at night, he saw "the supreme Name of God written in the sky by a green light all along an extent line from east to west."¹⁶

This kind of experience is the major underlying theme of the work of the greatest master (*shaykh 'akbar*) Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240). To understand how Ibn 'Arabi defined it, one can refer to his expression *al manazir al-'ula* which can be translated as the supreme spiritual vision: "*Manazir* is the plural of *manzar*, from the root *nazara* which means primarily 'to look, to view, to perceive with the eyes'."¹⁷ As I have recalled before, the organ of God's Vision is the heart, often mentioned by Ibn 'Arabi, referring to the *hadith qudsi*: "Neither My Heavens nor My Earth encompass Me, but the heart of My believing servant does encompass me." Moreover, he speaks of the imagination (*khayal*) calling into question a rich panoply of visual art terms, as Chittick argues: "The word denotes both the power that allows us to picture things in the mind and the mental pictures. It implies not only an internal faculty, but also an external reality, as is shown by the fact that the same word is also used for the images seen in mirrors or on a screen."¹⁸ Chittick warns us that the word "screen" here is not anachronistic. In fact, Ibn 'Arabî refers to what a screen (*sitâra*) represents, in the case of the shadow-play, to explain how imagination works according to the Divine power. It is in this case that, as the etymology of the Arabic word (S-T-R) points out, the screen takes the meaning of a protective shield, an aegis under which

the soul (*nafs*) is safe from the risk of losing itself. Ibn al-Fârid, one of the greatest Arabic Sufi poets, speaks of the shadow-play, referring to the same terminology.¹⁹

The Word becomes Vision and the Vision becomes the solid remembrance of God. This remembrance would not be possible without the awesomeness of a theophanic prayer and its ability to visualize in a transient world what is destined to remain hidden in the world of pure entities, to fix in a passing world what is absolutely inalterable:

Everything other than the Essence of the Real undergoes transmutation, speedy and slow. Everything other than the Essence of the Real is intervening image and vanishing shadow. No created thing remains upon a single state in this world, in the hereafter, and in what is between the two, neither spirit, nor soul, nor anything other than God — I mean the Essence of God. Rather, it undergoes continual change from form to form constantly and forever. And imagination is nothing but this. [...] The universe has become manifest only in imagination. It is imagined in itself. It is, and it is not.²⁰

This uncertainty is the fundamental structure of a thought which swings continuously between different domains and different sensorial spheres, choosing, with a final paradox, not to choose and remaining in between. Once again, it is necessary to reaffirm that the Islamic Tradition finds the concrete realization of this paradox in the *dhikr*, or is in the peculiar remembrance technique in which, synesthetically, sight, smell, taste, touch and sound are convened to

see things as they are from the perspective of the Real. In this sense, the prayers are equally a form of invocation on remembrance (*dhikr*). In reciting them, the servant is not indulging in mere mechanical repetition, but consciously acknowledging the Presence of God, opening up to the full force of the Divine Revelation and savouring its manifold “tastes.”²¹

Entering the sacred space of *dhikr* has a precise impact on initiates. One of the most important Sufi orders, the Tariqa Shadhiliyya, founded by Abu-l-Hasan ‘Ali Ash-Shadhili (d. 1258) attaches considerable importance to the repetition of the Name of God, as a tool of

salvation (the Shadhili Masters argue that, when he is absorbed by the *dhikr*, the worshipper is entirely protected from Satan's assault) and transformation in terms of what Victor Turner and Richard Schechner explained when they talked about liminal rituals.²² The performative feature of ritual, in fact, has always been considered from a secular point a view and in a merely cultural perspective. Despite his awareness of what goes beyond ritual appearance, Turner agrees with those tendencies which consider ritual as an excellent tool to explore the multiple facets of a cultural construction: "Ritual for me, [as Ronald Grimes puts it]; is a 'transformative performance revealing major classifications, categories, and contradictions of cultural processes'."²³ Conversely, some examples, as the ones we are referring to, show a hidden, deeper and higher meaning of the ritual horizon: something that still remains right on the center of everyday life, something that people keep on passing down to each other, something that recalls the original, not the lost, time in which a spiritual renewal must have been possible.

The craft of *Qur'an's* recitation recollects the starting point of Revelation when, through the imperative request ("*Iqra*"), the entire imagery of Islamic Tradition was molded into a performative perspective. The ritual circumstances of recitation engage people in an encoded space-time continuum in which some formulas must be recalled and repeated. This method is particularly used putting visual concentration and breath mastery together.

That is why, for instance, Shaykh Darqawi (d. 1823), who revived the Tariqa Shâdhilîyya between the 18th and 19th century, warned his disciples that they must focus on the five letters of the name of Allah, trying to keep on visualizing them endlessly: "If you invoke Him, devoting yourself to the visualization of the Name, you will be visited by so many and such strong intuitions so as to be driven until your Lord's Presence."

In his epistolary, he suggested to his disciple:

You must focus on the five letters of the Majesty's Name (*Allah*) and seek steadily to maintain this visualization. Each time it vanishes, you have to restore swiftly, even a hundred time, if it were. You need to prolong the invocation until the limit: 'Alla...h' without saying fast 'Allah Allah' [...] The purpose of such a visualization of the Name's Letters is to seize your soul in order not to allow it to lose itself in the material world (thus in what is not appropriate), for the material world is the right opposite of the spiritual world and opposites never meet [...] If the invoking one devotes

himself to the Name's visualization, he will be visited by many intuitions, which get stronger and stronger, and take him to His Lord's Presence. There he will receive some blessings and secrets that no one has ever seen nor heard of before, coming from a nonhuman source. That said, this path along the Spiritual Way is not for everybody, for it is suitable only to the shrewd people.²⁴

Far from being merely a concentration technique, this method is very far-reaching in its effects, due to the meanings and secrets which God has attached to the letters of His own Name. The purpose of this invocation is nothing less than *fana fi'llah* — annihilation in God, annihilation into the name, to be more precise, for every name has its specific virtues. It is a venue for the worshipper (*'abd*) and the Worshipped (*Ma'bud*) in a connection that aims to reintegrate man into his center and achieve union with God.²⁵ Before this opportunity, one can consider the intimate relationship articulated by the experience that has always had a crucial function in the teaching of the Islamic Tradition. In this light, the synesthetic device of the *dhikr* endows the believers with a consciousness that goes far beyond mere erudition. In this embodied knowledge's perspective, the lesson of Abū Ḥāmid Ghazali (11th century) is still alive because it has been disseminated among the Sufi Masters, in the contemporary age:

Know that the answers to some of the things about which you asked me are not brought about through writing and discussion. If you attain to that state you will know what they are, and if not-knowing them is an impossibility, in that they pertain to direct experience. The description of anything to do with direct experience is not furnished through discussion, as the sweetness of what is sweet and the bitterness of what is bitter is not known except by taste. Thus it was related that an impotent man wrote to a friend of his to tell him what the pleasure of sex was like. So he wrote back to him in reply 'O so and so, I thought you were just impotent! Now I know that you are impotent *and* stupid, since this pleasure is to do with direct experience — if you attain it you know it — otherwise the description of it is not furnished through talking and writing.²⁶

It is doubtless a weird narration, and it looks like much more astonishing because it is reported by a metaphysical science's Master. Yet, as bewildering as it may seem, the example of the "impotent and stupid man" gives a faithful snapshot of the issue of this paper.

The "taste" of invocation provides the privilege of experiencing the Divine Word, not to affirm the superiority of writing and books (as one might be tempted to believe according to the conventional interpretation of the Abrahamic religions as religions of the Book), but to impose the quality of an unexpected imagery.

In exploring the use of this unconventional imagery, we have naturally gone through a perspective which inherits an esoteric flair for images and does not need to have a strictly artistic impact. This is only partially true, because in a metaphysical and original vision of Islam, Art does not belong to a separate realm but is actually an integral part of a whole vision of the universe where everything is aimed at a better comprehension of God's plan. So, in this perspective, the images, which everyone desires to look at, arise from the archetypes' universe. To practice a thorough contemplation of these archetypal images is one of the best ways to achieve a limitless wisdom.

When the Divine Word is visualized, then it can be perceived, tasted and appreciated in a way maybe impossible to achieve by human words, but easily accessible to the purity of the heart:

For the reality that is the goal of the mystic, and is ineffable, cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception; neither philosophy nor reason can reveal it. Only the wisdom of the heart, gnosis, may give insight into some of its aspects. A spiritual experience that depends upon neither sensual nor rational methods is needed. Once the seeker has set forth upon the way to this Last Reality, he will be led by an inner light. This light becomes stronger as he frees himself from the attachments of this world or — as the Sufis would say — polishes the mirror of his heart.²⁷

Philosophy or rational reasoning can never reach this state: nothing but the immediacy of direct contact suffices. Islamic Tradition displays, by means of the teaching of wise Masters, a primacy of the Divine Word that never ends in Itself, but becomes, because of Its synesthetic authority, Sign, Icon, subtle and concrete Action.

1. We intend to devote our attention to the Islamic religion in a gnostic way, not in the salvation's simplistic terms as, for instance, Shahab Ahmed seems to mean it: "I am precisely *not* seeking to tell the reader what Islam is as a matter of Divine Command, and thus am *not* seeking to prescribe how Islam should be followed as the means to existential salvation. Rather, I seek to tell the reader what Islam has actually been as a matter of human fact in history." — Ahmed, *What is Islam: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 24.

2. Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 3.

3. Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha's Cushion. Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1.

4. Hans Belting, *Florence et Bagdad. Une histoire du regard entre Orient et Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 93.

5. As it is well known, against the Mu'tazila perspective that proclaimed, under the Caliph al Ma'mun, the created nature of the Qu'ran, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl Al-Ash'arī (d. 935) definitively established the official orthodoxy of Sunni Islam about the Qu'ran as uncreated Word of God. Cfr. Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ash'arī* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1990).

6. Shaykh G. F. Haddad, *The Uncreatedness of the Divine Speech*, https://www.livingislam.org/uncrq_e.html.

7. A revised translation was published in *Three Early Sufi Texts*, trans. Nicholas Heer and Kenneth Honerkamp, (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003).

8. "In the Middle Ages sight was not simply one of five senses. It was a physical encounter, a point of contact between rays sent from both the viewing eye and the viewed object. If sight entails contact, seeing is a complex, concrete action which involves all the senses of the body (touch, smell, hearing, taste) at the same time (synaesthetically). Seeing, in other words, is an action which demands internal discipline, a posture of the mind as well as of the body, and an intentional gaze which generates a particular perspective. Seeing means, therefore, coming into contact with an image and activating it; to put it more eloquently, it means taking part in a 'stage of the senses', formed of actions and relationships. Seeing is a performance." — Carla Bino, "Imágenes y visión performative en la Edad Media," *Eikón Imago* 11 (2017): 71.

9. "The greater part of them are agreed that God's speech does not consist of letters, sound or spelling, but that letters, sound and spelling are indications of His speech, and that they have their own instruments and members to wit, uvula, lip and tongue. Now God has no member and needs no instrument: therefore His speech does not consist of letters and sound." — Kalabadhi, *The Doctrine of the Sufis (Kitab al-Ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-ta'awwuf)*, trans. Arthur John Arberry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 22.

10. Erica Dodd-Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981). It is Denis Gril, "La science des lettres," in Ibn 'Arabī, *Les illuminations de la Mecque*, ed. M. Chodkiewicz, trans. Michel Chodkiewicz (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), 165-353, who introduces, translates, and analyzes the second chapter of the masterpiece *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiya*. Regarding this point, it is useful to consult Pierre Lory, "Ibn 'Arabī," in *La science des lettres en Islam* (Paris: Dervy, 2004), 115-136. This greatest master had reached such a degree that during the month of Ramadan, in 1201, at Biḡāya (Alger) he sees himself as the groom of every star of the sky and every letter of the alphabet, as in Ibn al-'Arabī's *Kitāb al-bā'*. This event is also mentioned in the *Futūḥāt*, and it has recently translated in french into the introduction of Ibn 'Arabī, *De la Mort à la Resurrection. Chapitres 61 à 65 des "Ouvertures Spirituelles Mekkoises,"* trans. and annot. M. Gloton (Beirut: Albouraq, 2009), 9.

11. See al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan* 3.36: 3949 (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Hadīth, 1999), 729, 731.

12. Henry Corbin, *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabī* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977). About a creative use of memory in the Middle Ages, Mary Carruthers noticed how one could not distinguish between different sensorial experiences and how memory could provide this synesthetic feature of knowledge: "According to the early writers, retention and retrieval are stimulated best by visual means, and the visual form of sense perception is what gives stability and permanence to memory storage. They do not talk of 'auditory memory' or 'tactile memory' as distinct from "visual memory," the way some modern psychologists do." — Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19.

13. "It is Suhrawardi who appears to have been the first to schematize the realm of vision into a proper world of its own, accessed through the mode of knowledge he suggestively entitled the wisdom of oriental illumination (*hikmat al-ishraq*). Suhrawardi laid out this epistemological system in his *Kitab hikmat al-ishraq* and other lesser Arabic works." — Nile Green, "The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 13.3 (Nov. 2003): 295.

14. See M. Amin Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination* (London: Routledge, 1996); H. Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination: A Study of Suhrawardi's Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990). Of course, the realm, described by Suhrawardi, has nothing to do with the not better specified "unconscious of the universe" cited by Elias: "Put differently, the realm of figures functions as a kind of 'unconscious of the universe' where things like love, hate, and fear are created as concrete symbols and make the miraculous (or supernatural) into the physical, allowing things from the nonphysical realm to intrude into the physical world" (214). It does not seem appropriate, indeed, this Jungian intrusion, given the fact we are talking about a thinker of 12th century. Unfortunately, the contemporary thinkers are used to apply their modern worldview to every epoch. In this particular case, it is surprising to verify how all that eschews the context of a merely mundane vision, as the *'alam al-mithal*, must compulsorily be ascribed to an inferior domain, never to the heavenly one.

15. Shihâboddîn Yahya Sohrawardî, *Livre de la sagesse orientale*, trans. and annot. H. Corbin (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1986), 221. The historian of Islamic art Oleg Grabar in *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973) has considered Koranic Arab as key, in the musical sense of the term, because of the formal arrangement of the text and ultimately its comprehension and memorization.

16. Cfr. Sahl b. 'Abd Allâh al-Tustarî, *Tafsîr al-Tustarî (Great Commentaries on the Holy Qur'ân)*, trans. A. Keeler and A. Keeler (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2011), 29; G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 47, in which we can find this little different variant of anecdote (filtered by al-Anṣarî's *Ṭabaqât al-ṣūfiyya*, drafted by his students in Herât, as compellingly J. A. Mojaddedi argues in *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism: The Ṭabaqât Genre from al-Sulamî to Jamî* [Richmond, VA: Curzon Press, 2001], 69-98): "One night, I was in a state of joy, so I took a walk in the desert, as I saw the name of Allâh written in every star of the sky."

17. William C. Chittick, "The World of Imagination and Poetic Imagery according to Ibn al-'Arabi," *Temenos* 10 (1989): 101.

18. William C. Chittick, "The Disclosure of the Intervening Image: Ibn 'Arabî on Death," *Discourse* 24.1 (Winter 2002): 54.

19. For a translation of the relevant passages from Ibn 'Arabî, see William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabî's Cosmology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 60; and Chittick, "Two Chapters from the Futûhât al-makkiyya," in *Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabî: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. S. Hirtensten and M. Tiernan (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1993), 102. For the passage in Ibn al-Fârîd, see *The Poem of the Way*, translated by A. J. Arberry. (London: Emery Walker, 1952) lines 2130-2237, or R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), 189-191, 260-262.

20. Ibn 'Arabî, "al-Futûhât al-makkiyya," in William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabî's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 118.

21. Pablo Beneito and Stephen Hirtenstein, "Introduction," in Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabî, *The Seven Days of the Heart* (Oxford: Anqa, 2000), 6.

22. "Liminal rituals are transformations, permanently changing who people are." Richard Schecher, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2012), 72. See also Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969).

23. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1987), 4.

24. Shaykh al-'Arabî al-Darqâwî, *Lettres sur la Voie spirituelle - Al-Rasâ'il* (Paris: La Caravane, 1968), 285-286.

25. "In the teaching of the *darqâwiyya*, the *'ubûdiyya*, being identified as the station of the Prophet, corresponds to the highest spiritual rank (*maqâm*) due to its being the state in which the otherwise unattainable God reveals Himself to man through His Lordship (*al-rubûbiyya*)." — Ruggero Vimercati Sanseverino, "Interpreting the Meaning of Islamic Ritual: The Spiritual Significance of Ritual Prayer According to al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi and Ahmad Ibn 'Ajiba," *The Matheson Trust: For the Study of Comparative Religion* (2010), <https://themathestrust.org/library/vimercati-interpreting>.

26. Al-Ghazali, *Letters to a disciple*, trans. and annot. Tobias Mayer (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2005), 24.

27. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 4.

CALLIGRAPHIC ANIMATION AS VISUAL MUSIC: A GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC SYNCHRONIZATION OF SIGHT AND SOUND

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INTRODUCTION

In the early decades of the twentieth century, some European avant-garde artists and filmmakers started using the newly-invented filmic medium to create abstract films that one could describe as “visual music.” Originally inspired by the endeavors of such modern artists as Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), and Henri Valensi (1883–1960) among others, these artists and filmmakers considered music a model for their artistic creation. They animated abstract shapes, patterns, and colors that were analogous to the dynamic rhythm, tempo, tone color, and non-objectivity of music. Artists and avant-garde filmmakers such as Oskar Fischinger (1900–1967), Viking Eggeling (1880–1925), Hans Richter (1888–1976), and others created films that aspired to the abstract structure of music. Working in a time-based medium, their films, as Brougher et al. suggest, added a new dimension, namely duration, to the endeavors of the early twentieth century modern painters, and created a direct correlation between visuals (sight) and music (sound).¹

In a similar fashion, over the past few decades there has been attempts in parts of Islamic world to create visual music pieces in the form of animations and performances. While these animations and performances are similar to other forms of visual music in that they establish a correlation between sight and sound, many of them are unique in their approach to creating such a correlation and in the type of visual images they use. In fact, some of these artworks have been created using Islamic calligraphy (which is defined here as any calligraphy written in Arabic script) as their main visual resource.²

Although such animations and performances may be perceived as direct continuation of the earlier European abstract visual music animations, I contend that their primary genealogy line should be sought elsewhere. This proposition does not completely deny any

influence of European avant-garde visual music animated pieces on such calligraphic animations. However, it suggests that these animated films should be viewed and understood in a broader context. Although the influence of European and American visual music films on such calligraphic animations and artworks cannot be denied, the decision to draw upon the art of Islamic calligraphy to create visual music pieces has deeper cultural and historical reasons. In fact, it can be claimed that such artworks are largely inspired by the putative musical analogies that have been used to describe Islamic calligraphy since the early centuries of Islamic civilization. My objective in this paper, therefore, is to draw a new genealogy line for visual music calligraphic animations (and time-based artworks in general) all the way back to the relatively widespread comparisons between Islamic calligraphy and music that existed for centuries.

Thus, I start this article, by exploring the references made to musical analogies used in describing Islamic calligraphy throughout Islamic civilization. Then, I review some calligraphic artworks (particularly in the contemporary context) that establish a correlation between sight and sound. Arguing that these calligraphic artworks are clearly inspired by musical analogies used in describing Islamic calligraphy, I show the diversity of artists' approaches to drawing upon such analogies. Finally, I complete the genealogy line by contextualizing visual music calligraphic animations within such a broad historic-cultural background.

THE SIGHT OF SOUND

Synesthetic analogies have been sporadically used in describing Islamic calligraphy throughout history, at least since the early centuries of Islam. In such instances, writers and calligraphers have typically emphasized that the appreciation of Islamic calligraphy occurs not only through the eyes, but also through hearing, smell, touch, and even by the heart or soul.³ Among these synesthetic comparisons, musical analogies are relatively more common and extensively used. Comparisons between different aspects of Islamic calligraphy and aspects of music can be found in the writings and sayings of Muslim philosophers, calligraphers, and poets from different centuries. For example, the thinker, philosopher, and influential intellectual of the tenth century, Abū Hayyān Al-Tawhīdī (923–

1023), found affinities between calligraphy and music in the technical details employed in the preparation of the tools and instruments, and the strict conventions governing the structure and education of both art forms.⁴ On a more metaphorical level, Mir Ali of Herat (d. 1544 CE), a sixteenth century calligrapher, compared his stature to that of a musical instrument that had been bent like a harp as a result of a lifetime of calligraphic exercises.⁵

Musical analogies have been more extensively employed by contemporary writers and scholars of Islamic calligraphy. They refer to various qualities of the art form, including its abstract nature and inner rhythm. For example, in their book *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, Khatibi and Sijelmassi draw several analogies between calligraphy and music. They emphasize the feeling of movement and rhythm invoked by a page of calligraphy or a script's order and geometric proportion.⁶ Likewise, in her extensive writings on Islamic calligraphy, Schimmel occasionally returns to the idea of comparing calligraphy and music. For example, she compares "the regularly posited knots" in a style of calligraphy known as foliated *Kufic*⁷ to rhyme in certain Persian poems. In this way, she compares the visual structure of calligraphy to the musicality of poetry, and underscores that both of these visual and aural qualities emerged out of the same artistic vision.⁸ In another part of her writings, she directly refers to calligraphy as having musical qualities. She polemicizes: "Good calligraphy certainly has a musical quality, whether the stiff letters of an early *tirāz*⁹ inscription ... or the lines of *nasta'liq*¹⁰ that seem to dance to the inner rhythm of a Persian poem."¹¹ The use of musical analogies to describe Islamic calligraphy can also be found in the writings of contemporary scholars from other fields of study. In his book, *Choreophobia: Solo Improvised Dance in the Iranian World*, Shay investigates the similarities between Persian calligraphy and Iranian solo improvised dance. Highlighting the affinities between the two art forms of the Persianate world, he sporadically uses musical analogies to refer to certain aspects of the art of calligraphy.¹²

THE SIGHT OF SOUND IN THE VISUAL ARTS

Musical analogies have proved to be influential among calligraphers and artists, specifically in the context of contemporary artistic explorations of Islamic calligraphy. Phrases such as "Music for the eyes," "Harmony of letters," "Singing words," etc. are frequently found in

the titles of calligraphic exhibitions or of individual works of calligraphy and neo-calligraphy.¹³ Unsurprisingly, many contemporary calligraphers and artists are the main advocates of such musical analogies. In fact, some calligraphers refer to the musical qualities of specific scripts (i.e., styles of calligraphy, such as *nasta'liq*, *thuluth*, or *shikastih*)¹⁴ or to the specific practices or categories of calligraphic works (such as *Sīyāh-mashq*).¹⁵ For example, the Iranian calligrapher and artist, Jalil Rasouli (b. 1947), refers to calligraphy synesthetically, saying: “there is a kind of music in calligraphy that is heard by the eyes; the artists should have realized this and should be able to well-exploit calligraphy’s musical gestures.”¹⁶ Such comments and expositions reveal how profoundly the musical analogies have influenced artists and calligraphers, and consequently their artistic creations.

Some contemporary artists, such as Ahmed Moustafa (b. 1943) and Babak Rashvand (b. 1980) among others, have gone further than this and have created calligraphic paintings that suggest a relation to music through their titles. Moustafa, an Egyptian artist and scholar of Islamic calligraphy, has painted several canvases of neo-calligraphic work that present musical analogies. In two of his paintings, the *Scriptorial Fugue* (1976) and the *Blue Fugue* (1982), Moustafa emphasizes the relationship between Islamic calligraphy and music, not only through the titles of his works, but also by means of their compositions. The works interweave the visual rhythm created by the repetition of similar letters with the sounds of the letters of the word “Allah” (which is one of the many names of God in Arabic). Such repetition of the letters of the name of God reminds us of the ritual of *dhikr* that is performed by many Muslims. *Dhikr* is a devotional act performed by many Muslims in which the different names of God, religious phrases, or short prayers are repeatedly recited silently or aloud as a way of remembering the will of God and achieving peace of mind. In Moustafa’s calligraphic paintings in question, the visual renditions of the letters of the word “Allah” appear to visually echo and resonate with the rhythmic sound of the repetitive recitations that are expected in the act of *dhikr*.

Other artists draw comparisons between calligraphy and music in their works by creating visual metaphors. The Iranian artist, Abdollah Kiaie (b. 1954), created such a visual metaphor in a work of neo-calligraphic art. In this work named *Sans Titre* (“Untitled” in French) (2015.), Kiaie superimposed lines of beautiful and undulating *nasta'liq* over a page of musical notation. Written in light and dark blue, the calligraphic forms, letters, and words dance over the staff lines of the musical notation, while the red rhomboid dots (i.e.,

diacritical points used to identify letters that share the same base-form in Arabic script) playfully and willfully blend with the musical notation symbols. Similarly, Nja Mahdou (b. 1937), a Tunisian artist, offers another visual metaphor that evokes a correlation between calligraphy and music. Mahdou, who usually writes in a pseudo-script devoid of any semantic meaning, used the vellum of a North African drum as his canvas for writing calligraphy. The artwork entitled *The Drums Silence* (1997) metaphorically suggests a relationship between calligraphy and music.

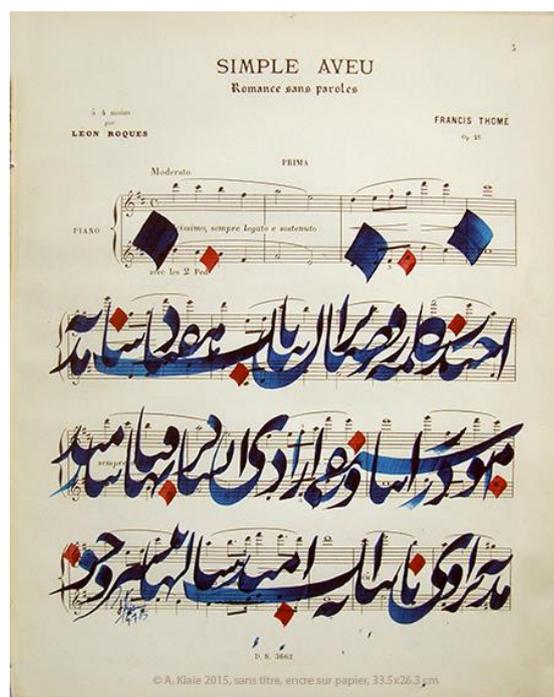


Figure 1: Abdollah Kiaie, *Sans Titre* (2015), ink on paper, 33.5 x 26.3 cm. (Courtesy of the artist.)

Some of the visual characteristics and qualities of Islamic calligraphy certainly paved the way for musical analogies. Apart from the abstract nature of calligraphy, which is usually considered similar to the purity of absolute music, the visual rhythm and movement invoked by many pieces of traditional calligraphy and neo-calligraphy is the reason for many of the analogies between the two art forms.¹⁷ Khatibi and Sijelmassi point to the rhythmic movement that a page of calligraphy invokes and state that there is a relationship between calligraphy and music, “a relationship which, while not precisely homologous in kinetic terms, reveals something in common, for both arts share a dynamic which separates logic from its rationality and its rhetoric.”¹⁸ The rhythmic movement inherent

in many pages of calligraphy convinces Shabout that Arabic letters should be considered “instruments to create visual music”:

The Arabic script can be a dance of ascending verticals, descending curves, and temperate horizontals, beautifully choreographed to achieve a measured balance between the static individual form and its rhythmic movement. Great variability in form can be achieved through the effective interplay of letters and words. They can be compacted into a dense area or drawn out to great lengths; they can be angular or curved; and they can be small or large.¹⁹

In these few lines, Shabout explains the entire repertoire of possibilities that calligraphers inscribing in Arabic script possess to create dynamic and rhythmic compositions. In traditional calligraphy, rhythm and movement are first and foremost invoked by the shape of the calligraphic forms and strokes, which one can call the choreography of the line. This is the result of the movement of the reed pen (or the hand of the calligrapher) as the traces of its motion are registered in ink over the page. Although most of the scripts in Islamic calligraphy suggest a sense of movement (specifically because the letters literally and physically connect to each other in order to construct a word in Arabic writing), such a feeling is experienced more vividly in the so-called cursive scripts, in which the strokes are more dynamic, more curved, and are rendered more spontaneously.

Rhythmic movement is also created by the regular or largely irregular repetition of similar strokes. In general, two kinds of strokes are visible in the forms of letters and words in Arabic script, namely, straight strokes and curved strokes. Calligraphers usually try to balance out these different types of strokes throughout the lines and over the page. Moreover, skillful calligraphers also try to arrange these straight and curved strokes in such a way that the whole composition suggests a rhythmic flow and movement. Traditional calligraphers may also play with the negative spaces between letters and words, creating visual pauses or rhythmic pulses over the horizontal enfoldment of the piece. Neo-calligraphers sometimes fill these negative spaces in with different colors to emphasize or disrupt the flow and rhythm, adding to the dynamism of the page.

In considering the visual rhythm and movement that flow over a page of calligraphy or a piece of neo-calligraphy, we should bear in mind that these shapes (which are in fact

letters) are actually connected to sounds. Calligraphers are well-aware of this fact and seek to engender a delicate balance between the visual rhythm of the page and the aural cadence of the content. This is particularly evident in those pieces of calligraphy that are renditions of poetry. For example, writing a verse of a poem that uses consonance as a poetic device — i.e., the repetition of letters with similar sounds to create an aural rhythm — the calligrapher may visually follow the aural rhythm of the poem by rearranging the composition, placing letters with similar shapes in line with each other. In such pieces of calligraphy, as Schimmel notes, “the music of the verse and the music of the line are harmoniously blended.”²⁰ Among contemporary artists who practice calligraphy in new and innovative ways, Bahram Hanafi (b. 1966) is someone whose calligraphic paintings blend the dance of the line with the rhythm of music and poetry. Hanafi works on large canvases and makes calligraphic-like gestures over the canvas in fast and spontaneous motions. He murmurs a piece of music or a song to himself as he works, allowing the rhythm and tempo of the music to indirectly influence the movements of his hands and thus the dance of his calligraphic lines on the canvas.

Geometric proportion is another quality of calligraphy that appears to lie behind many musical analogies. Order and proportion are two characteristics of music that have been the center of interest for musicologists, visual artists, and philosophers alike. Since ancient Greece, it has been known for musical consonances to be based on simple mathematical ratios. This discovery, which is usually attributed to Pythagoras, deeply influenced Greek philosophy and theories of beauty in late Antiquity. At least since Plato, musical proportion has been considered the eminent source of beauty.²¹ Such a belief was transferred to early Islamic philosophy, mainly through Plato’s *Timaeus*, and clearly left a deep imprint on the visual arts of the Islamic world, including the art of penmanship.²² Therefore, proportioning has become a pillar and a rule in the art of calligraphy since the early centuries of Islam. In *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, Alain George shows that the rules of proportion governed the architecture of most pages of *Kufic* calligraphy from the time of the Umayyad caliphates (660–750 CE). He also reconfirms that the rules of proportion play a significant role in the proportioned scripts that are known to have been codified by Ibn Muqla’ (885/6–940 CE) in the early tenth century.²³

The scholars of Islamic calligraphy, Moustafa and Sperl, go further than this in their study of the proportioned scripts. They illustrate that, in these scripts, the proportion of

the letters and the rules that govern the proportional relationship between them are designed according to musical ratios.²⁴ Proportioning remains part of the education and practice of calligraphers in traditional Islamic calligraphy. A good calligrapher writes letters and words in perfect proportion, ensuring that any visible form on a page of calligraphy is a visual consonance, and therefore harmonious for the eyes. Ahmad Moustafa, the artist and scholar whose artwork and scholarship have been noted above, spent eleven years researching the rules of proportion and the philosophy behind it. As previously noted, he produced one of the first comprehensive studies on the influence of musical ratios on the geometry of Islamic calligraphy, together with Sperl. His research on the topic left an imprint on his own artistic practice. The geometrical proportion of the script and its relation to Islamic philosophical, religious, and scientific thoughts are sources of inspiration for Moustafa's artistic explorations. Islamic calligraphy, and particularly its proportioned scripts, are like music for him in that they are both manifestations of universal mathematical laws that use abstract vocabularies. He therefore believes that both calligraphy and music can have spiritual effects on the viewer.²⁵

SIGHT AND SOUND IN TIME-BASED ARTS

Pythagoras' discovery of musical ratios and its impact on Greek philosophy also had another dimension. In addition to musicology and the arts, musical ratios and proportion entered such diverse fields as astronomy, human anatomy, medicine, and theology.²⁶ The discovery of musical ratios created a worldview in which the entire universe is in harmonious mathematical proportion. In the *Timaeus*, Plato declares that the Divine craftsman has shaped the universe by placing each small part into a proportioned whole, thus, in the words of George, "making the universe a symphony of proportion."²⁷ From this standpoint, everything in the universe is in perfect mathematical proportion and follows musical ratios, the celestial spheres, the human anatomy, and even the human soul. Such a belief was rapidly absorbed by early Muslim philosophers, particularly as several verses of the *Qur'an* emphasize that the universe is not a random chaos. For example, *Sura* (i.e., chapter) 25, verse 2 reads: "He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the

earth and who [...] has not had a partner in dominion and has created each thing and determined it with [precise] determination.”²⁸

Moreover, the Greek philosophers were mindful of the significance and power of music and harmony on emotions and the human soul. Plato believed that music, the art of harmonious proportion, can bring order to the soul and attune it to its original state. Likewise, for Muslim philosophers such as Al-Kindi (801–873 CE) and a secret society of philosophers known as the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān Al-safā* in Arabic), who were active in Basra (situated in today’s Iraq) during the eighth or ninth century, musical arts can impact the soul largely because they possess harmony and proportion.²⁹ According to these philosophers, visual arts are capable of affecting the human soul provided that they are based on the knowledge of proportion, and for them one of the most perfect of these visual arts was the art of penmanship.

The influence of harmony on the emotions and the soul was an ideal that was also embraced by Sufism. Sufism, which can generally be understood as Islamic mysticism, advocates transcendence and spiritual union with God.³⁰ As Nasr puts it, Sufism in its very essence is “a way that provides access to the silence hidden at the centre of man’s being.”³¹ As he elaborates, this silence can be heard when people stop listening to the noise of the mundane external world and start to pay attention to their inner existence. The Sufis and mystics described this inner silence as a spiritual music, which is harmonious and proportionate. This spiritual music clearly cannot be heard by the ears, but rather by the heart and soul. Some Sufi groups believed that certain types of music can act as a catalyst by which the soul of the Sufi becomes detached from the material world, seeks transcendence, and hears that spiritual music. This is the inner silence that is nothing other than the music of Divine presence.³² Hence, listening and dancing to music for the purpose of transcendence is one of the rituals performed by Sufis. This is known as Sema’ (which literally means listening in Arabic), and is a way of remembrance and transcendence. As Nasr asserts, music for the Sufi (and specifically the music of the *nay* [reed flute in Persian]) is considered the sonoral manifestation of that spiritual music, or silence, that Sufis can find at the center of their being.³³ Therefore, listening to it prepares the soul of the Sufi for its spiritual journey and reminds it of its ultimate sanctuary, namely, spiritual union with the Divine. As the prominent poet Rūmī (1207–1273 CE) suggested, the reed flute reveals the secret of Divine love and casts the fire of love into the souls of hu-

man beings.³⁴ Considering the fact that the reed flute is made of the same material as the reed pen of calligraphy, in the minds of Sufis and many mystics, calligraphy does essentially the same.³⁵ As the music of the reed flute is the sonoral embodiment of spiritual music, so Islamic calligraphy is considered the visual crystallization of the same spiritual message, which calls people towards their inner existence and ultimately towards God. Schimmel succinctly explains:

Like the flute it is hollow [...] and is filled with sweetness when conveying the words of love. Both tell the secrets that are in man's mind: the pen puts them on paper in undulating lines, and the flute expresses them in undulating strains of notes.³⁶

The comparison between the calligraphy of the reed pen and the music of the reed flute frequently appears in the poetry of the regions that were influenced by Sufism (Iran, Turkey, India, etc.). Moreover, such imagery has influenced contemporary artistic explorations with Islamic calligraphy. For example, an article by Ünlüer and Özcan explains their process of developing an interactive art piece.³⁷ For this interactive piece, they designed a graphic user interface (GUI) with which the audience can interact by means of hand gestures. These gestures are then interpreted in real-time by the computer into both calligraphic strokes and simultaneous musical gestures, which are mapped onto the scales of the reed flute. Experiencing their interactive art piece, it would be difficult for one not to be reminded of the Sufi belief in the similarities between the music of the reed flute and the calligraphy of the reed pen. Indeed, to justify their aesthetic decision to juxtapose the calligraphic strokes and the specific scales of the flute, Ünlüer and Özcan refer to the similarity between the calligraphy of the reed pen and the music of the reed flute.³⁸

The Iranian artist Parastou Frouhar (b. 1962) reflects upon the same Sufi analogy, and creates a link between the music of the reed flute and the dance of the reed pen. In a performance entitled *Body Letter* (2014), Frouhar collaborated with the dancer Ziya Azazi (b. 1969). In their performance that took place in Toledo, Spain, Frouhar filled the floor and the walls of the room with human-sized, illegible, and undulating lines of calligraphy, creating a rhythmic choreography of strokes on which the dancer, Ziya Azazi, performed a Sufi-inspired Sema' dance. In this performance, the Sufi-inspired dance was apparently

not only inspired by the music of the reed flute, but also by the dance of the reed pen. This resonates with the belief that the two do essentially the same thing.

Another theme of musical analogy can particularly be found in the writings on traditional Middle-Eastern music. Musicologists and musicians have never shied away from drawing comparisons between the different aspects of Islamic calligraphy and the features of a particular form or genre of music. Such comparisons are sometimes drawn for explanatory purposes and probably serve as visual explanations of abstract musical concepts.³⁹ Nevertheless, they reveal a tendency to consider the aesthetic affinities between the two art forms. For example, During and Mirabdolbaghi explain various similarities between the art of Islamic penmanship (with a specific focus on Iranian calligraphy) and Persian classical (modal) music.⁴⁰ They observe similarities between the sharpness of the contours in Islamic calligraphy and the clarity of phrases in Persian classical music. They also see an aesthetic relationship between the curves, upstrokes, down-strokes, and elongations in calligraphy and the rises, falls, and silences of the *gūsheh* in Persian modal music.⁴¹ Similar comparisons have been made by other authors, sometimes with far-fetched justifications and arguments. For example, Meydani argues that a page of *sīyah-mashq* is similar to a piece of Persian modal music because both are some sort of an improvisation. She obstinately and at times bafflingly tries to persuade us that Persian music has a great deal in common with Iranian calligraphy, so that “listening to one reminds us of the other.”⁴²

Although many such comparisons and arguments may sound forced, vague, and at times uncanny, they have been embraced by musicians and composers. For example, Majid Kiani (b. 1941), the Iranian musician and santur player, reflected on these comparisons in one of his musical performances.⁴³ Kiani, who has a personal interest in the relationship between Persian music and other forms of Persian art, performed a piece of music at a concert in Tehran, Iran that was inspired by a page of Iranian calligraphy.⁴⁴ Musicians have also demonstrated an interest in collaborative performances with calligraphers, in which a calligrapher produces one or more pieces of calligraphy accompanied by a live musical performance. In such performances, the music and calligraphy usually respond to each other as they both unfold over time. In a similar way to a ballet, in which the movement of the dancer adds an emotional impulse to the rhythm of music, these performances aim at creating an interaction between the two art forms. An example of such a performance is the co-performance of the Iranian artist and calligrapher Ahmad Ariamanesh

(b. 1968) with an Iranian musician. Entitled *Concert of the Line* (2013), the performance showcased the process of creating a work of neo-calligraphy as it was supplemented by a live musical performance.⁴⁵

While these kinds of collaborative performances have become more popular in recent years, the possibility of creating audio-visual interactions by means of such time-based media as animation and film has opened up an entire new vein of artistic opportunities for interactions between calligraphy and music. Clearly inspired by the musical analogies used in describing Islamic calligraphy, a few artists have already embraced the medium of animation to create calligraphic visual music pieces. One example of this is a short animated film entitled *The Third Script* (2017).⁴⁶



Figure 2: Mohammad Javad Khajavi, *The Third Script* (2017), animated short film. (Courtesy of the artist).

Seemingly a continuation of artworks that address musical analogies, this experimental animated short portrays calligraphic forms that dance to the rhythm of santur music. Calligraphic forms are the only visual elements in this film, yet they are largely used in an abstract way. They barely convey any semantic meaning, which one would expect of calligraphy (which is in fact the written representation of language). The animated film places considerable emphasis on the visual qualities of Islamic calligraphy, encouraging the viewer to focus on the abstract nature of the calligraphic forms, their kinesthetic forms, their dynamic structure, and their inner rhythms, rather than on any semantic content that they may convey. Although viewers who can read the language will attempt to read the calligraphic forms and letters that appear in the animation at some point, they understand

that most of what is being written on the screen does not have any linguistic meaning. They therefore stop reading for most of the animation and rather start enjoying the dance-like movements of the calligraphic forms, as they unfold on the screen in synchronization with the music. For the non-readers of the language, the calligraphic forms represented are obviously nothing more than abstract shapes that are dancing to the rhythm of the music. Artworks such as these shift the viewers' focus from the semantic content of calligraphy to the visual qualities of its abstract forms. Meanwhile, they also remind us of the influence of musical analogies (which are used in describing Islamic calligraphy) on contemporary calligraphic art.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although comparisons between Islamic calligraphy and music have been made throughout the history of Islamic civilization, these have become omnipresent in our time.⁴⁷ As I discussed in this paper, various themes of musical analogies have been used by poets, philosophers, writers, calligraphers, and artists to describe Islamic calligraphy. While many such analogies are nothing more than exciting metaphoric comparisons, their effect on contemporary calligraphic art is undeniable. As this article has demonstrated, comparisons between various aspects of Islamic calligraphy and those of music have left a mark on calligraphic art, particularly in the contemporary context. Various artists — whether calligraphers, neo-calligraphers, musicians, filmmakers, or media artists — have drawn upon such musical analogies to create a correlation between sight and sound, calligraphy and music. Many of these contemporary artworks, which are influenced by or reflect upon such musical analogies, can clearly be described as “visual music,” following the broadest definition of the term.

With the advent of new forms of art and especially the increasing availability of time-based media, some artists who are experimenting with Islamic calligraphy are now also seeking new ways of engaging with musical analogy through the creation of audio-visual interactions. As I argued in this paper, animations that establish a relationship between the sights of undulating calligraphic forms and the sound of music should also be read and understood as pieces of visual music. Although such calligraphic animations are cle-

arly inspired by earlier abstract European or American visual music films, we should also seek their genealogy in the earlier centuries of Islamic civilization.

Given the rising interest in experimenting with Islamic calligraphy in innovative ways, together with the accessibility of new modes of artistic expression, we can expect to see an increase in films, animations, and time-based artworks that explore calligraphy from this perspective. While, individual calligraphic animations has received attention from the side of festivals and scholars, little effort has been made to understand and analyze them within the right context. As a consequence, there are noticeable misunderstandings and misconceptions about calligraphic animations among both scholars and the general public. It is the aim of articles like this to shed light on some of these misconceptions. While the influence of musical analogies on existing calligraphic animation may still not be extensive, it is sufficient to justify further examination of this growing mode of experimental filmmaking from this perspective.

1. Kerry Brougher et al., *Visual Music: Synaesthesia in Art and Music since 1900* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005).

2. The term "Islamic calligraphy" as many scholars have pointed out is a problematic term. It should be emphasized that the term applies not only to calligraphy written for religious purposes, but rather to any sort of calligraphy written in Arabic script. In fact, instead of using the term "Islamic calligraphy," we can employ the term "Arabic calligraphy." Nevertheless, since Arabic script is used for writing many other languages such as Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Malay, etc. it is preferred in this article to use the term "Islamic calligraphy" to avoid confusion between the script and the language. See the definition of Islamic calligraphy as proposed by Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

3. David J. Roxburgh, "The Eye Is Favored for Seeing the Writing's Form: On the Sensual and the Sensuous in Islamic Calligraphy," *Muqarnas* 25.1 (2008): 281.

4. Annemarie Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1990), 120.

5. Ibid.

6. Abdelkebir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi, *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995).

7. Foliated *Kufic* is a style of calligraphy in which parts of letters seem to be transformed into plants, and interweave like tendrils. See G. Fehervari, "Art and Architecture," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

8. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, 10.

9. *Ṭirāz* was a textile band on which calligraphy is inscribed, usually on the upper sleeves of a robe or a turban.

10. *Nastaliq* is one of the many styles of writing (known as scripts) in the Islamic calligraphy. It is the predominant script in the Persianate world.

11. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, 120.

12. Anthony Shay, *Choreophobia: Solo Improvised Dance in the Iranian World* (Costa Mesa, CaA: Mazda Publications, 1999).

13. Neo-calligraphy is a term suggested by Hamdi Keshmirshakan to describe different kinds of approaches towards Arabic/Islamic calligraphic forms that are distinct from classical Islamic calligraphy, which traditionally follows set rules and conventions. See *Contemporary Iranian Art: New Perspectives* (London: Saqi, 2013).

14. *Tuluth* and *shikastih* are two styles (scripts) of calligraphy used in the Islamic world.

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15. *Siyah-mashq* refers to the calligraphic practice sheets that are usually fully covered with writing. Such calligraphic exercises later developed into a whole category of calligraphic artworks of collectible value.
16. Kaveh Teymouri, *Rāz-I Naqqāshī-Khat: Niḡāhī Bi Āsār-I Jalīl Rasouli [The Secret of Naqqashi-Khatt: An Overview of the Works of Jalil Rasouli]* (Tehran: Aban, 2012), 227.
17. It is important to note that Arabic script is not a hieroglyphic system of writing, and thus, the Arabic alphabet is abstract in its nature.
18. Khatibi and Sijelmassi, *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, 49.
19. Nada M. Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 66, 67.
20. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, 76.
21. Peter Vergo, *That Divine Order: Music and the Visual Arts from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Phaidon: London, 2005).
22. Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Saqi, 2010).
23. Ibid.
24. Ahmed Moustafa and Stefan Sperl, *The Cosmic Script: Sacred Geometry and the Science of Arabic Penmanship*, vol. 1 (London: Thames and Hudson, 2014).
25. Ibid.
26. Vergo, *That Divine Order: Music and the Visual Arts from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*.
27. George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, 103.
28. *Qur'an 25 (Surah al-Furqan)*, <https://quran.com/25>.
29. George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*.
30. Ladan Akbarnia and Francesca Leoni, *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2010), 1.
31. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 164.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 21.
34. Seyed Ghahreman Safavi and Simon Weightman, *Rūmī's Mystical Design* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009).
35. Besides a few exceptions, the reed pen is the main equipment of inscribing in Islamic calligraphy.
36. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*, 190.
37. Adviye Ayça Ünlüer and Oğuzhan Özcan, "Sound and Silence in the Line: Re-Reading Turkish Islamic Calligraphy for Interactive Media Design," *Leonardo* 43.5 (2010).
38. Ibid., 453.
39. Owen Wright, "The Sight of Sound," *Muqarnas* 21 (2004).
40. Jean During, Zia Mirabdolbaghi, and Dariush Safvat, *The Art of Persian Music* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1991).
41. In Persian modal music, *Gūsheh* are central melodies that usually span only four or five tones, and serve as a model for improvisation.
42. Mahdiye Meydani, *Irtibāt-I Khushnīvisī Va Mūsīqīy-I Irāni [the Relationship between Persian Calligraphy and Iranian Traditional Music]* (Tehran: Shelak, 2008), 9.
43. Santur is a stringed musical instrument of Persian/Iranian origin.
44. The performance was part of a series of research-based concerts and was titled: Farhangestan Honar, *Calligraphy and Music: the 16th Research-based Concert of Iranian Art and Music* (19 February 2015), Iran.
45. Khaneh Honarmandane, *Concert of the Line* (23 January 2013), Iran.
46. Mohammad Javad Khajavi, *The Third Script* (2017), Singapore, animated short film.
47. One clear reason for this relative abundance of musical analogies used in describing Islamic calligraphy could be that such musical analogies or comparisons between calligraphy and music have not been recorded in the past, or have faded away throughout centuries.

SEEING THE UNSEEN: THE INVISIBLE WORLDS OF JAFAR PANAHI'S CINEMA

— Mani Saravanan (Nanyang Technological University)

Censorship mainly persecuted words in dialogues. And of course, the dialogues had to be limited because of that. On the other hand, images were harder to be defined whether they are okay, or they contained something not acceptable. Films of that time used this phenomenon to communicate their audiences.

— ANDRZEJ WAJDA, Polish Filmmaker on making films in an authoritarian state, in BBC *The Film Programme*

A CAMERA TURNED ON ITSELF

In 2015's *Taxi Tehran*, Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi spends his time driving a taxi around the city, now that he has been forbidden by the government to make films for 20 years. The conceit is a playful variation on Andrzej Wajda's words, because Panahi subverts the limitations on his artistic endeavors by not directing, but acting in a film. Panahi steps in front of the camera after many years as a director and makes visible the machinations of the cinematic world he creates for the audience. By turning the camera on the filmmaker, at a time in his life when he is no longer legally allowed to make films, the film mounts a powerful act of political art in the aporetic moments between the created text and its creative process.

In one of the many colorful encounters that the director has with his passengers, a young passenger, who aspires to be a filmmaker, seeks recommendations of movies to watch as a way of furthering his film education. While discussing some films with Panahi, the young man expresses his difficulty in finding a subject, saying that "[he has] seen many films, and read many novels, but can't seem to find a good subject." Panahi's hitherto indulgent look turns serious as he replies "Those films are already made, those books are already written. You have to look elsewhere, you have to find it for yourself."

Panahi's warning against examining an existing text in search of new subjects is both an iconoclastic gesture and a self-reflexive comment. Considering that Panahi's last three films stand defiantly in the face of the institutional restrictions imposed on them, it is no surprise that he encourages others to resist the extraordinary reliance on existing conven-

tions and seek new ones. His critical attitude towards relying on past texts to find new subjects to articulate our concerns is not a simple rejection of nostalgia. By urging the young filmmaker, and in turn the audience, to seek new modes of viewing and receiving the film, Panahi draws attention to his own new modes of producing and presenting his film without traditional filmmaking tools. The fragility of the film's production permeates our encounter of the film, as it deliberately unsettles the certainty of images and our reliance on visibility to authenticate them. Instead of a cinema built on familiar aspects of plot, character and setting, the film offers the uncertainty and unknowability of the political, social and ethical possibilities of art.

Jafar Panahi moves away from a conventional role as a director and negotiates his officially mandated disappearance from Iran's visual culture by becoming at once a writer, an actor and the subject of the film. In both *Taxi (Taxi Tehran, 2015)* and *In film nist (This is Not a Film, 2011)* we find a blurred space between images of reality and fiction, which calls into question the power and certainty of the images used to demarcate reality and fiction. These films offer clarity about the ethics of witnessing by turning the camera on the filmmaking process itself, and finding new acts of resistance through the prohibition of representation imposed on the director. This paper examines Panahi iconoclastic use of film, which destroys narratives of fixed visual certainty in favor of narratives of ethical possibility. They serve as overtures to conversations about the social responsibility of the artist and her work, rather than providing closure to artful narratives. In light of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas' views of ethics in art, this paper reads the intersection of ethics and visibility in the two docufiction films made since Panahi's confinement and filmmaking ban.

THE WORLD OF PANAHİ'S CINEMA

While Iranian cinema has been recognized and celebrated in many film festivals across the world, Iran has had a tumultuous relationship with cinema. Film historian and critic Hamid Naficy points out that like filmmakers working under many authoritarian regimes, Iranian directors always operate between "the state which both supported and banned them; the public which demanded political commitment; and the film industry, which

was bent on maximizing profits.”¹ Initially, the Islamist movement violently opposed to the cinema, evidenced by the destruction of the Rex Cinema in Abadan in 1978 by arson, in which over 377 people died². In his book, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, Hamid Naficy recounts how the initial resistance to representational art was abandoned in favor of using cinema as a propagandist tool when the Islamic Revolution took charge of government. He comments that the aim was not the destruction of cinema or modernity – but “[to adopt] cinema to combat the Pahlavi culture and usher in an Islamic culture”³. While Islamic art’s evolution avoided pictorial or representative images in favor of textual and geometric patterns, Naficy points out that the redeployment of cinema as an alternative to the Westernized culture of the Shah regime, is not drawn upon lines of religion but upon the distinction of Iranian and foreign; a tendency that clearly reveals totalitarian, if not fascist intention.

Iranian cinema in the 1990s and 2000s had to balance politically engaged viewpoints while avoiding censure from the government. Alice Burgin goes as far as to say that that the films aimed at the festival circuits had an effect of recuperating the Iranian government’s image by creating a “benevolent international image” at the expense of the filmmakers’ “creative excellence”⁴. In this context of filmmaking, where the directors always encounter the uncertainty of whether they would get permission to make their film, Panahi continues to make subversive and critical films that reimagine the lines that separate the legitimate and forbidden, oppressed and dominant, and visible and hidden.

Iconoclastic cinema is not new for Panahi, whose earlier films also featured characters with fierce desires that did not conform to social norms. Panahi’s debut film, *Badkonake sefid* (*The White Balloon*, 1995) follows the indomitable Razieh who is determined to buy a gold fish regardless of the obstacles in her path. Mina, the protagonist from *Ayneh* (*The Mirror*, 1997) is unfazed when her mother fails to pick her up from school and finds her own way back home. The portrayal of women in prison in 2000’s *The Circle* drew the ire of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). The women in his 2006 film *Offside* repeatedly try to enter the football stadium to watch the World Cup qualifying match between Iran and Bahrain, despite the state’s prohibition of women from attending sporting events. The tenor of these films resonate with Naficy’s view that the socially minded nature of Iranian neorealism called for a cinema with a “moral commitment to reality and to a poetics of realism”⁵. As one of the great directors at the helm of the New Iranian

cinema, Panahi has dealt with important issues of gender, representation, belonging and complicity in an Islamic society. Panahi's rebellious work often left him at odds with those he criticized, who invariably turned out to be those in power. Panahi's career had to endure the looming threat of censorship and prohibition from the MCIG. Despite this precarious situation, he grew more openly defiant of institutional censorship with his films. Saeed Zeydabadi-Nejad observes this shift in his account of *The Politics of Iranian Cinema*. He notes that Panahi increasingly radical attitude towards the MCIG is "[to set] an example for the younger filmmakers to follow, as well as make it possible for them to continue filming."⁶

Panahi's films tend to exceed the frame of fictionality and grasp at the divide between fiction and reality, not only by casting non-actors alongside professional actors, but also in its disruptive exposure of the filmmaking process. *The Mirror* starts as a realist drama of a child with an arm in a cast trying to make her way home, but alters the narrative focus when the protagonist turns to the camera and declares that she will not act any more. The girl removes the cast on her arm and her veil and asks to be let off the vehicle, because she *does* know her way home. Commenting on the film's ending, Panahi says that "reality and the imagination are intertwined [in that scene],"⁷ as the protagonist's goals disappear into the actor's frustration. Despite echoing the character's desire to go home, the audience is immediately struck with the disparity in their lives — where the actor can choose to go home at any moment, unlike the character that has to encounter the despair of being lost perpetually.

Practical constraints have also shaped Panahi's need to exceed fictional strictures. *Offside* was filmed during an actual World Cup qualifying football match to capture the celebratory context in which the original act of defiance occurred. Panahi blurs the edges of documentary and fiction and flirts with formal and generic conceptions as a way of remaining truthful to the world he is representing, while questioning its rules and restrictions on the people. These instances of implicitly and explicitly questioning the impositions on women were not taken lightly by the Islamic government that wanted to enforce stricter control on women's rights as opposed to the liberalism and westernization of the preceding Shah Pahlavi's regime. However, Panahi has paid a price for his rebellion as *Offside* was the third of his films to be banned in Iran before its release.

In these films, we see Panahi's blending of contemporary concerns picked from everyday events with a sustained, empathetic outlook. Despite the politically charged nature of the films, his subjects do not engage in polemical grandstanding. Instead, he offers intimate portraits whose struggles may not have national or historical significance, but are central in determining their self-worth and place in the world. This inward-looking tendency in Iranian cinema is attributed to the looming threat of political retribution by an oppressive government. Noted filmmaker Bahram Beyzai comments that Iranians are compelled to "say things without appearing to have said them [...], but in such a way that those who should understand you have said it."⁸ Without appearing insincere, Panahi's films use the immediate and personal nature of the narrative world to crystallize the problems of a broader context in a microcosm. These films elide certain narratives while turning visible other struggles and perspectives, not for narrative convenience, but to accentuate the fleeting intervals where the individual can take brief control of their lives in a hostile environment.

Perhaps the most important questions raised in Panahi's films are about the limits of freedom and responsibility. In *Offside*, a group of women are punished for intruding on a territory marked out as the male domain. The desire insinuated by their presence, and the double standards of the restrictions posed on them, is not a mocking critique, but rather a sincere attempt at a conversation. While they are expected to participate in the nation building exercise of cheering their team, and complying with terms that may restrict their personal freedom, they are forbidden from drinking from the same well of national pride. Rather than some trite magical solution to insidious social problems, Panahi leaves the audience with the conflict between the invisibility of the group of women and their indelible presence. Similarly, the very act of attempt at erasing Panahi due to his political views has led to an increased global attention, and in turn, foregrounding the questions of witnessing, reporting, recording and framing narratives in his cinema.

FILMS IN CONFINEMENT

The late 2000s saw a more conservative turn in the Iranian government with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and film production came under political scrutiny, with many filmmakers facing curtailment of freedom and threat of punishment. Panahi first came into

conflict with the Ahmadinejad government, when he openly supported filmmaker Granaz Moussavi's film *My Tehran for Sale* (2009), which presented the story of an Iranian artist seeking asylum in Australia to escape persecution in Iran. In 2010, Panahi and his family were arrested on the pretext of his attempting to make a controversial documentary about the Iranian elections, leading a 20-year ban from making films by the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Amidst international uproar from the film community, Panahi continued to make films, which directly reference his inability to make films.

The first of Panahi's films since his arrest, *In film nist* is a video-essay where the director spends his day in his Tehran flat, coming to terms with his impending imprisonment and prohibition to make films. Panahi tries to circumvent the ban on filmmaking by verbally describing the scenes from a film that he was no longer allowed to make. Attempting to find loopholes in the ban, which does not prevent him from writing for or acting in films, Panahi films himself reading from scripts that were not approved by the ministry of culture for filming. Panahi enlists the help of Mojtaba Mirtahmasb as a collaborator and cinematographer, for the documentarian had expressed his intention to make a film that shows "Behind the scenes of Iranian filmmakers not making films." The film's use of ubiquitous digital technology and its shoestring budget both reflect the filmmaker's house arrest and the secrecy in which the film was shot. However, they inevitably draw attention to the absence of the production and technical crew, citing a transformative evolution of cinematic processes arising from necessity. The playful duplicity that Beyzai refers to surfaces here, is both as a tongue-in-cheek reconciling the reality of film production with the political control exercised over the creative process, and a way of seeking creative solutions in desperate times.

In *Taxi*, Panahi extends this trope of examining his exile from filmmaking through filmmaking. As he drives a taxi around the city, he picks up and drops off passengers despite his limited skills as a taxi driver. Film critic Peter Bradshaw calls Panahi, "an anti-Travis Bickle" who "[benignly cruises] the streets, looking for ideas."⁹ The scenes seem disjointed and fragmentary, as the characters interact to varying degrees and results. A woman seeks help to rush her husband to a hospital after he was struck down in an accident. In the car, he makes a video testimony on Panahi's phone declaring that he was leaving his property to his wife. The director receives a call from the woman who informs him that her husband is recovering and still requests the video footage he recorded just in case. While the director's

ultimate purpose of driving a taxi is never clearly conveyed, like in this scene, he bears witness to or listens to someone else recounting his memory of an event. Almost in every case, the meaning of the account is altered or heavily influenced by the presence of the camera, even though it is mounted unobtrusively, as if to prevent it from interfering with reality. In contrast to *In film nist*, the narrative is not about Panahi's immediate circumstances, but takes a slightly broader stance on the meaning of creating fiction out of reality and vice versa. This distance from the director's personal concerns does not prevent the film from engaging with him as a character with complicated political, aesthetic and social perspectives. If *In film nist* is a heroic flourish against his oppressors, *Taxi* is his manifesto.

Besides these two docufiction films, Panahi also made the narrative film *Pardé (Closed Curtain, 2013)* during his confinement. The film also treats the problems stemming from a character's visibility and its relationship with government surveillance, as two people literally hide behind closed curtains to keep the persecuting authority at bay. The invisibility afforded by the curtains allows the filmmaker to circumvent the restrictions imposed on him, on his movement and actions. This essay does not discuss this film, due to its overtly fictional and dramatic premise. While its sustained engagement with the question of representing a narrative resonates with the other two films discussed here, this paper focuses on the docufiction films that tread the line between metaphor and fact.

These two self-reflexive films demonstrate the director's vulnerability to the external forces that have limited his participation in his chosen art form. The plotless and discursive nature of the films are laconic due to their filmmaking context. They also respond to a greater legacy of films, which examine the impossibility of representing the unseen and the unseeable. The French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas protests against the closed nature of art as it precludes the ethical question by fixing the image permanently and preventing further interaction. Panahi's subversion of the visual medium to seek the invisible resonates Levinas' call for an art that is incomplete and thus for an art that can question the certainty of the world within which it is set.

LEVINAS, ETHICS AND VISIBILITY

At first look, Emmanuel Levinas' ethical philosophy might seem to be the farthest thing to use to discuss cinema. Seemingly in line with the rejection of visual representation in the

Abrahamic religions and the Platonic tradition, Levinas was extremely skeptical of the ethical potential of art. However, the reasons for his skepticism lie more on the totalizing tendency of art, which fixes concepts in time, rather than on a general suspicion of its illusory nature. A Levinasian approach to cinema may seem odd, considering that, while Panahi's confinement changed the nature of the images he presented, his cinema is still strikingly imagistic. In his essay "Reality and Its Shadow," Levinas rejects the idea of an ethically committed art, as he sees it as an unchanging point that cannot truly encompass reality.¹⁰ He draws a distinction between a static image of the art and the abstract concept that always exceeds the art.

Writing about the Levinasian stance towards art, Brian Bergen-Aurand elaborates on the seductive power of the image saying that "the work of art — especially the image — bewitches us and traps us in irresponsibility."¹¹ For Levinas, art can only create a false idea of "being-in-the-world," as it remains is aesthetically interesting without any ethical value or utility. The enjoyment of the beauty of art precludes the possibility of an ethical encounter, because there is something "wicked and egoist and cowardly in artistic enjoyment."¹² However, he argues that when art reduces the concept to an image, criticism "integrates inhuman work of the artist into the human world" and it "detaches [art] from irresponsibility by envisaging its technique."¹³ Through criticism, dislodges the completed and closed piece of art and opens it for further dialogue and examination. In this sense, Levinas offers the right approach to Panahi's cinema, as it destabilizes the authority of the image and argues for a self-reflexive if not self-critical mode of filmmaking.

Just as the intellectualism of modern art — which attempts to be its own exegesis, if not criticism — opens the potential for an ethical encounter between art and audience, Panahi's films interrogate the certainty and fixity of the images, even if they fail to completely step outside of the imagistic nature of the form. Levinas believes that language and criticism are the only ways of recuperating art. Panahi's films self-reflexively examine their own construction, as they create a space of introspective questioning of the filmmaking process itself. Most poignantly, these films tend towards an ethical space of incompleteness as they foreground the process of cinema, drawing in terms of both content, from the larger narrative of Panahi's struggles against a totalitarian regime, as well as the form that is subject to his expediencies and circumstances. These films gesture towards an infi-

nite possibility from which they could communicate concepts and evoke affective response rather than offering carefully constructed narratives.

THIS IS NOT A FILM

Jafar Panahi's *In film nist* may seem to reduce the distance between fact and fiction, but is in fact a treatise on the irreconcilability between the two. Between mundane activities, like drinking cups of tea, looking after the neighbor's dog in her absence and feeding the pet iguana, Panahi looks at his incomplete works at various stages of development, and contemplates his impending imprisonment and subsequent ban from work. Panahi reconstructs scenes, which have existed only in his mind, and inadvertently exposes the artifice of such a construction. In the simplest way, the film is not a film, because it is about a day in the director's life where he tries to recuperate the memory of a film that never existed. The mental world he attempts to evoke through his words is an abject defiance to the prohibition, which prevents him from representing the physical world. Panahi's action underlines the significance of the tenuous relationship between words and images in Islamic culture as well as critically examines the political complexities of its accompanying restrictions.

Panahi's political and social confinement creates an image of absence instead of the thing that he seeks to represent. However, the absence communicates a new meaning about the power of the image, itself in this confined space. The confinement is not just on his physical corporeality, but also on his mental worlds, as effected by the 20-year ban. However, he finds a way to circumvent the limitations. Early in the film, he comments that, while the judgment against him prevents him from making films, it does not say anything about reading out a script and enacting the drama that he cannot film. This clever manipulation of the system is delivered with a glint in his eye, but is quickly deflated because the images remain incomplete. Like the many unfinished narratives within the film, the image of the absence cannot articulate anything beyond the subject of its absence. The problem of the image and by extension, of cinema, is also that it is impossible to explain something that does not exist. Panahi dejectedly concedes his powerless position when he breaks down saying, "if we could tell a film, why would we make a film?"

This is not a film because it is a compilation of incomplete narratives. Towards the end of the film, he encounters a custodian collecting garbage from the apartment complex, who also happens to be a graduate student in arts research. Similar to the film, Panahi set out to narrate within the film, the custodian's story is also left incomplete. The film has few narrative elements that we are accustomed to in a film, and it does not resemble other stories that Panahi has told elsewhere. The film does not acknowledge the people who have worked on it due to the pragmatic necessity of protecting them. It blends reality of its making as a narrative component. In the simplest sense, it is not a film because it is shot digitally and transmitted by being whisked away on a USB drive. At this level, the film is about the visibility and elusiveness of narrative itself. The stories are incomplete because they evaporate before they can be permanently recorded in film. However, the ephemeral nature of the narratives also evokes the looming threat of persecution that the film insinuates in its construction.

Panahi and Mirtahmasb use a digital video camera and a phone camera to capture the moments in which they shift from documentary subject to documentary filmmaking. In one scene, Panahi uses his phone to record the new year's firework celebration taking place in the streets, when Mirtahmasb tells him that the phone could be a powerful tool, for it could help in recording a lot of important moments if he had left it turned on when he was released from prison. Mirtahmasb stresses the significance of recording things and documenting them, even if there is no possibility of turning them into a film. This brings us to wonder for whom do artists like Mirtahmasb insist that these unseen texts exist? What is the point of a film that no one will ever see? As if to answer this melancholic question, Mirtahmasb asks Panahi to continue filming, telling him to "take a shot of me in case [he is] arrested." The video shifts from the 16:9 aspect ratio of the digital video camera to the 4:3 aspect ratio of the phone camera in a distinctly poorer image quality. That shot seems to suggest that the significance of the image is in the very fact that it exists. Memory is unreliable, and the image is easily manipulated — but in adverse times, these two things create a fragile ecosystem where the events are witnessed and preserved.

The acts of watching and remembering play a central role in this film, as Panahi watches two scenes from his films. He points to a specific moment from *Talaye sorkh* (*Crimson Gold*, 2003) where the character has a devastating emotional response to a humiliating encounter with a jeweler. Panahi explains that that response was created entirely by the actor at the moment, and the details of his emotions did not exist before the scene was shot.

The film is ineffably cinematic, and no words could be used to reconstruct the image. Similarly, he points to the final moments from *Ayneh*, where the character Mina refuses to participate in the film. Again, the question of whether the action was staged is irrelevant because he sees himself in the same position as Mina, and must discard the burden of the artifice to seek a different kind of filmmaking. Panahi's confinement and the accompanying restrictions have led him to a mixing of reality and art, which have become indistinguishable to him.

In effect, this is not a film in the same way Magritte's paradoxical painting is not a pipe. Both reflect on the "Treachery of images" which remains unreliable in terms of offering a detailed perspective. *In film nist* often fails in its proclaimed aim of conveying narratives that were not allowed to be made. However, it makes abundantly clear the inability of accomplishing that aim and constantly draws our attention to its failure. It seeks to grasp at the significance of being visible when one is denied the legitimacy to be seen. The film's questioning stance examines the meaning of a cultural space where a filmmaker is prevented from participating in the cultural world. Ultimately, these questions percolate into a story about defiance and private rebellions, as the warning against celebrating the Persian New Year with fireworks is casually suspended by the everyday reality of the residents who carry on with their lives and practices. In *The Guardian's Film Weekly* podcast, Jason Solomons and Xan Brooks discuss the processes of Panahi's film, wondering how much of control and time did the director have in shooting or editing the film. They wistfully concede to the mystery of the text lies in the fact that "[Panahi] won't be able to tell us. And probably he shouldn't tell us."¹⁴ The film's mystery has been reduced to a shorthand of "smuggled out of Iran in a cake" — a phrase used in many descriptions of the film — and has turned into a novelty. However, the mystery creates a different kind of ethical cinema, whose process opens itself to a world of possibility and struggle.

Panahi's film is a protest because it shows us the limits of the law that tries to confine his artistic impulse. In an interview with Zeydabadi-Nejad, Panahi states that he "does not care what the politicians will say [...] when you are not dependent on the government, then you can say exactly what you want, or what you understand. I have one viewer and that is my conscience."¹⁵ Panahi's commitment to his viewership of one is severely tested when the imposed ban threatens to make it a literal reality. His response is not the apparent virtuoso performance where he seems to be the only figure both in front of

and behind the camera. Instead, his commitment to himself is clearest in the narrative structure that explores his failure to communicate exactly what he wants to say. In the process of acknowledging his failure, Panahi exposes a larger story about the delicate and fragmentary nature of narrative certainties. The narrative failure transforms itself into a defiant artistic strategy, which prioritizes the experience of the text over its structural and aesthetic cohesion. The non-representational and indirect sensibility in Panahi's films are reflective of key aspects of Islamic aesthetics which avoid image-centric to situate human experience in the universal context. However, they draw on the infinity of non-representational forms to reject the restrictions imposed in the name of Islamic austerity. Like many visual artists before him, he uses the symbolic and laconic structures to undermine the established conventions in favor of subjective experiences that connect the author to his audience.

TAXI TEHRAN

Taxi received the top honor at the 65th Berlin Film Festival where it premiered. In the opening scene of the film, two passengers have a dramatic conversation about the nature of crime and punishment under the Islamist regime. At the end of the conversation, a third passenger who recognizes Panahi as the celebrated filmmaker enquires about the authenticity of the conversation that they had just witnessed. The passenger's disbelief over the possibility of such a dramatic argument occurring naturally, immediately undercuts the air of authenticity evoked by the other the realist elements. However, the questioning becomes a basis of asserting the truthfulness of the interaction between the third passenger and the director. While watching this encounter, the audience tends to lapse into a moment of unknowingly suspending disbelief, despite the film's drawing attention to its fictionality. The unobtrusive cameras mounted within the car, and the various narrative fragments each dealing with problems of visual evidence and representation, lead us into different questions of narrative seduction as well as reflections about the inseparability of narrative and reality. Most tellingly, the film demonstrates the impossibility of narrative understanding, by highlighting that our relation to the events is ordered by the presence of the camera, and in turn, limited by it.

The film has multiple callbacks to Panahi's career as a filmmaker. Besides the interaction with a young filmmaker discussed earlier in this essay, Panahi explicitly guides us to the visual frame by moving the cameras and selecting the scenes he wants to capture. One of the important characters in the film is introduced through a humorous reference to the film *Ayneh*, as the director frantically realizes that he has forgotten to pick up his niece from school. The effervescent Hana asks if he suspected that she would have made her own way like Mina from his film. Panahi's conversation with his lawyer (played by real-life human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh) about the sentence against him, makes *Taxi* a direct sequel to *In film nist*, connecting the films as different stages in his confinement and the ban. Panahi cheekily subverts the trope of franchise building blockbusters sequels constantly increasing the stakes, by expanding the space of confinement from his apartment to the entire city.

In a climactic scene, Panahi's niece Hana reads out rules for a "broadcastable" film that were listed in class. The rules range from those that propose Islamic values such as, "Respect for the veil and the Muslim decency, no contact between man and women [...] no tie for protagonists [...] preference for the first names of Muslim prophets, usage of sacred names of prophets" to more social, political and ethnic restrictions including "no conspiracies, no violence [...] no Persian names for protagonists [...] [and] don't pose political or economical questions." These restrictions are reflective of the "Islamicate values" expressed by Naficy, where the true aim is social control rather than religious or social conservatism. The final rule appeals to the filmmaker's common sense — a rule which seems to sum up the rest — cinema must show reality, unless it is too grim. The listing of the rules in a film which seems to be deliberately disregarding every rule and made by a director whose mere action of filmmaking has been declared illegal by those who framed the rules, questions the limits imposed by the authoritarian regime.

The film's subversion is presented in an ironic and humorous way, as Panahi interrupts Hana's list of rules wondering what would happen to his old neighbor who had just appeared on screen, as he had a Persian name and was wearing a tie. Hana explains "this is real life. These rules, they are for films." Panahi further asks, "what if he becomes a protagonist in a film?" to which Hana matter-of-factly responds, "Then everything needs to be changed." This self-classification within the film further undercuts the film's fictional coherence by distancing itself from typical narrative cinema. Hana's quip about the nature of reality and how it does not satisfy the conditions set out for art goes beyond highligh-

ting the incompatibility of the fiction and reality under an authoritarian government. It calls for a transformation of the filmmaking process to overcome the restrictions. This formal gesture is also a political one, as the author seems to simultaneously concede to the authorities by excusing his text from being a film, and in turn, precludes his participation from an illegal activity. And yet, he is making this apparent apology in a construction that resembles a film in production and reception, openly mocking the government's impositions. Panahi continues to present his work in a space that tends to pair these oppositional values of negotiating his place in society while challenging its limits.

Hana's assertive voice has the power to sway people, but she too is restricted by the limits of what she is expected to do and where she can be. In a different scene, she tries to convince a boy who to return fifty tomans he found on the ground to its rightful owner in return for five tomans that she would give him — only to ensure that her own short film has a broadcastable conclusion. She does not say these words from a place of self-righteousness, but rather, she is simply concerned with the outcome of her own film. The only way she is able to make the boy consider her appeal is by making it in the name of the boy's dead mother. The question of the filmmaker's responsibility in questioning the responsibilities of the others is parodied in this subtle, playful moment of an author directly interfering with her subject. Her plan is thwarted when the boy, who makes a living by salvaging things from the garbage, prefers to keep his profit rather than behave in a manner befitting a protagonist in Hana's film. Panahi also tells another story within this frame, as he captures the encounter with a dashboard camera mounted in his car. He tells a story of a young girl who is confined to her space by both a system that designates her as a secondary citizen, as well as by her loving uncle who is concerned about her safety. While the limitations set the boundary of her presence, they do not restrict her reach and her action.

The roving narrative invites the viewers to encounter multiple worlds through the camera eye, but inevitably prohibits our access to events beyond the frame of the car. In the final scene, Panahi and his niece exit the car to return a purse lost by earlier passengers, and someone steals the camera from the car. The film ends abruptly, as if to signal that the live transmission from the camera has been terminated. The absence of the film's credits reinforces the abrupt ending. The narrative strategy allows us to momentarily disregard the fact that we are watching the entire film, which was shot by the cameras placed within the car. The last moments of the film also illustrate the impossibility of cinema to

show the whole truth. The viewer's eye can follow the narrative only as far as the camera goes. The moment the characters exit the taxi where the cameras are placed, their extended world vanishes as the camera records the absence of information. The final moments remind the audience that we observe the narrative world only as long as the people wielding the camera decides to include us in their journey. The film simultaneously draws us in and keeps us out of the narrative world, teasing us for our willingness to trade our awareness of the viewing frame for narrative enjoyment. The ending also serves a second purpose of preventing the director and his collaborators from being implicated in breaking the law. The constraints faced by Panahi's physical and cultural confinement necessitate his inventive use of cinema.

PANAHI AND OTHER INVISIBLES

Other artists have also used their art to reflect the strange tension between their confinement and need to express themselves, in turn transcending the political restrictions imposed on their circumstances. Dramatist Nassim Soleimanpour's 2010 play *White Rabbit, Red Rabbit* has traveled the world despite the playwright himself being denied permission to leave Iran for not completing his national service. Only in 2013, did he witness a performance of his play for the first time in Brisbane after being exempted from military service on a technicality due to his poor eye-sight. Azar Nafisi's novel *Reading Lolita in Tehran* outlines the years following the Islamic revolution, during which she had to reconcile holding on to the humanist values central to her and coming to terms with abandoning a country she was fervently attached to. Both Nafisi and Soleimanpour seek to recuperate their love for Iran while exiting it. Panahi deploys his work to humorously and irreverently undercut the authority that tries to limit his narratives by blurring the lines separating the gulf between fiction and reality. Perhaps the biggest parallel to Panahi's career is his contemporary filmmaker, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, who too had to improvise his filmmaking to circumvent the censure of his government. Ultimately, Makhmalbaf and his family left Iran and have continued filmmaking in exile. Despite their differing geographical positions, the two filmmakers return to the question of the future of Iran as an Islamic space, which allows for pluralistic viewpoints.

While not an Iranian himself, Salman Rushdie had to go underground to avoid threats to his life arising from Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against his writings, effectively limiting his freedom. During that period of his life, Rushdie found inventive ways of talking about censorship by offering a fantastic exploration of the significance of stories in a *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, a book dedicated to his son. He demonstrates that the value of arts, fiction and narratives have persisted throughout history as they take political, social and ethical significance in not just the context of their readership but in the mere act of their performance. In this story about a storyteller, one of the characters raises a central question, which resonates with the lives of all these artists who continue their difficult task at high personal cost, "What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" While Panahi's films deal with stories that *are* true, they still press on with similar concerns by examining what about the stories make them real. And yet, the narrative remains a site of resistance, because of this precise potential sway it has over its audience.

In the final confrontation in *Haroun*, the titular protagonist confronts the Cultmaster of the land of silence, Khatam-Shud (literally, "it is finished," but often read as an allegorical representation of Khomeini), asking him why he hates stories so much. Khatam-Shud whose believes that the world was meant not for fun, but to be controlled replies, "Inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all. And that is the reason why."¹⁶ These lines are persistently relevant as narratives continue to influence people and question the existing order of things. Narratives allow authors to shine a light upon things that others prefer to remain forgotten and hidden. Panahi's lingering attention to the disparity in Iranian society became a point of discomfort for those he criticized, leading to his official erasure from their world. However, instead of fading away, Panahi recorded his attempted erasure, and turned it into another act of resistance. Panahi surreptitiously strikes a match in an invisible world.

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 12. Lévinas, *The Levinas Reader*, 142.
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 14. Jason Solomons and Xan Brooks, "The Film Weekly: *This is Not a Film*," *Film Weekly*, 29 March 2012.
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THE FOIL AND THE QUICKSAND: THE IMAGE OF THE “VEIL” AND THE FAILURE OF ABJECTI- ON IN IRANIAN DIASPORIC HORROR

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A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness [...]. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A “something” that I do not recognize as a thing. [...] There, abject and abjection are my safeguards. The primers of my culture [...].

— JULIA KRISTEVA, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Modern true weird conceptualizes horror as the cluster of unreason emanating from the world-intelligible, recognizable only in its lurking closeness beyond the “self.” The crisis occurs when the image of threat is so intrinsic to the self that it cannot be cast off, as the distinction between the “unknowable” and the “self” blurs beyond recognition. As the very core of a knowledge system turns into an image of threat, its politico-cultural ramifications take the proverbial backseat, as the victim chokes in the apparent image of her own psyche and all that conditions it. They shudder at their own reflections but cannot deny it, as it will be a denial of the self. The plausibility or the coherence of the image in a culture system fades away in the sheer paralyzing terror that the image induces. And there appears the “world-without-us” — an uncanny, un-understandable, and often unknowable “spasm,” paradoxically within the “self.”

In the present study, a preoccupation with the representation of the Islamic culture in Iran falls short to the immediacy of the underlying terror that the image of the “Veil” evokes. The politics of representation of the image halts as both the spectators and victims fail to eject the image from the communal psyche. The line amongst the analyst, the progressive and the “right winger” fade, not just in a shared concern for a Muslim woman negotiating the paternal laws conditioning the taboos, but in an empathic recognition of the

crisis that occurs when the abject casting off of the quintessential image of the woman fails. The “primers of the culture” turn into the threat, unisolatable and thus, unobjectible.

While not exactly thematically similar, Babak Anvari’s *Under the Shadow* (2016) and Ana Lily Amirpour’s *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014) might establish the substantiating overlay of the argument to come. The discerning reader may ask the relevance of considering two films by members of the Iranian diaspora.¹ In the post-revolution filmic language in Iranian cinema, there was a clear attempt of negotiation between the state injunctions of *feqh/fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and the need to portray the national sensibilities. Due to a harness on the absolutist approach of the MCIG (Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance), following Khomeini’s demise and the gradual return to power of the Khatami government, there was a series of cultural policies not exactly adhering to the *feqh* based definition of social reality. Several filmmakers including Tahmineh Milani, Rakshan Bani-Etemad, Abbas Kiarostami, Makhmalbaf and his daughters publicly rehabilitated a more realistic take on everyday reality. This new phase, popularly called the Third Republic, influenced the rise of younger filmmakers to come open with their issues against the *feqh* based gender roles with a vocal need for the freedom for films and other cultural and social media.² For the Iranian diaspora, here was a chance to rethink their relationship with their roots, which, so far, they have longed for but have feared. For many, Iranian Cinema, especially following its global critical acclaim, was the one thing that they could identify themselves with. But with the return of the rightist injunctions with the Ahmadinejad Govt., for many of these younger Iranian diaspora or expatriates, a life of following the cultural injunctions was a distant fear, scarier than any immediate threat. Amirpour and Anvari, can therefore, offer an insight into the horror of the “Veil” (one of the most visible cultural injunction) offering a possibility of empathy amongst Iranians in and beyond the Persian shores.

The present study attempts to explore the dynamics of the image of *Chador* and the “fear” in contemporary Iranian diasporic “horror” film. It defies the ongoing controversy of whether “Veil” is an empowering choice for women or a symbol of domestic and societal oppression, offering a third paradigm of interest, exploring the image of the “Veil” as an element of “horror,” which cannot be purged out as the abject symptom of crisis because of its unisolatable association with the imagination of the Iranian “self.” “Veil” acts as either a foil to the terror of the disconcerting nonchalance amongst the urban populace or

an element that complements the said nonchalance. The image becomes almost impossible to be efficiently isolated as the symptom of the uncanny which can then be evicted from the “self” to sustain health. It is not the true-weird Large in Western Horror that defies familiarity. Conversely, its familiarity is what makes it threatening. It’s too near to the “self” to be avoided. Instead of the impulse to willingly dive into the abyss, as Eugene Thacker (2015) quotes Kierkegaard from *The Concept of Dread*, there is a shuddering realization that the abyss is already around the “self.”³ A quicksand which emanates from the ‘self’ and, in turn, sucks the “self” in;⁴ or the dark figure which is indistinguishable from the world around the “self.”⁵

The study intends to consider how the “unreal” presence of the Veil complements, what Barbara Creed calls, the eternal conflict between the maternal authority in the personal space of a female figure and the paternal laws which conditions the taboos and fears of the space.⁶ It also seeks to question the contesting dialectics of the image of *Burqa/Chador/Hijab* in contemporary media representations, problematizing the tendency for sweeping generalizations, and understanding the cinematic aesthetic of the image across the psychoanalytic and socio-cultural axes. The case studies will be considered as an extension as well as a product of the layered aesthetics of modern imagination around this most visible identifier of Islam.

2.0 SUBLIMINAL FEARS OF THE BARED HEAD: THE VISUAL POLITICS OF VEILS

What is interesting about the niqab is that it isolates the person wearing it, while at the same time, here in the Western world, especially in France, it puts you in the spotlight. That is the contradiction; by wishing to disappear from the public sphere, you are far more visible, you take possession of the public space. It is an empowering piece of clothing, but it can also be frightening.⁷

Ayatollah Khomeini’s regime considered the site of the uncovered female head a contamination of the Shi’ite values of post-revolutionary Iran. To stop further contamination, the MCIG enforced a system of modesty in 1982. Women's bodies became subject to a system of regulations that will project the modesty of Iranian women by standing “warrior like,” against the contaminating forces of Western melodrama's dominant codes of voyeur-

rism and fetishization. Stringent rules on the portrayal of gender relations and direct gaze between male and female characters on screen were implemented. The Iranian filmmakers often satirized such injunctions by scrupulously following them bordering the ridiculous and the unrealistic. For instance, director Tahmineh Milani portrayed the invasion of the *feqh* in the interiors of the bedroom as the younger sister of the female protagonist in *Afsane-ye-ah* (*The Legend of a Sigh*, 1991) was shown wearing a Veil in bed.⁸

Veiling and the dynamics of full or partial covering of the female body has become a recurring concern of the Liberal rhetoric in global media over the last half decade. The iconic July decision of the French legislative units to summarily ban facial wrapping in an alleged attempt to “protect” Muslim women from communal pressure leading to gendered regression, elicited a counter-argument where any pro-secular stance is dismissed as an ethnocentric racist inability to understand “other” cultural practices. While most political analysts have equated the series of spectacles leading to the Burqa ban as emblematic of the post 9/11 ideological and political shift⁹ leading to a generic disdain for all visible representations Islam, it remains an effort to reduce the scope of the debate to certain visible representations of a culture than a symbol of a pathological phobia of the “other.” It was possibly easier to make the image of Veil as an emblem of the non-“self” and hence appropriate for summary abjection, than engaging with an exploration of an inheritance of intolerance towards anything beyond the “world intelligible,” let alone in addressing the fact that the image of the Veil has been a site of struggle even within the Muslim communities. Hence, any study of the image of a “Veil” ought not be a homogenous treatment of Veil throughout the communities.¹⁰ Especially, in Iranian Cinema, the study of Veil ought to subvert the conventionally unquestioned Cinematic systems, to credit the spatial and temporal discontinuities amongst the Iranian filmmakers in and beyond the Iranian soil.

In an attempt to place similar rationale in understanding the visual politics of the practice of veiling, it can be deduced that there exists an inadvertent attempt of the media to promote a culture through the visual digression of the truly problematic to a more congenial dogma. This may appear as a significant departure from the initial formation of the public sphere and social/ entertainment media with an urge to hold the proverbial mirror upto the society. The fear, regardless of all possible analysis, persists.

However, a few points may be deduced here. First, an apparent increase in the Veil imagery might be a direct result of the meteoric rise of anti-Islamic aggression. A reactionary adherence with *visibly* “Islamic” customs (facial hair or choice of garments) and recognizable elements of a Muslim habitus (*namaz*, Ramadan fasting etc.) might be construed as defiance against the polemic insults against individuals with certain religious affiliations.¹¹ Second, the return of debates concerning veiling in the Liberal agenda may also be a digressive ploy to redirect global attention away from the ambivalent grey zone where “religion” and “culture” intermingle, to a more approachable dogma with consignable binaries. The practice “encapsulates [...] a political, ideological and affective heritage that is no less than a specific trajectory of south Asian modernity,”¹² rather than engaging with complicated rhetoric of religion and communal practices as an idealized cultural system symptomatic to certain social conditions.¹³ Third, the preoccupation with the Veil rhetoric and the “fear of wrapping” might also be a strategic introduction of those obvious signs of oppression that were conducive to active mobilization in the growing academic practice of third-world feminism as the oft overlooked underbelly in global feminist politics. Practices like honor killing, female genital mutilation, sexual oppression within religious sects made entries in global media with the advent of an endemic trend of creating a binary between secular humanitarianism and the “other” oppressive cultures.

Sharon Todd, in one of the few early articles on the image of veiling (“Veiling the ‘Other,’ Unveiling Our ‘Selves’: Reading Media Images of the *Hijab* Psychoanalytically to Move beyond Tolerance”),¹⁴ holds the issue of intolerance towards *hijab* as a stance supporting the right of many over that of one, as well as stereotyping the idea of the “normative” in a multicultural society. Questioning the representational politics of *hijab*, Todd argues that in the media representation, the iconic use of *hijab* or any other kind of Veiling implicates more an idea of the “self” and what is associated in the imagination of it, than perpetuating the “other.” Such stereotypes establish the definition of a social group and those who are “outside” of it.¹⁵

The argument takes us far. If we follow the logic that stereotypical images fortifies the imagination of the “self” as opposed to the “uncanny” representation of the “other,” then any inversion of the rationale should also be applicable. If the representation of the “other,” instead of being inherently different from the “self,” reflects the very image of it, then the imagination of the ‘self’ implodes into a fatalistic crisis. For instance, if the media

representation consigns the image that one associates with the “self” as the iconic “other,” then the imagination of the ‘self’ bounces back into an abyss of confusion. To make the long deal short, the “self” looks at the mirror and finds the “other” (enforced by media and other social representation) and recoils in horror.

3.0 THE ABJECT THAT I CANNOT PURGE: FEAR OF MUTILATING THE “SELF”

The creeping threat in the two films for the case study never gets assimilated in a rational understanding of the origin of the impending crisis or the justification behind the haunting. The crisis flirts with the victims and the spectators alike in a Ligottian “frolic,” which defies any human attempt of understanding. What remains is a frantic effort to escape from the recurrent image of *Chador*, a stiff moving triangular stretch of dark fabric or yards of floating floral print — images that cannot essentially be cast away as the “other,” on sync with the backdrop offered within the celluloid canvas. The characters cannot purge themselves of the image, as it willy-nilly becomes a part of their essence. The image of horror sinks in and there is no retching it out, as it stops being “opposed to I”¹⁶ and creeps into the “self.” The victims ingest the threat and turn into a locust carrying the seed of horror. I don’t understand the horror because it is in me. It cannot be separated from my “self,” because then the threat will sustain and mutate, and the “I” will die or turn into another unknowable. “I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself.”¹⁷ “I” am in the process of becoming an “other” at the expense of my own death.

Kristeva’s idea of the abject is not what disturbs cleanliness or health, but it is rather the disruptor of identity, system and order. In the Iranian context, however, the idea of identity and the order may be opposed to each other as the identity is enforced by an order which the identity cannot or will not adhere to. The abject cannot be consigned to any perimeter; it transcends the border between the self and the “other.” It is the element closest to the “self”, yet not exactly the self, which has no compunction to betray the self. Thus, for Kristeva, the culmination of all abjection is the abjection of the self that defies all that which can serve as the basis for the creation of the “self.” The body and the ego are offered for the final castration that mutilates the “self” beyond all recognition. I am no

more because I have purged what I thought is me.¹⁸ Kristeva alludes to the image of a child who swallows up his parents too soon. As the child notices the overwhelming emptiness that is inside “him,” what bubbles up as a response to this self-annihilation (as the closest entity of a child is the maternal figure) is fear; an absolute uncanniness — unapproachable but intimate. Such great is the power of fear that it repudiates everything about the self and casts it without any bearings. Thus, the “self” becomes an exile caught within the perpetual questions of “Where” and “Who” am I? For a member of the Iranian diaspora, this can become a double separation — as the self recognizes the “Veil” as an element of the root culture, forced and defamiliarisingly foreign, but nevertheless a part of the “self” which they have inherited but do not choose — an element of horror, a nightmarish possibility. To cast this out is, in a way, separating oneself from the roots and can situating oneself elsewhere. This purging will negate the sense of the inherited “self,” and will intensify the angst of the rootless. The Who and Where dynamics will pile up with the earlier geographic, and now psychological separation.

4.0 “LIFELESS SHAPE IN A DARK SACK”:¹⁹ WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN IRAN

It has been a standing concern for most Middle Eastern Feminist scholars that most human rights studies, before the iconic 1990 Pohl report, dismiss the everyday discrimination against the women (especially secular women) in the streets of Iran. Though the report intended to be a UN special study on the condition of social dissenters in the post revolution theocratic Khomeini rule, it unwittingly recorded several things.

Women were discriminated and oppressed based on their physical appearance and the “image” they portrayed. For instance, the adherence to the correct way of Veiling and the proper way of conducting herself, determined the degree of safety accorded to a woman.

Rigid parallels were drawn between the “image” of a woman, predominantly represented by the conventionality of her chador, and her political as well as cultural beliefs.

The possibility of any woman beyond the “non-hijab” was summarily rejected. The folds of hijab represented a woman in the then Iranian communal psyche. The image of a secular woman defying the insistence of any kind of Veiling was blotted out thoroughly.²⁰

There were distinctions drawn between the “correctly” veiled and the “badly veiled” women in contemporary Iranian society. While the “correctly” veiled women became symptomatic of the “anti-Western credentials”²¹ of the Islamic consciousness to the curious, the “badly veiled” ones became collaborators with the West and hence fair game for all state sanctioned violence, dismissal from jobs and harassment in streets being just the beginning.

Later studies made on the then social conditions reflect an interesting phenomenon. Unable to fight the very justification of Islam (maybe out of fear of retribution or probably owing to the fact that most of the dissenters were practicing Muslims), record number of women found ways of defying the discriminatory laws within the permissible grounds of protest. They countered the patriarchal interpretation of the legal tenets of *Shariah* and *velayat e faqih*, by offering alternative liberal readings of the Islamic jurisprudence. While questioning and purging out the very existence of Islam and the visible icons of the religion in popular sentiment, the secularists insisted that the discriminatory rules and subsequent violence are not consistent of the understanding and principles of true Islam. The arguments constituted a parallel school of feminism contained within the ambit of constitutional Islam, yet seeking to modify the legal interpretations and the execution of laws against the interest of women, paving the way to a more flexible and better Islam:

Islamic “feminists” wished to remove *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence, from the male monopoly. They argued that, throughout history, men had inappropriately defined the perimeters of *shari’ah* laws and kept women secluded in subordination.²²

This series of counter-movements proposed by Islamic feminists (in lieu of any better word) brought about small but significant victories. Between 1992 and 1997, few revisions were made in the ambit of family law, bringing divorce cases under the jurisdiction of courts rather than the unilateral socially sanctioned abandonment or the discretion of the whimsies of local clerics. However, most such laws and revisions of legal terms were sketchy at best, as the legislature could often neither manage to nor intend to successfully implement the law in favor of the woman defendant. There has, since, been a recurrent conflict between the cleric preferred family courts and the Islamic feminists upholding the UN regulations on women and children rights; fluctuating according to the degree of influence of the clerics and their sympathizers in women groups like *Majlis*. Thus, by the end of the millennium, with the exception of *hijab*, most feminist groups were arguing on

issues external to the grounds of violation of women's rights, more concerned about the idea of authenticity of Islam and improvement of living conditions for women.²³ The "Veil" and the argument around it were consciously repressed as it became part and parcel to the idea of the "self." To a Diasporic individual, the "Veil," therefore turned into a shroud of familiarity and repugnance, oscillating between the identifier of Iranian womanhood and the forced conformation to a root long left behind- unrecognizable in isolation, thus scarier.

5.0 LAMIA ON SKATEBOARDS: *A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT*

Ana Lily Amirpour creates a mood of incongruence. Summarily inverting the idea of the 1970s female vampire, the Girl in her 2014 debut "Iranian Spaghetti Western Horror" *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*, juxtaposes the fecundity of artistically monochromatic cityscape to a darkness of hopeless survival in a dying society, where any sound is drowned in blaring Iranian rock, drugs, grime and violence. The language and a few articles in confining households determine the culture, but there are precious few signifiers otherwise. Things are left unexplained. In the opening sequence, Arash spares no glance at a ditch full of corpses as he saunters holding a cat towards a shiny convertible. This callous disregard to violence, as the frame freezes to display the title card, becomes analogous to the abandon of reason as violence becomes an integral part of life. As a mechanical whir frames an abundance of machine plowing on, a slovenly father injects himself narcotics listening to television where a man warns about the insecurity of women in this society.

In the dark alleyways, disreputable citizens are stalked by a figure draped in a stiff triangular chador, barely distinguishable against the darkness of the backdrop. Saeed, a violent drug peddler with an eclectic combination of tattoo spots the triangular chador for a second while extorting sexual favors from a prostitute, before it disappears. The Girl, in the first glimpse of her face visible from her chador, appears young and very "properly" expressionless. As she comes out of a stationery store flanked by propaganda posters with a faceless chador on one side and a tele-evangelist on the other, her jeans and striped shirt peeks out as the chador balloons behind her in a wing-like trail. Her chador does not stand out even amidst other women in their hijab and western wear, smoking cigarettes,

as it blends her in the silhouette of the dark alleys. In the bright hipster's den wallpapered in punk rock posters, record boxes and bookshelves, the Girl puts on gothic makeup and shimmies without the telltale chador. The punk session ends in under a minute as Saeed unwittingly invites the Girl (back in her *chador* blending against the dark sidewalk) inside his decadently plush apartment. As he attempts to initiate a sexual encounter, the Girl bares her fang as she sucks and chews out his finger²⁴ in an adaptive image of vaginal dentate. As the screaming Saeed is fed his own finger, an obvious phallic metaphor, the blood smeared goth makeup menacingly descends upon him as the *chador* settles like a winglike cape around them. Ironically the first words of the Girl, somewhere in the middle of the film, set the logic of the film straight. As the Girl playfully scares a little boy on skateboard, she whispers in his years: "Answer me. Are you a Good boy, or not? ...I can tear the eyes out of your skull and feed it to the dogs. Till the end of your life, I will watch you. Be a good boy!"

As the Veiled Vigilante preys on "bad" boys while skateboarding through darkness, Arash dresses up in a Count Dracula cape to gatecrash a costume party. The similarity between the Girl's *chador* and the Boy's vampire cape is stressed as they face each other in a posh locality; both "Veiled" similarly in goth makeups and stiff fabrics. The usual attacker-victim dynamics inverts as the seemingly fragile Girl in a submissive chador becomes the predator and the clueless drugged boy in a cape and tousled hair reminiscent of a *hijab* stands in danger. The "deliteralizing gesture" of the first encounter between the duo stretches out at a wide angle as the audience is prepared for an indescribable occurrence in the context of the "Bad City" where violence is treated in a strangely dissociative manner. The object of threat makes its presence felt as an impassive face looms in a bellowing cape as the shadow in the corner and an eerie spectral disquietude and unrest. The physical distance between the predator and prey withers away as they both melt into the surrounding darkness, in a reflecting similarity of appearance and gesture. He drapes the end of his cape around her and draws closer in a protective embrace. It becomes difficult to tell them apart as the identity of the "self" and the "other" blurs away and any possibility of closing one's eyes at the frightening "other" or purging oneself of the crisis, disappear.²⁵ Abjection fails and so does any recognizable stereotyping of the fear. The Girl does not match the aggressive lamia like figure who seduces her prey, as her impassive features and 'tame' gestures belie any effort at deliberate seduction. But the one, who crosses the line, dies.

You cannot escape the threat as the threat cannot be defined against the incongruent usual. The aging prostitute rewraps her *hijab* before performing oral sex, the vampire punishes her “bad boy” preys while settling the *chador* around them both and a heavily made-up cross dresser dances around with a balloon in western wear and a *hijab*, while the prey protectively embraces the Veiled lamia veiling her in his Count Dracula costume. The predator and the prey share a kiss, forgives the “punishment” of a rapacious parent and drives away with their cat into darkness and metallic music. The required monstrosity of the aggressive feminine (symptomatic of Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*) is missing as the Veil becomes a foil to the ‘world-intelligible’ yet undistinguishable, and hence unobjectionable.

6.0 THE FLORAL YARDS OF QUICKSAND: BABAK ANVARI’S *UNDER THE SHADOW*

Unlike Amirpour, Anvari has a particular agenda as his object of crisis is much less corporeal and creeps in on the victim and the audience alike as more of a disembodied dread than a distinguishable figure. There is no Veiled phantasm (alive or dead) behind those floral yards, the Veil *is* the phantasm. And as Shideh and the other women walk around draped in this phantasmic entity, the specter or the “true-weird” envelopes them making them reflections of what they fear. The context of the dread is set, as the film opens with a menacing drumbeat in a sterile University corridor with students scrupulously draped in dark *chadors* and properly speaking to their own kind. The protagonist Shideh (Narges Rashidi) sits across a stiff official in a room prominently festooned with a Khomeini portrait, being rejected in her plea for continuing her medical studies. This is the confining world of refusals and dark shrouds for the penitent rebel, as the figure of authority looks on and bombs drop at a distance. As Shideh drives away in tears, she is forced to come out of her dark musings as the culture police stop her and she furtively tucks back any truant curls under her Veil that she is allowed to take off only after reaching home with a sympathetic neighbor.

The Veil persists; as the traditional Mrs. Ebrahimi does not unveil even under an unsettling air raid alarm, standing apart from the “unveiled” Shideh and Mrs. Fakur. In the bright sunny kitchen, the looming threat of Dorsa’s nightmare, the annual draft notice of Iraj ordering him to the Iraq-Iran War and the memories of Shideh’s sleepwalking are enhanced as the taped window casts a crossed shadow at the family. For the first half of the film, Anvari utilizes the classic genre tropes of haunting with the creeping buildup of

repeated air-raids, Dorsa's insistence that a mute boy "told" her of *Djinn*s around them, Shideh trying to desperately resuscitate elderly Mr. Bijari with CPR while an unexploded missile falls through the ceiling and Dorsa's doll Kimia being allegedly abducted by the *Djinn* in the Veil. The Veil imagery enlarges as the toothy missile crevice on the ceiling is *covered up* in a canvas shroud. The first encounter with the uncanny occurs with Mr. Bijari's daughter Pargol recounting the strange passing of her father, who had survived the missile, but had a heart attack after seeing a shocking "something" behind her. Pargol's inability to describe the eldritch depicts the failure of the rational imagining of the "otherworldly," except in a sense of deep belligerence towards the "self" as it lurks in "all the dark corners in which the I's mastery would be challenged."²⁶ Though, the skeptic protagonist dismisses the "uncanny," the seed of disquiet is sown and the image appears soon. As Shideh, deep asleep, suddenly finds her faraway husband beside her spewing cruel dismissals as a figure looms large under the blanket and "covers" her within its suffocating folds. It cannot be a dream as "it was too real," and the missile must have "brought something with it." Shideh is warned by the devout Mrs. Ebrahimi that if the *Djinn* takes a treasured personal possession from an individual, it is the first stage of haunting and soon, the possession will start.

As the Fakurs leave for Paris, the haunting escalates and Shideh finally sees "something." As she wakes from her sleep to draw the curtains (another persistent Veil metaphor other than the blankets), a Veil speeds past outside the window. As the Ebrahimis leave the mother-daughter duo behind, Shideh spots the dead Mr. Bijari in their bedroom as the cracked ceiling, the one between their apartment and the Bijari's, eerily repairs itself and Dorsa is found speaking to a "Lady standing in the corner." As a terrified Shideh runs barefoot and bareheaded with Dorsa; she is arrested for indecent exposure by the police and is forced to cover herself in a full body chador. "This sort of behavior is intolerable. A woman should be more scared of exposing herself than of anything else. These are not old times now. We have values. Our men are becoming martyrs to protect these values," the official drones on and a dispirited veiled Shideh looks on emptily. As they tiptoe their way back, Shideh starts at her own reflection in a chador, and the image of crisis is determined. A half-crazed Shideh envisions Dorsa sitting with her mouth grotesquely open looking up at the missile hole; the full bodied floral Veil blocks her way to Dorsa and then plunges towards her. Dorsa's blue hooded jacket draws her in the raid shelter as the face turns into

a pair of gigantic jaws trying to swallow her. As Shideh runs for Dorsa, yards of bellowing chador drapes around her and the only way out is mercilessly tearing it and pushing her child away from crisis. As the mother is sucked in the quagmire of melting chador, the child pulls her out. The image of threat remains all around them, ever present, lurking at the corner, as Shideh drives away draped in a chador.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The image of the Veil persists as the appropriation of it determines the degree of liberation that a woman invests in her “self.” As the “Veil” becomes the marker of servility and backwardness, a distinction rises between the “veiled” and the “unveiled,” with a discursive subjugation of the latter on the former. The romanticization of a “canvas wall” emblematic of the “Veiled” permanently categorizes the individual behind the *Burqa* into an uncanny non-being to the “unveiled” bourgeoisie secular who allegedly (described by historian Homa Nateq) demanded a participation in the reactionary politics of Khomeini draped in rippling black *chadors*. The argument went both ways when the Islamic feminists re-veiled themselves as a mark of empowerment and openly disapproved of their unveiled sistren, as they found their preoccupation with veiling counter-productive and digressive from what is important. The *hijab* (“But no Chador. Never a Chador...”) ²⁷ acquired a reputation for a socially enabling tool to preserve the Islamic norms that are chosen to be an identifier for Iranian womanhood, and any deviance from such an image will be tantamount to betrayal of cultural identity: “under all the talk about hijab freeing women from commercial or sexual exploitation, all the discussion of *hijab*’s potency as a political and revolutionary symbol of selfhood, was the body: the dangerous female body...” ²⁸

Eventually, the discursive arc comes full circle as most Human Rights reports save a noncommittal passage on the everyday practical inconvenience of chador and the inability of choosing one’s attire under a totalitarian regime with hardly enough attention towards its imposition as a violation of agency. With an attempt to invest the wearer with a significantly uniform worldview, the *ulemas* appropriated the private space of the Iranian women projecting an adopted consciousness homogenizing over individuality of the wearer. And the wearer never afford the luxury of purging her consciousness of the veil

— either they submit to the orthodoxy and drape their persons in the yards of anonymity, or they defy against the dictate of the society and forever is haunted by the disapproving image of the Veil. The distinction between the public and the private spaces gradually narrows to nothing as the confining boundary of the yards of fabric wall closes in on the ‘self’ becoming indistinguishable from the “self.” The necessary distancing required for abjection is negated and eventually any effort to purge out the confining threat fails.

In the two films used as a case study in the present enquiry, the horror of the self, works in two different ways. Amirpour creates the image of the veiled lamia as something which is disruptively incongruous and yet strangely is an undistinguishable modality matching the darkness beyond. Conversely, for Anvari’s *Shideh*, the trailing floral chador is a nightmarish reality of her “self” with dark promises of a future that she desperately tries to avoid. While the former satirizes the self/other stereotype by matching the stiff triangular chador with roller skates, the latter builds on the stereotype of the prescribed normativity by investing in it a horror of the unavoidable future. While Amirpour’s *Girl* is threatening in her seductive weirdness, Anvari’s veiled phantasma codifies the religious political image threatening the idea of secularism, tolerance and liberality. Thus, while the other more conventional female characters around *Shideh* escape unscathed, the Westernized mother-daughter duo is sucked into the quagmire of the chador. If we follow Nima Naghibi’s argument on the politics of extensive media representation of Persian women, we will have to begin with the *apriori* that the representation of Veiled Iranian women is fueled by the taboos, fears and other *gemeinschaftic* conditioning of a culture and in turn displays a discursive effect on communal psyche and the material lives of women.

Amirpour’s imagination of the Veil is a foil to the macabre vampiric cape, indistinguishable from the mechanical whirl and the dark arctic coldness of the “Bad City.” It is there as the uncanny, menacing figure (curiously like the Dark Knight) melting into the darkness. You “know” what it is, and attempt at “understanding” its rationale, but cannot get rid of it, because you cannot tell it apart from the “self.” The “self” and the “other” fall in love, as the “world-intelligible” and the “world-without-us” merge in a cacophony of music with the cape and the chador draping around each other. Anvari’s floral Veil is faceless, and can be the externalization of the victim’s worst fears and insecurities. It cannot be purged out as the cultural conditioning of the “self” cannot be imagined without it. The Veil persists and though the protagonist tries to attempt, it still has her prized medical book (the symbol of her individuality and ambition), and is firmly attached to her as *Shideh* is forced to re-

main veiled. Anvari's Veil is all around the victim, and hence cannot be distanced and abjected as the "self" will not survive the purge. The "Veil," thus becomes inseparable to the imagination of the Iranian diaspora. Film, one does not want it or even knows it, yet, the passion for it is joyful, violent and tormenting. The desired reflection of the self shatters as the shadow of the Veil creeps up behind one, as the ego contemplates being the "Other." In Persian diaspora, the cinematic imagery of the "Veil" remains suspended in an undefinable space of seduction and repudiation, as the idea of the self does not want to associate itself with the "Veil" but cannot contemplate itself without it. If abjected, the "Veil" will take the sense of "self" away leaving a hollowness that intensifies the power of horror.

1. Ana Lily Amirpour was born in the UK and Babak Anvari was born in Iran but immigrated to the UK at the age of sixteen.

2. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Iranian Cinema: Art, Society and the State," *Middle East Report* 219 (Summer, 2001): 29.

3. Eugene Thacker, *Tentacles Longer than Night: Horror of Philosophy Vol. 3* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2015), 118.

4. As we literally see happening to Shideh in *Under the Shadow*.

5. Arash embracing the Girl in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

6. Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1994), 51.

7. Quoted in Anneliese Moors, "NiqaBitch and Princess Hijab: Niqab Activism, Satire and Street Art," *Feminist Review* 98, "Islam in Europe" (2011): 128. The quotation is a transcription from a video featuring Princess Hijab's story about Art and Islam, as broadcasted by Al-Jazeera's English language programme on 6 July 2010. According to the video the comments are on the social reaction to a veiled figure as observed by Princess Hijab, the persona of an anonymous street artist working in the Paris metro.

8. Negar Mottahede, "Iranian Cinema in the Twentieth Century: A Sensory History," *Iranian Studies* 42.4 (September 2009): 534.

9. For the first time in recent political history, fundamental Islamic principles were considered to be an enemy to Western liberating and democratic ideals, whereas before the collapse of the twin towers there was an overt truce between fundamentalist Islam and the Occidental powers against the political ideology of Communism — Lubna Duggal and Abhishek Shaw, "Burqa Battles: the Left Needs to Reclaim its Space in the Battle for Secularism and against Fundamentalism," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45.32 (August 2010): 9.

10. Though addressing a different socio-political context, Ananya Jahanara Kabir writes about how the immediacy of certain socio-political conditions might have been obfuscated by "conflating that issue with images that stoked barely subliminal fears of an atavistic, resurgent Islam" — Ananya Jahanara Kabir, "The Burqa Ban," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45.37 (September 2010): 1. The Burqa Ban in France unilaterally prescribes the side that any analyst needs to take without permitting an objective analysis of choices that Muslim women make in the *glocal* media.

11. It is important to note that in France the movement preceding the Burqa ban allegedly started when progressive women struggled against incidents involving members of fundamentalist organizations "slut shaming" unveiled schoolchildren. This movement led the French legislature in banning all religious symbols from school premises including crosses, rosaries, turbans etc. However, with the blanket ban on all forms of facial and head covering, the women who had previously resisted the fundamentalist moves, had no recourse but in seeking refuge within reactionary fundamentalism: "The initial inquiry we need to make is whether the burqa belongs to the same class of religious symbols as the cap, rosary and bangles. These markers of identity make small additions to the physical appearance, and thereby the social self, of the wearer. None of them can be compared with the burqa which dissolves the public identity of the individual wearer and thereby imparts to her an overarching religious identification. It leaves no room for individual identification since the person wearing it becomes a non-being whose public presence is wholly reduced to being a member of a religious group." — Krishna Kumar "Burqa: More than a Symbol," *Economic and Political Weekly* 45.35 (August 2010): 4.

12. Kabir, "The Burqa Ban," 18.

13. In retrospect, we might look into the Foucauldian warning of culture specific "regime of truth" which acts as the mechanism to distinguish truth from falsehood; a kind of *a priori* that creates a socially sanctioned procedure of truth acquisition by investing certain bodies with the agency of authenticity; as opposed to "new forms of Orientalism, along with racism *vis-à-vis* Middle Eastern peoples and cultures, have found currency in a reinvestment in the civilizational tropes of Islam and the West" — Mino Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 19.

14. Referring to the suspension of Emilie Ouimet from a school in Montreal in September, 1994, for refusing to the official behest to remove her *hijab*, Todd quotes the principal of the school: "the wearing of a distinctive sign, like the hijab or neo-Nazi insignias could polarize the aggressivity of students" — Sharon Todd, "Veiling the 'Other,' Unveiling Our 'Selves': Reading Media Images of the Hijab Psychoanalytically to Move beyond Tolerance," *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation* 23.4 (Autumn 1998): 439.

15. *Ibid.*, 440.

16. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

17. *Ibid.*, 3.

18. *Ibid.*, 210.

19. Reza Afshari quotes Mahnaz Afkhami Secretary-General of the Women's Organization of Iran under the Shahin the beginning of his chapter in *Human Rights in Iran: the Abuse of Cultural Relativism*, on women's rights in Iran: "In December of 1979, Ms. Farrokhrou Parsa, the first woman to serve in the Iranian cabinet [Minister of Education, appointed 1968], was executed [...]. A few hours after the sentence was pronounced she was wrapped in a dark sack and machine-gunned [...]. The significance of her position for the Iranian women's movement rested not so much in her considerable personal achievement but in that she was one of hundreds of thousands. Those who executed her also understood this and staged the event as a symbolic attempt to reduce her — and through her the type of women she represented — to an insignificant, lifeless shape in a dark sack." — Afshari, *Human Rights in Iran: the Abuse of Cultural Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 250.

20. Dr. Homa Darabi's public unveiling and subsequent self immolation on protest against the Iranian theocracy can be considered as an example. In fact, Dr. Darabi's familial and social conditions strongly remind one of Anvari's Shideh.

21. Afshari, *Human Rights in Iran*, 252.

22. *Ibid.*, 255.

23. Two of the more reactionary laws passed during this moment of backlash are firstly, the gender based segregation of hospitals with the rule that patients can be treated only by the physician of the same sex; and secondly, the restrictive censorship imposed over media and literature (mostly those which were sensitive to women's conditions) on the potentially spurious ramification that there articles can make to incite conflict in society. The latter law also included a blanket ban on all "provocative" foreign female images with bared head and any literature alluding to "direct relations between [unveiled?] women and men" as they can "stimulate the youth and awaken their instincts" — *ibid.*, 259.

24. The scene is significant. It was almost a rerun of the earlier sequence of sexual extortion of the aging prostitute, where the drug dealer had pushed his fingers in the mouth of the woman prompting her to suck it in a strangely erotic manner. As Atti, the prostitute primly sets her hijab right before lowering her head to deliver a forced oral sex act the chador appears for a second voyeuristically looking at the duo. In the latter sequence as the Girl first sucks out the finger, there is a promise of the same objectification of the female body, which gets subverted the next second as the girl bites the finger out and drains him of his blood.

25. Something the little boy did by first trying to run away from the Girl and then, failing all, closes his eyes in an attempt to negate the "other."

26. Emmanuelle Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (London: Continuum, 2006), 121.

27. Afshari, *Human Rights in Iran*, 263.

28. Brooks quoted in *ibid.*, 263-264.

POST-CINEMATIC (MIS-)REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM

Taida Kusturica (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna)

Who controls the past, [...], controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.

— GEORGE ORWELL, 1984

The technological empowerment of the camera and the invention of motion pictures — the cinema, is in Western culture an important extension for understanding the physical, political and sensible world — what we today recognize in all cultural segments as *representations*. In particular, this essay scrutinizes the post-cinema production of political and cultural antagonism towards Islamic culture, and thus approaches cinema as generated cinema, as a hegemony of politics, religion and digital media representations by images. What I am also proposing is that the post-cinematic production of imagery has a structural function in the broader context of neo-imperial desire, as a function that affects the target group — race, identity, gender, religion, and in this context, it enables the complete disappearance of the realistic narrative through new media ecologies. The “new media,” which post-cinema as a phenomenon is a part of, will not be considered from the technical point of view, but as the medium of present epistemological and social relationship forming politics with image(s) — information, which becomes the structure of the capitalistic consciousness of a viewer or the central power of global capitalism/neo-imperialism. Such an analysis raises a number of empirical and philosophical questions that I would like to examine briefly.

Camera as the mechanistic term of matter and motion bespeaks reified a Cartesian sense in physics and the philosophy of modernism, which was consequently applied through early cinematic apparatus. Being both an object of desire and gaze, the image was in dire need of the Western consciousness-rationalism represented in dominant colonial-western cinema (French, British, American, and German)¹ and these issues are often portrayed as being unique to the “West.” Neither the West nor the East are necessarily geographic notions, but rather imaginary, even ideological fictions, mostly — and I would like to argue here — employed in history via visual mediation (“old and new media”), especially within cinematic apparatus, in relation to political selection, exclusion, limitati-

on, and appropriation. Cinema's innovators, the Lumière brothers, were first agents of colonial narrative in their short films.² The creation of *Orient* serves as an example of the outer world manipulated by the virtual perception of apparatuses. Kamran Rastegar in *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* notes: "The major genres of colonial imagination, such as adventure and exploration stories, military narratives, and historical dramas, become fundamental to the success of the cinema industry."³ I would rather consider only the correlation of cinematic and post-cinematic (*new media*) perspectives of such a complex ideologic/political-aesthetic strategy, by examining how a certain "image of fate" and a certain mediological and epistemological background in its representational mode are tied up in the political and religious discourse of today's cinematic mediation. Steven Shaviro argues: "Capital continues to function through the dissimulation of the imperial archive, as it has done throughout the last century."⁴ Accordingly, the cinematic medium (from Greek *bios*- bioscop, that means form of life) is used as common sense for the gaze and representation of others, as a way to transcend political power. Cinema that becomes a shorthand for the political by its newly discovered instrumentalized telos, paved the way to the misuse of the contemporary representation of religion — as well as the artistic re-inscription of cultural narratives and religion into political power. Until the present this context of visibility has been a particular mode of aesthetic cognition of human/visual culture. Modern cinema embodied in transcendental imperialism as an aesthetic of anthropology in the process of "cultivation" was primarily inverted into today's *politics of culture* as the very act of setting the value and economic power over those who are to be represented. Radical imperialism, which is today recognized in media and cinema narratives, means that traditional colonial empires due to the importance of machine technology counterfeited and created the autonomy of *time and representation*, which shifts towards the historical relationship of image as the *image of the world*, therefore understanding it as an aesthetical form of experience. The concept of *political modernism*, as known today through the western cinematic medium, is a fundamental layer for understanding the misrepresentation of "double becoming" — from the past colonial *orientalized image of Muslims* and contemporary *creolization of Muslims* (formation of new identities), in post-cinematic imagery, which *reincarnated* already orientalized narratives and prescribed it into a new media political agenda. The whole western genealogy of image is based on this correlation between the technology and politics of transcendental construc-

tion of visuality. Martin Heidegger in *The Age of the World Picture* discussed the phenomenon of making modernity by science and technology as a new medium. "Man becomes the representative [der Repräsentant] of that which is, in the sense of that which has the character of object."⁵ Furthermore he argues:

The age that is determined from out of this event is, when viewed in retrospect, not only a new one in contrast with the one that is past, but it settles itself firmly in place expressly as the new. To be new is peculiar to the world that has become picture.⁶

Such a way of capitalization of biosocial functions and vision, through the power of technology, among others, is otherwise known as commodification dominating our cultural understanding of representation. Also, this type of historical genealogy of imagining in present-ing, opening a speculative form of today's *world view-image* in age of digital imag(e)/ing of world — putting at stake ideological and visual misapprehension. Contemporary digital *tools* are prone to manipulate perception, as picture does not "behave" as a classical picture — the representation of "impression of reality" through the medium. I find the following considerations provide convincing examples in contemporary mass-media-post-cinematic mode of production and digital ontology of images. They preceded the conscious visualisation and shaped those sensory deprived pictures of reality that have shifted the ground of the cinematic medium, and thus the general visual understanding and perceiving of the world. In other words, this paper insists on re-framing our understanding of what cinema was in light of what it is now becoming in the age of digital media cultural politics. The cinematic medium in a classical sense, as materiality of image and ancient desire for narrative(s), still orders present and post-modern society, but in a different way. It animates the most complex ideological and political secret of social movements which brought about new epistemological functions of the political economy through images. In order to understand the contemporary cinema/image within the new communication paradigm, it is of the utmost importance that the science of image is able to determine an ontological line between analogue and digital image in the process of the dematerialisation of society and its sociological image, memory and reality. It is where the cinema withstands the same destiny; that is the dematerialization between reality and ir-reality as well as the political discourse within society. Going from technics into techno-

logy is the change from an analogue into a digital paradigm, out of the historical development of thinking and being, and is evident in the technocratic society. Images become the mimetic portraits of political engineering which change our perception toward the Orwellian anti-utopian dehumanized power they have. And the economy was the concept of their *living* linkage not in the mode of representation, but in the mode of simulation. The space and time of the digital image demand us to take a different approach to the images, not as in the old Greek term *eikon*, i.e., an impression or a representation, but rather in experiences, events, and a special sort of manifestation. It reminds us that the interplay between the *apparatus* and the *medium* always has a political dimension, accordingly, post-cinema would mark not a caesura but a transformation that abjures, emulates, prolongs, mourns, or pays homage to the cinema.

The digital sphere is a completely new way of ordering reality within which notions such as originality, copy, reproduction or representation no longer hold their own authentic sense in the way that two-dimensional photography resided on its own ontological ground of indexicality(-trace), but rather the incomparable epistemological levels which the image theory has to take into consideration as the line between reality and appearance of reality is disappearing. That is not just the same old vivid sense of aliveness of television or cinema, that is “real” with a difference, the time-image becomes the time control-image, a tool for creation of a new political *imag(e)ling of the world*. An indicative example illustrating a “picture of the world” as an image is the 9/11 Twin Towers in New York City.⁷ It was represented in regard to Islamic terrorism, and in which the post-cinematic narrative of terror conjures modern cinema’s legacy of imperial narratives with the new narrative; so then again it becomes one of many cinematic deceptions/effects of Hollywood misinterpretation of the world. I am going to investigate elements and structures in the post-cinematic medium that correspond with global frenzy and its representation through the new political apparatus covered by “new” media as a post-cinematic moving images medium in the mis-interpretation of Islam. An important feature of the contemporary image is that it is not defined with language as *logos*, but information-*code*. Therefore, it is a programmed and transcoded image that leads viewers — and viewers no longer indicate people passively sitting and watching propaganda movies in the cinema or on television — towards a new approach of epistemology inside the cinema. From the effects they might have on the recipient, i.e., our ability to make judgements, the historical connection

becomes questionable prior to loss of its iconic analogy. Thus, cinematic narrative is not inscribed in matter within the physical world, but is displayed on a cognitive invisible world map — the display of a possible reality. The relationship between events and recognition as such is a basic layer upon which the digital image creates its power — the power to alter them into pure abstraction. It could be compared with the experience of Malevich's famous painting of *Black Square* (1915) as a radically-non-representational image/pixel, but with ontological recognition as an image in the sense of its physical reality and perceptual realism. Finally, this thesis, in regard to the becoming-abstract of the visual, suggests a new set of insights. Lev Manovich addresses the meaning of these changes in the filmmaking process comparing it with pre-cinematic practices — hand painting:

As cinema enters the digital age, these techniques are again becoming the commonplace in the filmmaking process. Consequently, cinema can no longer be clearly distinguished from animation. It is no longer an indexical media technology but, rather, a sub-genre of painting.⁸

From this thought, one can conclude how everything can be easily airbrushed towards a totally new order of receiving the "truth." Computer memory is also not affected by the variability of time as well as politics and history; that is to say, it works between narratives and symptoms of narratives. From this paradox, the sense of post-cinema is inevitably caught in these feedback loops in a rapidly changing media environment, and any assessment of the historical and affective changes signalled by this term continue to define the future. D.N. Rodowick discussed the following:

The most difficult question, then, relates to the ethics of computational interactions; that is, evaluating our contemporary mode of existence and addressing how our ontology has changed in our interactions with computer screens. What epistemological and ethical relations to the world and to collective life do simulation automatisms presuppose?⁹

At the core of digital technology, in relation to the industrial-mechanical, is the power of pure aesthetics (*hyper-aesthetic realm*), without instrumentalisation of body and perception

— *looking as labor* — that Jonathan Beller immediately suggested by the term *cinematic mode of production*. The present condition is better defined with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun's assertions of *programmed vision* as a direct dialogue with the software codification of feeling, geopolitics, and identity's socio-political features. Thus, to understand the contemporary image, it is not enough to recognize the operation of the economy solely, but also to understand the metaphor that conjoins them. Therefore, the image renders algorithmic code (cognitive manipulation) which already executes the *biopower* and *governmentality* in the very structure. In Foucauldian terms, *that* creates a dispositive of totally new modes of existence where the post-cinematic image becomes the future self. This compensation of the discourse of knowledge/power notion with the notion of dispositive is what Deleuze marks as the transition from disciplinary into controlling societies in 1992, i.e., society transitions toward the post-historical phenomenon. The present "post-historical time" (the new global vision) in cinematography, escapes from its historical context — what Jean-Luc Godard defined for cinema as "truth 24 frames per second" — and emerged as an ambiguous tool of paradoxal mis-interpretation of its own purpose to inscribe the narrative and to represent it — putting new cognitive and physical demands on the viewer. Digital images already look through pictures in metanarrative mode (a mode that works on an algorithm that scans all other pictures previously made and stored in memory). On this legacy digital images already make post-memory on which the contemporary platform of representations is based, where the present does not exist as it existed in the "old media" apparatus. Therefore, the "digital present" is programmed, consequently, the *image* could not be described as the metaphysics of Heidegger's *world picture* (the equivalent for modern beings is their position in the midst of this picture). It is a metaphor on its own which speculates on the preferences of present data-mixing into fabulation of reality where everyone is in a state of being misused and is not able to struggle to find a collective image of how to define themselves.

To comprehend cinema as a world vision-image, dependent on the "new" technology of media, means that it not only mediates between the observer and the observed, but also creates a metapolitical condition that concerns the emergence of a new concept of perceiving or *episteme*, as well as new forms of political and visual *affect/sensibility*. Therefore, the connection and sense in which the (*mis*)-representation of Islamic culture and identity should be understood is as a prefiguration between the *post-cinematic* mode and what Ma-

rienne Hirsch (2008) named *post-memory*¹⁰ — a memory of cultural trauma not experienced first-hand but rather transferred vicariously. The age of a computer memory device rarely corresponds to the age of the memory it holds; the device and its content do not fade together. The new media, with its ephemeral structure provides a strong motion structure of aliveness, the *prosthetic memory* immediacy that amplifies single action, expanding it into a narrative that “restarts” temporarily a new *re-orientation* of eastern identity in contemporary visual culture and cinema plots. As a paradoxical example for this assertion, it is crucial to mention the 9/11 event, as a consequence of which post-cinema apparatuses expanded *post-memory* (compressed time and space) onto global political and cultural patterns, resulting in the desired political effect/affect of the vilification of Muslims in the United States — and at present utmost global hate — indebted and remediated into new-media cinema-narratives, where the Muslims are subjected to rules on non participatory acts as well as of conscience in making the political and historical context. They remain either as consumers of foreign media power or as an object of stereotypical images for economic power. The key to digital technologies is not “immateriality” but the fact that they can be “programmed” and epitomized as new imagery — the parallel (and paranoid) myths of the Internet as total freedom/total control, stem from the dehumanization of political problems into technological ones. Lev Manovich asserts that “cinema gives birth to a computer,” in a configuration between time, memory and perception that

gradually, cinema taught us to accept the manipulation of time and space, the arbitrary coding of the visible, the mechanization of vision, and the reduction of reality to a moving image as a given. As a result, today the conceptual shock of the digital revolution is not experienced as a real shock - because we were ready for it for a long time.¹¹

In the modern post-cinematic era of changeable ideologies, the most powerful link is the one between religions and cultures/identity. In the new era, it is not the Islam described in terms of faith and new world discoveries, but a ruthless terror of calling the Islam a “political religion” thus becoming the most dangerous phenomenon of the modern day which allows the media to shape repression out of historical ability and human impact.

Manovich explains that in regard to this visual technology, the subject in the digital setting

has to be standardized, and the means by which they are standardized need to be standardized as well. Hence the objectification of internal, private mental process, and their equation with external visual forms which can be easily manipulated, mass produced, and standardized on its own.¹²

Traditional understanding of the new media — as analytical thinking — in intermediary and its realistic transfer of information can no longer provide an adequate reading of the visual; the digital media are based on softwaring the vision, as Gene Youngblood introduced this shift from new media to *metamedia*. Experience has turned into the appearance of the real, and appearance into the experience of the hyper-real. Thus, the return to the image seems to have launched experience far beyond language, into the images, that have gained power thanks to new technologies, and particularly thanks to the abuse of these new technologies. The very bond of this sense is the present reappropriation of past and future narratives — e.g., the colonial past of Arabs into a new narrative of the “Islamic terrorist,” which is a perpetual example of the mis/interpretative models of Islamic culture and memory that are moving towards new epistemological models of knowledge and visual production.

The totalitarianism of the contemporary media no longer has its enacting subject — it is electronic politics that governs now with the help of images. The post-cinematic vision in films and media creates the historical transition of a new era of power evident in the new radically changed conditions of viewing and new ways in which films address their spectators. The perception of image as video or film is blurred in the consciousness of the recipients of images, because a computer as a mediator conflated memory with devices, creating the ideological (self-)censorship incorporating it into the “reality” of narrative. Wendy Chun elaborated software as an analogy for ideology; one could say that neoliberalism, as well as the control of the “masses,” became a cinema form in the reality of post-cinematically mediated events, as multiple simulations display in a gamespaces-like world. Software embedded multi-corporational *télos* colonized through the new “visible” regime, creating a most oppressive historical mis-representation of Islam in the post-im-

perial world. Thus, the post-cinematic regime is the new political regime — the “war on terror” is a projection of the post-cinematic magic of multilayered “reality” that executes powerful historical capital of memory and historicity. The link between the cinema and post-cinematic is that the latter perceptuality capitalises the consciousness with images through an already capitalised image of the future, i.e., memory. It is referred to as *post-* as a pseudo-temporal and an abstract extension to which the proliferation of images is never simply a neutral process but rather something that greatly shapes the meaning and experience of the moving images. Through the perpetual project of democratization of mass mediation in the present day, the new mode of reducing the “others” via high-tech Orientalism objectified the reality and made it possible, that after all (media ideological underpinnings of Tower collapsing) the viewer is given no way of framing the attack as anything other than a completely irrational and totally undeserved act of aggression.

Using the term *expanded cinema*, Gene Youngblood defined a promising historical process to manifest consciousness as a reality of synaesthetic images. His essays in *Expanded Cinema* (1970) were very innovative concerning not the aesthetics of the cinema, but putting the accent on the viewers. They will later become the key point in the era of post-cinematic mediation. I have chosen the iconic example of the “9/11” Twin Towers collapsing (2001) mediation — the brute fact-event made up of the “images” — as powerful action-images which tend to illustrate this new role of post-cinema world vision, as well as the awareness of an aesthetical image manipulation with religion and culture in the era of new media ecologies. Post-cinema emerged within digital media neo-colonization. The government’s monopoly on post-9/11 war-related media images was strong. The *9/11* documentary runs for two hours, with an hour of bonus material on the DVD which is comprised primarily of testimonials by New York Fire Department (NYFD) personnel. It was made by two French filmmakers, Jules and Gédéon Naudet. I would like to point out that this was a strong catalyst and inauguration of the ideologically-political post-cinematic narrative. This documentary and others are a typically affective structural incarnation of identity politics, where the ideological construction of subjectivity is central to creation of the movie — on the one hand victimization and, on the other the image of terror. This is, of course, exactly the form taken by the Naudet brothers’ documentary as it attempts to convert a “decentring” tale of terror into a “re-centring” story of heroism and community spirit. The irony is that the camera on that day was waiting on the spot with the film director for the event, likewise other people’s mobile cameras. It is this image/narrative that

plays a decisive role in the viewer's opinion, where cinematic techniques were employed in documentary and as well in other documentary films in which the audience is confused by the edited point of view, with highly successful fictional movie effects represented as a document of reality:

The framing of the story departs from traditional films about the disaster, which typically shows the first plane hitting Tower 1, the "Oh, my God" response of those on the ground, then the second plane hitting Tower 2, followed by the collapse of the two towers and the screams and frantic attempts of those on the ground to avoid the debris. *9/11* opens in the traditional manner, but then adds depth by flashing back to the history of Ladder 1 and the selection of Tony Benetatos upon his graduation to be the featured rookie as he finally becomes the fireman that he has always wanted to be. He lost his life on 9/11. The film ends with a pictorial montage scroll of the firemen who lost their lives that day to the fade-out song, "Danny Boy."¹³

Ziauddin Sardara and Meryll Wyn Davies in the book *American Dream, Global Nightmare* (2004) argue that the American media has a bad influence on its citizens, as well as the destiny of every individual on this planet. The authors believe that the American film industry is vital in creating mythical prejudice: "Cinema is the engine and empire metaphorically and in reality."¹⁴ They analyse a few American films and come to conclusions which then create these *myths*, and they serve to govern American society and global politics. One of them is *Cinematography (Hollywood) and War (colonization)* as being necessary for creating the nation and state — whereas symbols of war are in every aspect of American society and culture (films, TV series, video games, toys) and war rhetorics are a component of the *end of history* hypothesis by Francis Fukuyama, also *The Clash of Civilizations* by Samuel Huntington, a liberal *project for the new American century*. Islam as a culture and religion has changed immensely in the cinematic language — it has become a cinematic *aftereffect* image serving global visual neo-imperialism. The relation between media reception (cinema) and Islam is profound and multi-layered, especially in the age of digital manipulation of time and space, what Chun has called a *hi-tech Orientalism*. Concerning the medium, contemporary cinema reshapes images on a new level of digital ontology — image without image (images do stand on aesthetic or moving image). The absence of his-

tory or political life in post-cinematic apparatus creates hybridized telos, what I would like to put under the term of *hi-tech Orientalism*, that is to say that all temporal zones (past, present, future) are dissolving into the medium without materiality/reality in which images do not possess historical genealogies. This is a crucial layer on which the system of post-representations that constitutes our modernity stands. Thus, the image without medium and medium without image became a virtual weapon of the new media technocracy. But, the digital is just another time-based spatial media; it should not be understood as something newborn or degrading, but as a process that contextualized a new form of visual and political life of the image. The last decades have seen a multiplication of scholars dealing with Islam and media, especially post-9/11. A great number of studies have investigated the (mis)representations of Islam and Muslims, mostly in Western media (Olfat Hassan Agha 2000; Rubina Ramji 2003; Mark Silk 2003; Elizabeth Poole 2006; Amir Saeed 2007), but also in the media of the Middle East (Lila Abu-Lughod 2005; Lina Khatib 2006). Representations of Muslims in the media in the post-9/11 context have shown some levels of complexity, as opposed to the one-dimensional caricatures of earlier times. These representations are occurring in what Evelyn Alsultany in her book *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (2012) describes as a post-race era through “simplified complex representations,”¹⁵ and these representations unwittingly collaborate in forming multicultural and post-race illusions, and are ultimately framed in the context of terrorism. Religions are powerful, dynamic socio-cultural systems, working at both micro (the socialization dimension) and macro (political dimension) levels of society. The link between film reception and religion opens new terrains of audience engagement with film in a digital era of post-cinematic production.

Marie-José Mondzain significantly utilized the term *iconophilia* to show the obsession with visual imagery. She elaborates the visual spectacle’s capacity to appeal, seduce or strike and control the consciousness and remarks on how this “sensuality” is recruited in order to execute political ideologies. According to Mondzain, even the most *aniconic* regime that rejects the visual exerts power through the manipulation of visual spectacle which she refers to as *wars of images*.¹⁶ The digital image is an absence of image. This type of aesthetics is visible in the post-continuity aesthetics of contemporary film, which juxtaposes and layers spatially and temporally discordant images with little interest in the kind of totality of the twentieth-century filmic diegesis, as well as its pervasive reliance upon

compositing as such (CGI-Computer Generated Imagery, GIS imagery, Bullet time effects). The filmic strike of post-9/11 imagery of the collapsing Twin Towers is a very powerful post-cinematic effect by the fact of the absence of such pictures in the media. Namely, the only images that exist were shot by documentary filmmaker Jules Naudet and sold to Gamma agency the same day, which has crucially opened the phenomenon and method of a public “image-iconoclasm” that conflates with perceptual deprivation *to see* on the global stage, and was used as a justified means of implicitly laying the groundwork for the impending invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. This postcinematic media has continued in iconoclastic sacrifice of Muslim people — the first victims were Islamic leaders, such as Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. A whole conglomerate of films was produced during the post-9/11 era, crucially for the purpose of depicting a fundamentalist interpretation of the *Qur’an* and Islamic people, what we today can recognize in global anti-Islamic films, such as: *New York Firefighters: The Brotherhood of 9/11* (2002), *United 93* (2006), *Unanswered Question from 9/11* (2005), *The Search for Osama bin Laden* (2007), *Uncle Saddam* (2000), etc. — those films are only a small part of the large propaganda against Islam, and are thematically linked in their treatment of the Muslim identity.

Therefore, it is not an accident that pictures of the Iraqi leader were made by a filmmaker. A ridiculous 14-minute YouTube trailer *Innocence of Muslims* (2012) is an anti-Islamic film that sparked violent protests throughout the Muslim world, and later became a leitmotif in feature films. The film *Uncle Saddam* — that won the award for best documentary at both the Northampton Festival and New Orleans Film Festival — was not shot by a director, but was composed from file footage, mainly cut from military channels. According to John Markert “The film reflects a rather simplistic and stereotypical perception of the Iraqi leader. This is undoubtedly the reason the film, shot in 2000, and was finally shown in post-9/11 America, just a few months before the invasion of Iraq.”¹⁷ Markert gives a further explanation:

Most of the films that follow *Uncle Saddam* rely on the same format: talking heads, file footage, judgmental narrative. In part, the simplified picture that is found on many of these films is related to their status as television documentaries that are ground out for the Military Channel, History Channel, and Discovery Channel, whose logo, “*Entertain your brain*” [author’s italics], is itself an indicative of their approach to current

events. Their inclusion here is due to their availability on movie sites. They are dealt with summarily, largely because they add little to the documentary format or to the portrait of Saddam or Iraq that has not already been critiqued in *Uncle Saddam*. They do, however, reflect a popular mind-set toward Saddam in the United States, and their initial showing and subsequent viewing only served to reinforce the popular belief about him.¹⁸

Images are the fastest mediators when sent to the consciousness. In this way the film and media industry achieves the status of an almost religiously iconic effect on the human psyche thus making technological and social transitions, an expanding sensorium by erasing and remaking the consciousness. It would be naïve to say that the media create reality and culture; it is only an emanation of the construction which in its core holds the technology which would make capitalism disappear. While explaining post-modernism Fredric Jameson argues that it is *experienced as a spatial dysfunction that consists of the symptom and expression of a new and historically original dilemma “insertion as individual subject into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities.”*¹⁹

Augmentation of the visual (however past and present) is an instrument for capital which targets not just territory but also consciousness, visual relations and the imagination itself. The present cinematic spectacle embodied in the post-cinematic mode is a close nexus between the declining colonial power in the days of Western-European colonialism, overlapping with the rising of the new global “enemy” after the Cold War — namely, in the Islamic War on Terror. The fall of the Berlin wall on 11th September 1989 was a metaphor for the dangers of East-communism, mostly represented in science fiction plots, and the fall of the Twin Towers in New York on 11th September 2001 embodies a new metaphor of the big enemy incorporated in the image of Muslims/terrorists in post-cinematic media, and those are the main historical events deliberated by the revolution of images. In the twilight of 1990 the power of the image becomes a crucial agent with the rise of digital ecologies (computer-generated images) with a new mode of cinematography — remixing and re-ordering past and present events into future ones. The thirty-six-seconds shot of the Tower collapsing should be regarded as both an isolated film image—as part of a *set*, i.e., the documentary film *9/11* — and as a part of a historical event. Jacques Rancière argues that *movement-image* and *time-image* are two different points of view on the image.

That is, the difference is not ontological but epistemological that considers this participatory role of the spectator as an important characteristic of the aesthetic regime of art. It is because the effect of the aesthetic can never be anticipated; it calls for spectators acting as active interpreters. Thus, the role of post-cinematic media is crucially bonded to the memory of present and future, hence the epistemological layer between viewers-users of reality is no longer cinematic (indexical and analogical). It is represented and perceived before any events, therefore there is no visual transcription — the witnessing of an event, that goes along with the example of the 9/11 attack as post-cinematically directed politics. In other words, today Islam embodies an iconography of power and subordination that dispersed as Jean Baudrillard writes: “Terrorism, like virus is everywhere.”²⁰

It is highly necessary to understand the new epistemology of what Shaviro termed *post-cinematic*, arguing: “We are now witnessing the emergence of a different media regime, and indeed of a different mode of production, than those which dominated the twentieth century. Digital technologies, together with neoliberal economic relations, have given birth to radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience.”²¹ Contemporary cameras, in short, are deeply enmeshed in an expanded, indiscriminately articulated plenum of images that exceed capture beyond the form of photographic or perceptual “objects.” These cameras — and the films that utilize them — mediate a nonhuman ontology of computational image production, processing, and circulation, leading to a thoroughgoing disconnection of contemporary images from human perceptibility. Political ideology becomes sensory every-day living, which appropriates the memory and aliveness through images. In *Orienting Orientalism, or How to Map Cyberspace*, Wendy Chun discusses how cyberspace narratives perpetuate Orientalist fantasies within machine mythology. Chun offers a helpful discussion on how cyberspace functions as a new frontier to be explored and colonized. Therefore, the close interconnection of digital technology with neoliberal/neo-colonial politics of the West, in culture opens — evident in the cinema representations — a new correlation between media, perception and reception. Chun argues:

By interrogating software and the visual knowledge it perpetuates, we can move beyond the so-called crisis in indexicality toward the new way in which visual knowledge — seeing/visible reading as knowing — is being transformed and perpetuated, not simply rendered obsolete or displaced.²²

The result of this change is a change in the status of experience, as perception is changing at great speed while consciousness compared to it is changing slowly. Computer-generated images influence the scheme of what can be seen and not seen, known and not known. Therefore, we become drama users, not the viewer-mediator of film-drama as we used to be. There is this larger epistemic drive to make sense of the visible through an invisible program that links past to the present, as well as an individual to the population, in terms of elucidating invisible programs of the post-cinematic language. In the post-cinema, viewers are in a position of control, they are not only the subjects but also the objects of the manipulation — not only does programmability mean that images are manipulable in new ways, it also means that post-cinema interacts on the level of fake images. Lev Manovich, in *The Language of New Media*, asserts: “New media may look like media, but this is only surface.”²³ The image which shows on the screen, as stable as it seems, is actually generated, or *governed*. As Chun writes, computers “coincide with the emergence of neoliberalism. As well as control of “masses” computers have been central to processes of individualization or personalization.”²⁴

The term *Orientalisation* — as well as *Balkanisation*²⁵ — embodies a rise of identity politics theory that escalated in the so called *cultural wars* driven in the 1990s and after. Chun indicates that “when digital cameras were introduced to the mass market in 1990s, many scholars and legal experts predicted the end of photography and film.”²⁶ The post-cinematic mode of mediation — via the digital image — “by contrast break the temporal link between record and event, [...] there is, theoretically, no fixed relationship between captured event and image.”²⁷ The software or computer *logic* as an “immaterial” relation changes the nature of subject-object relations. Hence, religion — as it is the presently political satanization of Islam — corresponds to a new media conversion onto an immaterial base, as a *vapory*,²⁸ tool for governmentality, as Chun asserts: “vapories are not accidental but rather essential to the new media.”²⁹ The new media continues to create and is spreading the *programmed visions* that “automatically brings together disciplinary and sovereign power through the production of self-enforcing rules.”³⁰ In the post-cinema, audiences do not become just users — they are converted into actors, political objects, and act as though they are the “source.” From the ontological point of view, the image of an event is what makes the memory of one nation. The issue that arises from 9/11 is one of the key examples of modern-day manipulation of memory through post-cinematic tools using visual

shock, also showing the importance of the understanding of politics. The post-cinema, according to Shaviri, is a new form of the 21st century film that incorporates digital technologies into their narratives. The Film is no longer defined just by a canon of great works, or historical truth about events, but rather as a mass of moving pictures that calls for new taxonomies of images which turn it into an element of everyday governance and mis-usage of the cultural memory. As Wendy Chun explains: "Digital media is degenerative, forgetful, erasable. This degeneration makes it both possible and impossible for it to imitate the analogue media, making it perhaps a device for history, but only through its ahistorical (or memoryless) functioning, through the ways in which it constantly transmits and regenerates text and image."³¹ It is not anymore the question of time-image as temporal ontology — to be connected with present or with past — it is the question of *post-* (without any temporality) that becomes the wheel of the future.

IMAGE AS SHOCK DOCTRINE

Naomi Klein wrote groundbreaking studies uncovering historical research in the book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007), where she brings to light the making of *shock doctrine theory* based on experiments in electroshock and sensory deprivation theory in the 1950s, also applied as political tool in Pinochet's coup in Chile in 1973, in the Falklands War in 1982, in the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, in the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in the Asian Financial crisis in 1997, in Hurricane Mitch in 1998, and in the disintegration of Yugoslavia,³² until the 9/11 Twin Towers attack where this doctrine came to be the political staging for economic-free market-power and world-wide genocide. Along with Deleuze, an important feature of the film image is the shock, as a direct and physiological relationship between the mind and perception. He draws the term *shock* from Antonin Artaud and Sergei Eisenstein to underline his view that thinking is an unavoidable result of film — an effect on the cortex. In this way it can be seen that Deleuze has established the foundation for rethinking images throughout the relationship of "shock" and perception, or he might have foreseen the image which will appear in the psychotic presence at the height of digital circulation and reproduction. This aesthetic version of "terrorism" is very similar to the first action image of train-steam-powered action

in the early cinema — i.e., the first action movie from Lumière brothers which worked on the basis of sensory shock. The theory of sensory deprivation that Naomi Klein elaborated in the economical sense of great power, reflects on the medial image of the 21st century, i.e., the post-cinematic image as a striking and effective apparatus. In order to understand the historical relationship of the film and the images better, one difference is noticeable in classical film as a geopolitical means of colonisation and contemporary post-film as a unitary sensory-cognitive apparatus. The awareness in the latter is based on the hybrid reality that introduces the unconscious formations of the relationship of the reality of the past and the future filling it with fear and shock through the realistic-visual (as the post-cinematic images take place literally in front of our eyes).

In the critical study of Edward Said's at the end of the 1970s, *Orientalism*, it is shown how the West used all forms of knowledge and was able to take part in the creation of an ideological image about the so-called *East* during the history of colonization in order to keep it tamed. The modern era is characterized by the post-historical loss of permanent territory and a secure position in new virtual worlds, games, simulations of cybernetic films in which a man is determined by being plunged into the media events of the technocratic world.

The exotic "Other," which still adheres to the East-orient, including also the Balkan world, is explained above all by the film of great cultural uniformity which characterizes the Western world. The picture is truly no longer mimesis. Its "function" is the new media (creating the new reality) which creates new sensory devices — watching, listening, and above all, a new political building of the cultural image of the world. The best way to see this is in the example of a film script in the form of recording techniques of the falling of the Twin Towers on 9/11. The perception of these images made a complex collision of fiction and reality. The images of the falling tower were immediately made into action-images rendering the attacks as "fictional." Thus, electronic images have created a combination of triviality and shock in the *post-cinematic* visuality. In neoliberalism, the image feeds itself with an image. In order for an image to come into existence, it has to make and renew constant crises, which it achieves through the economic *shock doctrine* of Milton Friedman and the Chicago school.

Marie-José Mondzain argues that the question of the economy cannot be separated from the question of the image itself. Photography and film allow us to compare the past and the present in a way that they represent an organic process which contains the me-

mory and its length of appearance, something that is impossible in the modern media. Various attempts to identify the defining characteristics of these newer media (and hence their salient differences from older media) emphasize that they are essentially digital, interactive, networked, ludic, miniaturized, mobile, social, processual, algorithmic, aggregative, environmental, or convergent, among other things. Culture becomes the media, and religion becomes a media category in which the deprivation and destruction of the ontological and material side of the former analogous relationship between the media-like apparatus and the telos embodied in that relationship lose every touch. So, the time and duration that we have in the classical film sense of events is expanded. This relationship between the viewer and what they see is a crucial relationship of events that must take place in a certain historical time and narrative. It then depreciates and becomes a fantastic reality — which is the total opposite of the SF film genre, because it turns into a realistic fantasy in which the post-cinema as an exorcistical medium extracts the effects and affects of the picture. And then, we can say that the post-cinema is some sort of auto-pilot, developing and managing the event itself, which is not an organic movement. Images from the transition are transferred into transaction images where affects have been radically transformed; they become the object of a global programming in which *cinema* occupies a unique place — “real life” becomes a redesigned temporal object.

Hypervideo technologies, generated image and sense, and post-media industry, that have converted the *industrial* world into the *hyperindustrial* are subordinating entire worlds of culture, knowledge, and mind, along with artistic creation and advanced research and instruction, to the imperatives of development and the market as economic and political power. In this century in the world where images have become the dominant relation among people, in the increasingly global society that produced the political-economic ideology of religion, image becomes the tool for repression.

1. For further discussion see Wolfgang Fuhrmann, *Imperial Projections: Screening the German Colonies* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015). German colonial cinematography is needed to be represented more publicly, due to lack of data as well production processes.

2. Gorham Anders Kindem, *The International Movie Industry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002). “Senegal was introduced to film activities as early as 1905, when *L’Arrivée d’un train en gare de la ciottat* and *L’arroseur arrose*, [...] were exhibited in Dakar by French circus group and filmmakers.” (117).

3. Kamran Rastegar, *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 19-20.

4. Steven Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2010), 31.

5. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lowitt (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 132 (brackets in original).

6. Ibid.

7. On this question see "Daniele Ganser: Die Wahrheit über den 11 September," YouTube video, 6:22, July 30, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxglXfOu8GY>. There are strong scientific and political argument that 9/11 are conspiracy theories which American authorities created to start war in Iraq.

8. Lev Manovich, "What is Digital Cinema," http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/009-what-is-digital-cinema/07_article_1995.pdf.

9. D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 174.

10. Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," <http://facweb.northseattle.edu/cscheuer/Winter%202012/Engl%20102%20Culture/Readings/Hirsch%20Postmemory.pdf>.

11. See Manovich, "Cinema and Digital Media," in *Perspectives of Media Art*, ed. Jeffrey Shaw and Hans Peter Schwarz (Ostfildern: Cantz Verlag 1996), 4.

12. Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001), 74.

13. John Markert, *Post-9/11 Cinema: Through a Lens Darkly* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 29.

14. Sardar Ziauddin, and Merryl Wyn Davies, *American Dream: Global Nightmare* (London: Icon Books, 2004), 127.

15. See Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

16. See Marie-José Mondzain, "Can Images Kill?," *Critical Inquiry* 36.1 (2009): 20-51.

17. Markert, *Post-9/11 Cinema*, 2.

18. Ibid., 7.

19. Fredric Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 351.

20. Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2003), 10.

21. Shaviro, *Post Cinematic Affect*, 2.

22. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011), 92.

23. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 48.

24. Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 7 (my emphasis).

25. Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Maria Todorova wrote a key book on the Balkan problem, which she defined as an ideological product of the West's policy rather than an eternal geographic and cultural twilight zone.

26. Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 15.

27. Ibid.

28. The phrase *Vapor theory* was coined by Peter Lunenfeld and Geert Lovnik.

29. Chun, *Programmed Visions*, 21.

30. Ibid., 27.

31. Chun, *Programmed Visions*.

32. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007). In the book, the case of dissolution of Yugoslavia was not given as an example for Shock Doctrine; the author of this text draws the connection.

HANAN AL CINEMA:
AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURA U. MARKS

by Stefanie Baumann (IFILNOVA) and Susana Nascimento Duarte
(School of Arts and Design at Caldas da Rainha / IFILNOVA)

As the title of your book (Hanan al Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image) indicates, the concept of affection is of central importance for the way you analyze a number of films coming from the Arab world. Reading your book, one immediately senses that you are genuinely affected by the works you write about, and that this affection, and not the idea of doing a comprehensive, neutral survey, is the starting point of your research.

However, the concept of affection has also another dimension in your work: you consider the moving images of the corpus you are analyzing as affection-images in a Deleuzian sense. Situated in the interval between perception-images and action-images, these images constitute a cinema of suspension and thus fall under the category of time-image. Can you reconstitute for us the birth of this book in connection to its title “affections of the moving image”?

First, I'll tell you honestly that I began by looking for an Arabic title that connoted love of the cinema, and that had to transliterate easily into English. *Hubb* (love), *gharam* (ardent love), and other words don't look so good in Latin characters; but *hanan*, affection, fondness, or kindness, is easy to read and pronounce, and has an extra connotation of supportive tenderness, which seems appropriate for the non-commercial genres and practices that the book addresses. Therefore, the philosophical concepts of affect and the affection-image that animate much of the book made it into the title.

But as you ask about the birth of the book, I think you are asking how I came to the topic. Beginning in the early 1990s I was struck by some experimentation going on in works from Arab countries and their diasporas that was not only, or not at all, political in the ways a viewer would expect; instead these works seemed to be developing new languages for feeling, sensation, and thought. There was really a sense of something coming into being in works like Mona Hatoum's *Measures of Distance* (1989), Elia Suleiman's *Homage by Assassination* (1992), Mohamed Soueid's *Indama Ya'ati al-Masa* (*Nightfall*, 2000), Omar Amiralay's *Toufan fi Balad al-Baath* (*A Flood in Baath Country*, 2004) — coming into

being despite a great many constraints — that I wanted to respect by finding the words for it.

You also consider Arab cinema to be a cinema of suspension in the sense of an impossibility for Arab filmmakers, in view of the contemporary political and historical conditions of Arab countries, of doing anything other than a cinema of the crisis of representation and of the action-image. Why did the Deleuzian diagnosis developed in connection to the European post-war context seemed useful and appropriate to deal with cinema developed in the context of the contemporary Arab-speaking countries?

The Second World War caused massive economic and ideological breakdowns in the European countries that lost, Italy and Germany, and Deleuze argues that the resulting blank slate demanded creativity yet destroyed pre-existing creative templates. The cascade of terrible events that the twentieth century brought to the Arabic-speaking world don't parallel the Second World War in Europe, because they also involve colonial and imperial history; but certain events, like the Lebanese "civil" war (1975-1990), the first Oslo Accord of 1993, and the second Gulf War (2003), as well as the entrenched totalitarian governments in Syria and Egypt, erased people's faith in governance or ideals of justice. As Samir Kassir argued, these events entrenched feelings of powerlessness (in the face of colonial and dictatorial powers) without the revolutionary energy of the underdog that had prevailed after the crushing defeat of the Arab allies by Israel in 1967. Blank slates proliferated. At the same time, and departing from Deleuze, I note the various new means of production and skills that began to make independent film and video possible in these disillusioned times.

*On several occasions, not only in *Hanan al Cinema*, but also, for example, in the film that Grahame Weinbren did with you about the book (<https://player.vimeo.com/video/160179965>) you stress the necessity of not confusing Arab and Muslim, namely because many film directors that you mention are Arab, but not Muslim. That you have to insist on this important difference betrays the fact that many of your readers know very little about the context and that such a differentiation between two very different notions — one designating a geographical region, the other a religion — is not evident to many of them. In this regard, do you understand your task, among other things, to be didactic? And is it necessary to have a deeper knowledge of the geopolitical conditions in order to understand not only the political subtext, but also the formal construction of these films?*

Yes, this is a quandary I often face. I want audiences and readers to appreciate these works aesthetically, but the aesthetic response is often deeper when people have a decent grasp of the historical and political circumstances. However, awareness of the historical and political circumstances often throws audiences into a representational mode, which is often reactionary and defensive and misses the delicate pre-discursive achievements of the films. When I programmed the Robert Flaherty Seminar in 2015 with half Arab and half non-Arab artists, I intentionally subtracted politics from the theme — it was “‘*Atr al-Amkina*/The Scent of Places.” This made a lot of people crazy but also allowed them to focus on the creativity of individual works.

Throughout your book you resort to different theoretical positions such as Deleuze’s notion of the fold, Peirce’s third, Spinoza’s idea of the body or the Mu’tazili’s atomism. How do these very different traditions of thinking relate in your assessment of cinema?

Simply, I like to bring concepts from Arabic and Islamic philosophy into contemporary thought, just to freshen it up. More deeply, it’s illuminating to learn that Arabic and Islamic concepts are deeply embedded in European philosophy, an idea I explore a lot in my book *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art*,¹ and subsequent research. For example, the concept of the fold in Deleuze and Leibniz is deeply informed by Islamic Neoplatonism in general and Shi’ite philosophy in particular. My work is increasingly informed by cosmology, specifically comparative cosmology: experimenting with bodies of thought, such as the four you mention, that approach the cosmos as a whole: knowable or not, interconnected or not, divinely ordered or anarchic, transcendent or immanent, etc. — in order to test and taste what such a universe feels like. The cinema, a multisensory perceptible, is a wonderful way to test cosmology because it touches our bodies and invites different ways of thinking about the links between the body and the cosmos.

The question of the close relationship between filmic art and politics is central to your analysis. Aesthetic and political aspects go necessarily hand in hand. Even if political struggles are explicitly thematized in a few films only, all films implicitly engage with their political conditions. One of the issues is the fact that Arab artists are confronted with an existing imagery, an imagery elaborated outside of the Arab world - the strong projections on them as religious fanatics or backwards by

“Westerners”, as reproduced by mass media, ideological discourses or certain Hollywood films. In order to allow for a different access to the Arab world, some artists immanently deal with these clichés in order to subvert their ideological power. It seems to be necessary to deconstruct the reigning imagery based on Western, sometimes orientalist representation so as to construct a genuine aesthetical position which is, at the same time, a problematizing of the hegemonic situation. Could you comment on this relation between images from in- and outside the Arab world as constructed in the films you are interested in?

Yes, that is all correct. To complicate things further, there’s never a purely “inside” or “outside” position. Many artists and filmmakers decide to address non-Arab audiences and to explain, or simplify, or self-Orientalize, or in other ways mirror back the demands some non-Arab audiences (and funders, and festivals, etc.) place upon them. In turn, these filmmakers are subject to detailed critique by colleagues and audiences in their own countries. At one point I wanted to call the book “Never the Right Time” because so often films are censored, or self-censored, by the artists themselves, audiences, funders, exhibitors, journalists sometimes, or any number of intermediaries, on their way to more distant audiences, with the explanation that “this is not the right time” (to celebrate Arab art, to criticize Saddam Hussein, to say anything at all about Islam, or other examples that I mention in the introduction). As Egyptian artist Doa Aly wrote in 2011, “There’s something morbidly bourgeois about implying the existence of a ‘time for art.’ The thought that art can only exist to react is disquieting. But more so is the idea that art cannot exist if it cannot react ‘appropriately.’”²

You mention the need on the part of many Arab filmmakers to make a historical research about the repressed communist past in their countries, bringing to the present the forgotten stories of their radical leftist movements of liberation. According to you, these are not nostalgic gestures towards the past, but ways of studying it in order to figure out what went wrong, as if this past still contained a non-fulfilled potential awaiting to be reused and actualized in the present. Could you elaborate on the need to address this quasi total annihilation of secular radicalism in connection to the recent rise of religious radicalism and of Islamic armed movements?

Without looking for it, I found an enormous amount of research and creative production on Communism and Socialism on the part of filmmakers, artists, and scholars across the Arab world, well before the uprisings of 2011, about which I write in the chapter

“Communism, Dream Deferred.” State socialism in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq was initially animated by Communist and Socialist ideals. Lenin would have been proud of the anticolonial revolutionary praxis of Algerian, Moroccan, and Palestinian revolutionaries in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s and of the international Communism that supported them. But none of these anticolonial revolutions succeeded; instead they installed authoritarian governments. One of the best answers to your question comes in Mohamed Soueid’s *Ma Haftu Li Ghayriha* (*My Heart Beats Only for Her*, 2008), which deftly recounts how the guerrilla tactics that pro-Palestinian revolutionaries learned in Vietnam in the 1970s got passed down to Hizbollah, which gained a monopoly on armed resistance in Lebanon, while shedding the Communist ideals that had initially informed it; meanwhile economic imperialism thrives like a catfish in muck. The disastrous events of 2011 only reinforce the Marxist observation that a revolution that doesn’t enfranchise all classes is bound to fail. So the many Arab intellectuals who look back to Communists and socialists of earlier decades are building tools of analysis for a praxis still to come.

When referring to the program of the film festival you organized many years ago, Palestine, the Aesthetics of Exile, you mention the contradiction between, on the one hand, that which makes a film politically rich, and which has nothing to do with its message — elements such as the disjunctive narrative style, the intrusion of the director in the film, the ambiguity between fiction and documentary, the pastiche of found-footage — and, on the other hand, the fear expressed by some, that precisely such a richness might compromise the political message, identified with a positive and unambiguous image of the situations and stories of Palestinians. Do you sense that such a contradiction is still at work in the expectations regarding the reception of Arab cinema in general, and of Palestinian films in particular?

Yes, aesthetic richness often makes people uneasy that the work will not transmit a clear political “message.” However, I notice they are always uneasy not for themselves — they understand the political ambiguity perfectly well — but on behalf of other people, who they suspect can’t be trusted to receive and interpret the film. This phenomenon isn’t exclusive to Arab cinema; it happens everywhere. It is a form of censorship.

You talk about a specific Arabic “archive fever” or “mal d’archive,” where what you call a desire for the archive is inseparable from the recognition that the access to Arab culture and to its past/history/memory is, for a great deal, dependent on non-existent archives. The archives in Arab countri-

es, laden with voids and blank pages as they are, show, although negatively, that an archive is the result not only of what has been kept, but also of what has been lost or forgotten. And this points to the impossible neutrality of the archive, since it is always the result of a combination between the remains of history and the collective and social uses given to those surviving fragments. How is the particular condition of the existing archives, and the subsequent subjective and creative approaches to the materials, apprehended and transmitted by Arab cinema? Do you think that cinema is more capable than other forms of practice to undertake an archeology of the Arab archive in the sense of Foucault, i.e., of the statements and visibilities articulated by a certain epoch or historical moment?

Yes, cinema is very good at crashing together statements and perceptibles (the term I prefer to visibilities, as it is more multisensory) in order to release and, sometimes, mobilize potentialities. That chapter is the longest in the book, discussing about 37 films and doing a lot of philosophical heavy lifting, because Arab filmmakers apprehend and transmit the state of archives in a great number of truly inspiring ways. They also draw attention to the fact that it's never "the archive" but "*this* archive," a singular and precious collection of materials. They turn archives' absence, poverty, and even their antagonism (as in colonial archives) into means for creativity and invention — in a way that may give pause to those in wealthier countries who believe that our state and commercial archives represent history pretty well. Arts workers in Arab countries are also exemplary at building their own archives, something I've pursued further since *Hanan* was published.³

At one point in your book, you say that some aesthetic forms and some political contents could only have been developed in the Arab world, precisely because cinema there is not in the dominant position. This reminds a bit of Hegel's dialectic between the master and the slave — the slave being the one able to become self-conscious, to slip out of his condition as an object for the master. Could you elaborate on your idea?

Yes, it's not exactly that the slave knows what the master does not know, but that the one who is disenfranchised is in a better position to bring into existence what is not yet known. It is possible to turn disenfranchisement into a luxury. In this vein Fares Chalabi, as I mention in the chapter "Cinematic friendships," celebrates self-organizing artists' movements: "movements and meetings devoid of an identified goal, and images with no commercial value or sometimes with no value at all."⁴ Refusing the status quo can actualize more distant, almost unimaginable potentials.

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1. Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010).
 2. Doa Aly, "No Time for Art," 15 June 2011, <https://moabdallah.wordpress.com/2011/06/15/no-time-for-art/>.
 3. Laura U. Marks, "Poor Images, Ad Hoc Archives, Artists' Rights: The Scrappy Beauties of Handmade Digital Culture," *International Journal of Communication* 11 (2017): 3899–3916.
 4. Fares Chalabi, "The Idiots," in Mirène Arsanios and Suna Kafader, eds., *How to Make (Nice) Things Happen* (Beirut and New York: 98weeks and ArteEast, 2010), 36.

*PSYCHOANALYTIC FILM THEORY AND
“THE RULES OF THE GAME”*

Anthony J. Ballas (University of Colorado Denver)

Todd McGowan. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 179 pp. ISBN: 9781628920826.

Whether infiltrating philosophy, media studies, literature, culture, or politics, psychoanalytic theory leaves no academic stone unturned. Although considered *passé* by the sciences, and sophistic from the vantage of analytic philosophy, psychoanalysis continually provokes, prods, and presents a thorn in the side of many academic disciplines. Despite having been partially eclipsed by the legacies inherited from Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, psychoanalysis has gained traction in recent decades under the auspices of Slavoj Žižek, Joan Copjec, and Alain Badiou, and can be thought of as undergoing yet another renaissance today; although luminaries of the American philosophical tradition such as Noam Chomsky have long maintained that Jacques Lacan was, “an amusing and perfectly self-conscious charlatan,” psychoanalytic theory — the Lacanian vein in particular — is perhaps more influential today than ever before.¹ Todd McGowan’s *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and “The Rules of the Game”* offers a refreshing counterpoint to these and other hasty dismissals of psychoanalytic theory, providing a much-needed catalogue of the crucial concepts of psychoanalytic thought and their application to the study of film.

Equal parts history, theory, and polemic, McGowan has written a book in which he demonstrates what he refers to as the “intrinsic conjunction” between psychoanalysis and the cinema (1). Detailing both their historical as well as the theoretical linkages, McGowan delves into the sub-textual undercurrent connecting these two seemingly disparate fields indelibly to one another. He observes that while historically Freud and Breuer’s *Studies on Hysteria* and the Lumière Brothers’ first films were introduced contemporaneously to the world in 1895, it is within the structure of the dream work elaborated by Freud in his 1901 *Interpretation of Dreams*² that McGowan locates the most convincing element adjoining psychoanalysis to the cinema, as he explains how, “Freud takes an interest in dreams because they unlock the unconscious and films, which share the structure of dreams, carry the same promise” (2). For McGowan, unconscious desire functions as the thread suturing

dreams and the cinema together, as both mediums disclose what cannot be shown in the subject's quotidian experience, arousing desire in an array of images, and satisfying desire through the repeated failure to attain objects of desire. Just as dreams function as disguised wish fulfillment for individual subjects, so too films arouse in the public a collective desire — a desire which is always self-limiting and illicit, ensuring that the subject grates up against the written and unwritten rules regulating society. Simply put, for psychoanalytic film theory, desire is never neutral but rather always a disruptive force guiding the subject as it navigates through the texture of socio-symbolic relations. According to McGowan, it is in the structure of both dreams and cinema that these symbolic relations are put on display and highlighted by a desire to attain that which is never fully attainable.

McGowan's focus on desire as the fundamental substance formative of the subject echoes the "party line" of psychoanalysis practiced by names like Žižek, Copjec, and Alenka Zupančič. The preponderance of desire in contemporary psychoanalytic theory in general and psychoanalytic film theory in particular points toward another major thesis in McGowan's book: to wrest the subject from the historicist and deconstructive trends in contemporary theory, which posit power as the focal point of subject formation, inherited from Foucault and Nietzsche before him.³ Psychoanalytic film theory concentrates its critique toward the unconscious desires permeating the social sphere and the ways in which they may not only serve to reduplicate conditions of authority but as well can serve to resist ideological interpellation. In this way, McGowan elaborates the radical import that understanding and articulating desire has for the study of the cinema as a *dispositif* of social control.

As Associate Professor of Film at the University of Vermont, Todd McGowan has dedicated a generous amount of articles and books to psychoanalytic film theory, including the *Film Theory in Practice* series published by Bloomsbury, for which McGowan serves as editor, and to which the reviewed volume belongs. Perhaps best known for his 2007 title *The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan*⁴ in which he develops the continuing importance of the Lacanian notion of Gaze in cinema theory, McGowan's body of work is in direct correspondence with the work of Joan Copjec, specifically her groundbreaking 1989 essay "Orthopsychic Subject" (since released by Verso in the collection *Read My Desire*). McGowan alludes to Copjec's analysis that "film theory operated a kind of 'Foucauldinization' of Lacanian theory" in the 1970s insofar as applications of Lacan's work toward the

study of film grossly missed their mark theoretically.⁵ The progenitors of this unfortunate misstep were the theorists associated with what is known as Screen theory, to which McGowan dedicates a significant portion of the first chapter. McGowan indicts Laura Mulvey, Raymond Bellour, Jean-Luc Baudry, and Christian Metz for their failed attempts to successfully fold psychoanalytic theory into the study of cinema. For example, McGowan discusses Mulvey's famous "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," and the way the theorist misapplied Lacan's notion of the Mirror Stage to meet politico-feminist ends. McGowan describes Mulvey's reading of Lacan as a "butchered operation," detailing this and other theoretical pitfalls that Screen theory ushered into film studies that we are still attempting to recover from today (62).

McGowan's book collects the most relevant developments in psychoanalysis and its application toward film theory, condensing its one hundred plus years of history into just fewer than two hundred pages. The book's first chapter features a concise yet detailed explication of the crucial concepts necessary for understanding the coordinates of psychoanalytic film theory today; the unconscious, desire, demand, the three registers of the psyche (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real), fantasy, and enjoyment to name a few. This section is quite useful, as it not only gives coherence to a discipline which so often falters under its own esoteric weight, but as well this section reads as a glossary of psychoanalytic vocabulary, easily standing in as a reference to supplement other texts on psychoanalytic theory. McGowan's first chapter also includes a detailed reading of Copjec's and Žižek's respective influences on psychoanalytic film theory. McGowan gives mention to the fact that, although influential in the field, Copjec's "Orthopsychic Subject" has still yet to be argued against since Raymond Bellour's epistolary dismissal of it in the 1980s, in which the theorist famously penned the words describing how Copjec failed to follow "the rules of the game" (66). This eponymous phrase alludes to Bellour's failure to apprehend Copjec's critique of Screen theory — what McGowan describes as "indicative of a trauma" — as well as it stands for the title of Jean Renoir's masterpiece *La règle du Jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939), to which McGowan dedicates the bulk of his second chapter.

McGowan's clever connection between Bellour's use of the phrase and Renoir's film is far from accidental, but rather demonstrates the function of social rules of engagement which go unwritten, and thus present the most surreptitious demands upon the subject. In the case of Renoir's film, McGowan explains how audiences and critics were angered

and confused by the film upon its release, applying psychoanalytic film theory in order to decipher the deeper problematic at hand attesting to Renoir's genius as both a filmmaker and leftist political thinker. When social rules are not abided, a traumatic gap opens up in the fabric of social space which threatens to undermine the sanctity and cohesion of what Lacan referred to as the big Other. McGowan describes this feature apropos of the cinema specifically in two sections entitled "Antagonism Elided" and "Antagonism Exposed," highlighting the unique propensity of psychoanalytic film theory to decode the ideological mechanisms inherent to film form which often neutralize the radical transformative potential in spectatorship. In the case of Renoir, McGowan cites a myriad ways in which his film actively exposes the unwritten rules of social authority, from its excess of genre, to its use of depth of field to convey "the underside of democracy," as he explains that, "[b]y making clear visually that everyone has an equal place in the filmic world, Renoir depicts the extent of everyone's investment in the unwritten rules of the social order" (126). Depth of field thus does not merely demonstrate sameness, McGowan observes, but more importantly, emphasizes a lack of difference.⁶

Psychoanalytic Film Theory and "The Rules of the Game" covers theoretical as well as practical ground; McGowan is at his best when he balances cogent expository content with analytical application to the film text. Be not fooled by the relatively modest size of this book, it could be said that it is in fact larger on the inside than it is on the outside. Although packed tightly with a wealth of theory, the book can serve as an introduction to both psychoanalysis in general and/or its application to film theory in particular. Perhaps aware of this, McGowan offers a nice list of recommended further reading from Freud and Lacan, to Zupančič and Copjec, organized by their level of difficulty. In sum, McGowan's work serves a vital role in the continuation and further development of psychoanalysis, and is necessary for anyone wishing to grasp the fundamentals of psychoanalytic film theory. If not for McGowan's contribution to the field, it is quite possible that psychoanalytic film theory would be unrecognizable today.

1. Quoted in Oliver Harris, *Lacan's Return to Antiquity: Between Nature and the Gods* (London: Routledge, 2017), 11.

2. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2. McGowan as well cites the conflict between Freud and Adler apropos of the same problem of desire versus power, describing Adler's expulsion from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society due to his notion that the subject quested for power, ostensibly "eliminating the unconscious" (22).

4. McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

3. Ibid., 8.

4. It is curious that McGowan neglects to mention Lacan's own words written on Renoir's film in *Les Séminaires Livre VII*, describing Robert's automaton as an "*objet du fantasme*," however this fact does not seem to remove from his analysis of the film in my estimation.

*THE PHILOSOPHY OF DOCUMENTARY FILM:
IMAGE, SOUND, FICTION, TRUTH*

Stefanie Baumann (IFILNOVA)

David LaRocca (ed.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. 644p. ISBN: 9781498504515.

Documentary films have not only become increasingly popular in the recent years, they have also attracted more and more attention as a complex subject of academic research and critical study. And indeed, their peculiar relation to reality raises manifold questions: asserting a truthful basis in the real, they push us to reflect on the correspondences between objective facts and their subjective mediation, and confront us with the problem of finding an adequate artistic form for carving a truth content out of the empirical reality. While many rather conventional documentary films aim to reproduce and analyze explicit facts, critical documentaries and essay films often take on a critical stance towards the hegemonic claim for factual truth and the idea of an unbiased representation. Instead of comforting the status quo of that which appears as genuinely real, they examine the underlying power structures of reality and the spectrum of experiences and representations constitutive of it, thereby interrogating the status of images in the contemporary society and their performative force of shaping perception. Thinking with, about and through documentary films, especially those with artistic and critical ambitions, thus leads to a problematizing of our very understanding of the world, the way it is represented and legitimated, and the impact of images and sounds in contemporary society. What do documentary films reveal, scrutinize, or destabilize? How do they make us think not only about specific topics, but also about the form through which they become graspable? How does the interrelation of form and content affect their epistemological dimension and their critical force?

Those and many other essential questions have recently been in the center of several edited volumes: *The Documentary Film Book*, edited by Brian Winston,¹ a rich and complex compilation that brings together 41 outstanding scholars and artists working on the subject of documentary images past and present, and in different geopolitical contexts; *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film*, edited by Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Le-

bow Jonathan,² which focuses on particular topics relevant to contemporary non-fiction films through various contributions by mostly female academics; and Jonathan Kahana's impressive 1000 pages anthology *The Documentary Film Reader. History, Theory, Criticism*³ featuring a wide range of highly significant texts, manifests, reviews and essays written throughout the 20th and 21st century, just to name a few.

The Philosophy of Documentary Film: Image, Sound, Fiction, Truth, edited by David LaRocca, constitutes another significant contribution to the subject. As the title indicates, this publication concentrates on the multiple philosophical layers of documentary films rather than approaching its subject matter through specific themes or stylistic features, giving a historical overview of existing theories, or generalizing its characteristics as a genre. The book is divided into five parts, which rather provide a minimal structure than subordinate the individual texts under categories, and preceded by a short foreword by Timothy Corrigan and a comprehensive introduction by David LaRocca. In his presentation of the book's orientation and achievements, he refers to Plato's distinction between poetry (associated with fiction, art, invention, subjectivity and the senses) and philosophy (related to the search for truth), in order to demarcate the two conflicting poles inherent to documentary films. This dual ground — the artistic mediation of reality on the one hand and the claim for truth on the other — as well as the multiple tensions and ambiguities between these two poles, constitutes the nucleus of the publication and informs the aesthetical, metaphysical, epistemological and ethical investigations included in the volume. In this sense, *The Philosophy of Documentary Film* aims not only to explore the relation between reality and the filmic medium and to examine how a truth-value can be attributed to a documentary film, but also to question the strict separation of fact and fiction as such. For while the poetic aspects in documentary films bear the danger of distorting reality and facilitating propaganda and manipulation (e.g., the films of Leni Riefenstahl), they also allow for a critical reassessment of the very concepts of truth, reality and their interrelations, as well as a problematizing of the ethical and political levels of representation. In order to open up a "prismatic perspective on documentary cinema" (44) rather than exclusively concentrating on writings from within the field of philosophy, the editor opted for a "radically inter- and transdisciplinary" (42) approach. Therefore, besides critical texts written by academics from diverse horizons (anthropology, literature, film and communication stu-

dies, philosophy, political theory, and others), the publication includes contributions from documentary filmmakers.

The first part of *The Philosophy of Documentary Film*, entitled “The Medium, Morals and Metaphysics of Documentary Film,” comprises theoretical texts written by acknowledged philosophers and film academics on specific problems concerning the filmic medium in relation to the reality they depict. Some elaborate on general questions of the medium, as Stanley Cavell’s contribution which concentrates on the nature of the photographic image as such, and Noël Carroll’s analyses of the notion of realism after André Bazin. More specifically engaged with the definition of documentary films, Gregory Currie defends his thesis of their necessary inclusion of authentic traces, and Carl Plantinga develops his position — against subjectivist theories — according to which the distinction between fiction and documentary films depends on the “intended function of the film within the cultural context in which the film is produced and viewed” (120). The last contribution in this section, written by Vivian Sobchack, discusses in depth the genuinely ethical question of representing death, and the different effects such a representation triggers in fictional and documentary formats.

The texts assembled in the second part of the book, “Strategies and Styles of Documenting with Film,” focus on particular questions that have been raised in the history of documentary filmmaking, and problematize their apparent objectivity. Thus, Tom Gunning analyses an early form of non-fictional films, the “views,” as a form pretending to simply register empirical reality, while “reveal[ing] the ambiguous power relations of the look so nakedly” (171). The inherent ideological grounding of seemingly “neutral” nature films are examined in Scott MacDonald’s contribution, by confronting the moralistic tendencies of the True-Life Adventure films produced by the Disney Studio with the nature documentaries of Jean Painlevé, which relate to society by taking on a critical stance. While William Rothman retraces Jean Rouch’s idea of “ciné-transe” as a means to penetrate into the reality in question, thus producing a camera-truth through the intervention of the filmmaker, William Day deploys different ways of evoking and experiencing time through documentary films with a special focus on Werner Herzog’s *Cave of the Forgotten Dreams* (2010). Finally, Claudia Pederson and Patricia R. Zimmermann study the alienating strategies towards landscapes and nature in Vincent Grenier’s experimental films.

The third part of the book, “Documentary Theorist-Filmmakers at Work,” includes contributions written by practitioners who also work in the academic field. Ariella Azou-

lay, Diana Allan, Mieke Bal and Bernadette Wegenstein give a critical insight in their own artistic practice and the way it is interwoven with theoretical reflections. In contrast, Dan Geva revisits the praxis and concepts of one of the pioneers of activist documentary filmmaking, Dziga Vertov, as “*ciné-seeing the invisible*” (310), and Elan Gamaker investigates the political and social impacts of aesthetic choices through a critique of early films by Ken Loach and Ken Russell on the housing crisis in the 1960s. The last contribution in this section, written by Selmin Kara, examines the mediation of matter and its virtual and actual strata in Victor Erice’s *El sol del membrillo* (*Dream of Light*, 1992).

“Interventions and Reconstructions of Documentary Modes, Methods and Meanings,” the fourth part of the publication, is maybe the most difficult to grasp as a homogeneous section. It includes different topics and questions, which, furthermore, appear through diverse forms. Thus, it contains critical studies with philosophical implications of particular films: V. F. Perkin’s reassessment of the final scene of Frederick Wiseman’s *High School* (1968), Jennifer L. McMahon’s reading of *Blackfish* (2013), and K. L. Evans’ interpretation of *The Big Short* (2015). It also focuses on certain theories and their reevaluations: Rick Altman surveys the treatment and impact of sound in films and their theorization, and Keith Dromm comments critically on the theories of Carroll, Currie and Plantinga, which leads him to develop an approach to documentary films based on the notion of understanding. Finally, the section also includes “The Dogma 95 Manifesto and Werner Herzog’s *Minnesota Declaration* (1999),” as well as Bill Nichols’ “Letter to Errol Morris.”

The fifth and last part of the book, “Auto/Biography and the Composition of Identity in Documentary Form”, concentrates on portraits, the problem of the self and the different layers of consciousness as constructed through documentary films. Each contribution in this section elaborates the question through a particular film: Michael Fried sensitively analyses the multiple perspectives in *Zidane, un portrait du 21e siècle* (*Zidane: A Twenty-First Century Portrait*, 2006), Garry L. Hagberg immerses into the literary universe of Winfried Sebald and its sensual correspondences with the film *On Patience (After Sebald)* (2012). Both Charles Warren in his text about the intersections of fictional and non-fictional elements in Chantal Akerman’s film, and Linda Williams in her contribution about Michelle Citron’s work address the question of the representation of femininity in audio-visual media. The problem of re-enactment and staging is raised by Karen D. Hoffman’s article on Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing* (2012), and David LaRocca’s own contribution

discusses the moral implications of the “false documentary” *I’m Still Here* (2011) about the alleged downfall of the actor Joaquin Phoenix.

In sum, *The Philosophy of Documentary Film* undoubtedly bears witness to the complexity and the density of its subject matter. The texts included in the volume cover a wide range of topics and approaches, and they raise multiple philosophical questions inherent to documentary films. Rather than systematically analyzing specific philosophical aspects or giving a comprehensive overview or a conclusive assessment of philosophical issues in documentary films, the book functions kaleidoscopically: each text sets its own approach. However, despite the explicit appeal to diverse forms and methods, most of the contributions follow a classical, academic structure. Those that aim to provide a general theoretical framework proceed on a purely conceptual level, and question the indexicality of the medium, its theoretical connection to empirical reality and the attribution of factuality through abstract argumentations rather than interrogating its political relevance. By contrast, many of the articles engaged with particular films focus precisely on the ideological, aesthetical and ethical dimensions of the films in question. Therefore, even if some of them resort to American or continental philosophers or to critical theory, they primarily rely on the sensitive material as such. Disclosing the particular potential of doing philosophy *through* particular works by unfolding the way topics and concepts are interlaced with sensible forms and formats, those writings consider the multiple layers of reality and the heterogeneous mediations it is subject to rather than seeking to establish a general conceptualization. The particular force of reenactments, staging or fictionalization, the critical potential emanating from the deliberate choice of using aesthetic strategies such as montage, specific framings and the interrelation between image and sound, thus reveal the intelligibility of the sensitive material and discloses its inherent philosophical dimension.

In contrast to those — the contributions concentrating on theoretical questions and those that deploy the philosophical potential of particular films — three texts included in the publication are constructed in a strikingly different way and call for special notice. Werner Herzog’s *Minnesota-Declaration* is a very short, provocative and sometimes solemn statement against a method that he calls *cinema vérité*, a term he does not attribute to Jean Rouch, but to American observational or direct cinema⁴. According to him, this current “is devoid of *vérité*”; it “reaches a merely superficial truth, the truth of accountants” (379). In

opposition to this belief in facts, he postulates his own cinema as a seeking for the “deeper strata of truth” which can only be revealed “through fabrication and imagination and stylization” (379). Also Lars von Trier’s and Thomas Vinterberg’s *The Dogma 95 Manifesto* takes a compact, affirmative form. Against the *cinema des auteurs* and the illusionary cinema of emotions, it formulates a strict set of rules, the “vow of chastity,” claiming that (fiction) films should rely on realistic conditions and not recur to technical trickery or any form of manipulation. On a different level, Bill Nichols’ “Letter to Errol Morris” is addressed personally to a filmmaker and expresses his intense sensation of ethical indignation towards Morris’ way of dealing with the scandalous revelation of ongoing torture of the prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in his film *Standing Operation Procedure* (2008). Those three contributions vitalize the debate by deflecting the attention from the scholarly standards to more subjective, engaged or radical apprehensions.

What is almost absent in the book is, however, an opening to “non-Western” voices and perspectives. Apart from two texts written by the filmmakers Ariella Azoulay and Diana Allan — both teaching in the USA — on their works in and about Palestine, none of the writings deals with positions from the East, Asia, Africa, the Arab world, South-America or other places outside Europe and the US. The vast majority of the contributors to the volume works in the United States and refers to theoretical positions from within this particular academic context or acknowledged by it. Even if the diversity of approaches included in the volume establishes undoubtedly a manifold of fruitful association between films, forms and ethical, aesthetical, epistemological or political dimensions, it is limited to American-European views on documentary films. Nonetheless, the publication inspires its readers to problematize their perception and its biases, and to look more thoroughly and more critically at films whose aim it is to mediate reality.

1. Brian Winston (ed.), *The Documentary Film Book* (London: BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

2. Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow Jonathan (eds.), *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

3. Jonathan Kahana (ed.), *The Documentary Film Reader. History, Theory, Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

4. See Eric Ames, *Ferocious Reality. Documentary according to Werner Herzog* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 9.

*SURVIVING IMAGES: CINEMA, WAR, AND
CULTURAL MEMORY IN THE MIDDLE EAST*

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Kamran Rastegar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 235 pp. ISBN: 9780199390175.

Kamran Rastegar é doutorado em Literatura Comparada e em Linguagens e Culturas do Médio Oriente e Ásia pela Universidade Columbia, co-fundador do programa interdisciplinar de Estudos Coloniais na Universidade Tufts e membro da rede Estudos Transdisciplinares de Trauma (*Transdisciplinary Trauma Studies*) da Universidade de Colónia. O seu percurso demonstra um interesse crescente no estudo das relações entre a memória cultural e o trauma social em contextos pós-coloniais. A propósito, destacam-se ensaios como “Trauma and Maturation in Women’s War Narratives: The Eye of the Mirror and Cracking India” (2006) ou “The Glass Agency: Iranian War Veterans as Heroes or Traitors?” (2010). Actualmente, Rastegar é professor associado de Árabe e Literatura Comparada e director do programa de Árabe na Universidade Tufts, universidade onde tem leccionado as disciplinas Estudos sobre o Trauma, Guerra e Memória Cultural na Literatura e no Cinema, Cinemas Pós-coloniais e Cinemas do Médio Oriente, entre outras. Estas colocam em evidência a sua atenção no cruzamento entre as temáticas já enunciadas e o cinema, uma atenção que, inclusive, tem resultado na publicação de diversos artigos, entre eles, “Global Frames on Afghanistan: The Iranian Mediation of Afghanistan in International Art-House Cinema” (2011) ou “Al-Sinama al-Filistiniyya wa al-sinama al-Kurdiyya wa mas’alat al-sinama al-wataniyya (Palestinian and Kurdish Cinemas and The Question of National Cinema)” (2010).

Dando continuidade aos artigos supracitados, o livro *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* (2015) consiste, muito sumariamente, num estudo sobre o cinema do Médio Oriente desde o final do século XIX até ao presente. Mediante a análise de diversos casos cinematográficos pertencentes a diferentes geografias, e considerando criteriosamente os diferentes enquadramentos: histórico, político e social de cada uma delas, Kamran Rastegar reflecte sobre como o cinema retratou e retrata algumas das principais problemáticas resultantes dos contextos colonial e pós-colonial. Nesta articula-

ção, o livro escrutina temas tão sensíveis como a masculinidade imperial e a permanente procura “pela redenção social através da transformação dos ideais masculinos” (trad. 48) ou a prevalência de uma “paz amnésica” (trad. 165) no contexto do discurso oficial libanês que disfarça a existência de uma sociedade personificada no imaginário do morto-vivo, o qual metaforiza o estado de irresolução derivante dos milhares de desaparecidos na guerra civil. É diante destas e de outras realidades que se torna fundamental para o autor a referência a realizadores que assumiram uma recusa crítica face à imposição de uma memória cultural idealizada nos seus países. Tal manifesta-se, por exemplo, no quinto capítulo. Neste, o autor, recorrendo ao filme *Bashu, Gharibeh-ye Kuchak* (1985/87), de Bahram Beyzai, centra a sua atenção no modo como o cinema defendeu uma “necessidade de reformulação da identidade nacional” (trad. 152), propondo novas possibilidades de representação da memória cultural iraniana no período que ficou conhecido como Defesa Sagrada (designação que compreende os oito anos de guerra entre o Irão e o Iraque [1980-88]).

Estruturalmente, *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* apresenta um formato convencional, devidamente ordenado, com capítulos e subcapítulos que procuram aprofundar cuidadosamente as questões que abordam. A escrita de Rastegar garante, no encadeamento preciso e objectivo das ideias, uma leitura clara. No entanto, convirá referir que, se o leitor não conhecer de antemão determinados termos utilizados, terá dificuldade em compreender alguns deles e tal impede, por vezes, a fluidez da leitura. Apenas a título de exemplo, Rastegar começa por avançar com o conceito de memória cultural sem o alicerçar, uma inconsistência que se repete na referência de diversos termos ao longo de todo o livro. Por vezes até, em determinadas referências (ou na inexistência de outras), persiste a dúvida se o autor recorreu, ou não, às fontes originais que referem os termos que cita. Acontece com o emprego de conceitos como o de pós-memória (209) ou o de hipermediação (da memória cultural) (178), entre outros. A saber, o primeiro introduzido por Marianne Hirsch em *Family Frames*¹ e o segundo por James Young em *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*,² dois autores inexplicavelmente ausentes na sua bibliografia.

Não obstante, e atendendo, por exemplo, ao primeiro capítulo, Rastegar começa por esclarecer o que entende por *productive traumas*, expondo o facto de a memória cultural do colonialismo produzir discursos activamente contestados, o que contribui para o enten-

dimento não só da diferente articulação das formações ideológicas como também para a compreensão do surgimento de novas formas identitárias pós-coloniais (38). É na consequência deste esclarecimento que o livro começa desde logo por lançar a problemática da memória traumática que resulta destes contextos e que circunscreve o modo como as histórias são interpretadas. Seguindo esta ordem de ideias, o autor orienta a sua investigação para o cinema, reconhecendo o importante papel que o *medium* ocupa na produção da memória cultural colonial e pós-colonial ao fazer proliferar as memórias dos traumas sociais e ao restabelecer o discurso público, no qual simultaneamente intervém (39).

Este reconhecimento permanece transversal a todo o livro, provendo uma clara linha condutora através de casos exemplificativos que se destacam pela consistência e abrangência. Também a notável articulação destes e a sua reconhecida complementaridade beneficiam o entendimento da investigação. Veja-se, por exemplo, que nos dois primeiros capítulos o autor examina a produção da memória cultural e do trauma em contextos coloniais e que no terceiro capítulo procede, por sua vez, a um aprofundamento da conjuntura anticolonial. A partir desta última, Rastegar debruça-se sobre o papel do cinema na formulação da memória cultural que resulta da luta contra o colonialismo. O enquadramento passa a ser maioritariamente o dos cineastas egípcios nas décadas de 1950 e 1960 e a respectiva idealização da luta anticolonial, com a particularidade de o autor centrar a sua atenção na representação do papel das mulheres no momento de luta pela independência. Para abordar esta perspectiva, toma como testemunhos principais os filmes *Anna hurra* (1958) de Salah Abu Sayf e *Al-Bab al-maftuh* (1963) de Henri Barakat.

Através dos exemplos supracitados, Rastegar reflecte sobre como o processo de género da memória cultural resultante da luta anticolonial foi encenado mediante o registo cinematográfico, como a memória das mulheres tornou explícitos discursos do trauma entre vítima e agressor e de como o estado de trauma concorre na crescente reconfiguração da memória cultural nas gerações pós-coloniais subsequentes (66 e 68). Este contributo, de aparição improvável no presente livro, demonstra a pertinência do tema, mas simultaneamente aponta uma significativa insuficiência de informação. Mais. Repare-se ainda que, ao longo de todo o livro, as referências a realizadores são maioritariamente masculinas e que, neste capítulo, a visão reflectida é sobre a representação que determinados realizadores fizeram das mulheres — não se trata de pensar sobre a perspectiva feminina desse período histórico. Fará sentido, neste seguimento, reforçar que, ao escolher trabalhar este tema, Rastegar deveria ter procurado sustentar melhor as suas ideias sobre as questões de

gênero e a respectiva relação com a memória cultural e o trauma, relação que desperta um interesse crescente na comunidade científica desde os últimos quarenta anos. A este respeito, valerá a pena referir, a título de exemplo, “Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction,”³ uma publicação que conta com a colaboração de Marianne Hirsch, autora que, como já foi mencionado, não se encontra presente na bibliografia de Rastegar. Neste seguimento, reforça-se que, ao longo da investigação, se verificam algumas ausências bibliográficas. O exemplo anterior comprova esta asserção, como também a corrobora, e citando apenas mais um caso, o sétimo capítulo, em que o autor aborda a título comparativo o cinema que retrata a Guerra do Vietname (1955-75) e o sequente sentimento de trauma que incide sobre os veteranos. Neste caso particular, Rastegar teria enriquecido a sua investigação com leituras adicionais, entre elas, “The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial” de Marita Sturken.⁴ Noutros momentos outras referências consideradas pertinentes permanecem omissas.

Em contrapartida, há capítulos neste livro que asseveram uma solidez irrepreensível. “The Time that Is Lost: Cinematic Aporias of Palestine” atesta esta afirmação. Com atenção ao caso palestino, Rastegar lembra como o mesmo figura num estado de “trauma suspenso [por consequência] de uma catástrofe contínua” (121) — o Nakba — marcada pela guerra e pelo êxodo de milhares de cidadãos, que ao verem as suas casas destruídas fugiram (e fogem) da Palestina. É na consciência desta conjuntura que o autor introduz a ideia de “purgatório da memória” (trad. 93), sendo que “purgatório” advém do título homónimo da segunda parte do filme *Notre Musique (A Nossa Música, 2004)* de Jean-Luc Godard (93 e 95). A relação estabelecida é tão pertinente que se lamenta que o autor não se debruce mais sobre este e outros filmes produzidos por Godard, como *Jusqu’à la victoire: Méthodes de pensée et de travail de la révolution palestinienne* (1970) e *Ici et ailleurs* (1975), os quais nos reenviam para algumas das questões palestinianas abordadas neste capítulo. Não obstante, apoiando-se maioritariamente no testemunho de Elia Suleiman, um dos principais representantes do cinema de autor palestino e realizador da triologia aporética composta pelos filmes *Segell ikhtifa (Crónica de um Desaparecimento, 1996)*, *Yadon ilaheyya (Intervenção Divina, 2002)*, *The Time That Remains (O Tempo Que Resta, 2009)*, Rastegar evidencia como o cinema palestino foi capaz de retratar condições sociopolíticas tão específicas. Como refere o autor, o cinema de Suleiman, através de recursos técnicos e narrativos, como o desaparecimento de personagens ou a repetição de cenas, entre outros, reflec-

te a ideia de que a memória cultural palestina se encontra num estado de suspensão (traumática) próximo daquele que caracteriza o purgatório (110 e 115). Recorrendo a estas ferramentas, o realizador espelha a condição de irresolução que persiste como consequência da guerra e que afecta a memória dos sobreviventes que subsistem num contexto de trauma histórico.

Menos apologética, mas que ainda assim se deve mencionar, é a breve referência que o autor faz às práticas artísticas, a qual expõe, através de uma citação de Walid Sadek, a escolha que as mesmas demonstraram, em simultâneo com as manifestações fílmicas, em rejeitar a “representação pura,” assumindo-se esta como uma propositada marca de relutância em ambos os contextos (164). Esta menção que aqui se realiza, e que expõe o reconhecimento, por parte Rastegar, da relação entre o cinema e as práticas artísticas, tem o propósito de lamentar a ausência, que se estende a todo o livro, de alusões mais aprofundadas sobre estas últimas. Isto porque, e como o próprio autor defende, nas diferentes conjunturas analisadas “os produtores culturais tiveram um papel central na produção do trauma social num desafio à memória irresoluta da guerra” (trad. 183) Embora não seja uma omissão que sentencie o sucesso da investigação, acredita-se que a alusão a estas práticas, incontornavelmente cúmplices do cinema, ajudaria a compreender melhor e a consolidar os contextos onde se realizaram os diversos testemunhos fílmicos apresentados. Por outro lado, no presente livro, conduzido por uma metodologia que se fortalece na sua homogenia, a conclusão surpreende ao divergir da concordância que rege todos os capítulos. A introdução do termo “pós-cinemático” (trad. 206), nem por uma vez evocado nas restantes páginas do livro, não se fundamenta no escasso espaço a que fica reservado, denunciando alguma incoerência. De igual modo, a repetida enunciação sobre a questão da morte do cinema carece de fontes e de sustentação. O acrescento de novas referências nestas últimas páginas também não contribui para a clarividência que se espera no final de um estudo que respeitou a rigor um formato sistematizado e tão objectivo.

Independentemente destas anotações é inegável reconhecer que o livro cumpre os objectivos a que se propõe. E é de reforçar especialmente a importância que o mesmo manifesta em estabelecer um debate que, e como afirma Rastegar, procure pensar sobre as possibilidades de uma aceitação ética das responsabilidades da guerra e, por outro lado, sobre como se podem criar estratégias que visem evitar o obscurantismo envolvido nas violações dos direitos humanos. É neste sentido que o documentário de animação *Valz im Bashir* (*Valsa com Bashir*, 2008) de Ari Folman, cumpre de forma exemplar o seu papel nes-

te livro. Ao ambicionar, na hibridez resultante de uma miscigenação técnica, levantar a dúvida e fragilizar a própria verdade da memória israelita, Folman promove a subjectividade e a destabilização da linearidade da narrativa histórica do seu país (197 e 203). Recorrendo a tais exemplos, Kamran Rastegar identifica, assim, a relevância de uma permanente consciência crítica, por parte de alguns dos realizadores convocados neste e noutros capítulos do livro, face ao perigo de uma homogeneização do imaginário social na imposição da ideia de uma memória unária que, como já alertava Jacques Le Goff em *Histoire et mémoire*,⁵ compromete indubitavelmente o sentido histórico das sociedades.

1. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

2. James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).

3. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, "Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28:1 (Autumn 2002): 1-19.

4. Marita Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Representations* 35 (Summer 1991): 118-142.

5. Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

*DOING TIME: TEMPORALITY, HERMENEUTICS,
AND CONTEMPORARY CINEMA*

Feroz Hassan (University of Michigan)

Lee Carruthers. Albany: SUNY Press, 2016. 186 pp. ISBN: 9781438460857.

Temporality has been a privileged topic in cinema studies ever since Deleuze identified modern cinema with explorations of the time-image. In different ways, Bernard Stiegler, Mary Ann Doane, and Phil Rosen have pushed the philosophical and historical linkage of modernity and cinematic time.¹ Where Stiegler has argued that the modern conception of consciousness is essentially cinematographic, Doane and Rosen have inquired into cinema's role since the nineteenth century in shaping, or containing, the experience of temporal and historical flow. Against these instances of recent scholarship on the topic, Lee Carruthers's book, *Doing Time*, is both less ambitious and also perhaps more courageous in what it takes on. While she would accept the broad claim that cinema has played a privileged role in shaping the modern experience of time, Carruthers is not working out another large claim for the medium either historically or philosophically. Instead, she looks at how particular films formally and narratively attend to cinema's potential for mediating our temporal experience. The four texts that receive a chapter each are *The Limey* (1999), *5x2* (2004), *Ni na bian ji dian* (*What Time Is It There?*, 2001), and *The Tree of Life* (2011). In taking a film analytical approach to investigating the purchase of claims on behalf of time, Carruthers seeks to counter the depreciation of interpretive practice in disciplinary film studies.

Carruthers proceeds from a particular understanding of Heidegger's use of the word *Zeitlichkeit*, for whose translation she prefers "timeliness" over the more commonly used "temporality." Timeliness designates "a dynamic structuring of past, present, and future" (16). It involves human subjectivity, including spectatorial subjectivity, in an active and non-linear engagement with the different dimensions of time. Such a conception of the work of time is in line not only with Heidegger's work but also with other long-standing inquiries into alternatives to linear conceptions of time and history in modernity. Therefore, the case studies in the book, in different ways, all touch upon the theme of

temporal disjunction and realignment. To this thematic concern, Carruthers joins the work of phenomenologically oriented film and critical theory of roughly the past two decades (for example, the work of Vivian Sobchack and Laura U. Marks) that foregrounds the sensorial dimension of film experience. This allows her to develop an interpretive methodology that takes into account the temporal unfolding that constitutes spectatorial relations to the films under consideration. Therefore, each film analysis starts with an examination of the opening scene before moving on to later ones. Nevertheless, this unfolding itself is guided not by an uninterrupted linearity — beginning, *then* middle, and *then* end — but by rhythmic structures that can be detected in a film's formal work, and which, for example, can cause chronologically distinct sequences to exist together in some way, unsettling and reorienting each other.

The films Carruthers chooses all explicitly violate the expectations of a conventional, clock-time framework. *The Limey* is a revenge drama that uses flashbacks, flash-forwards, and ellipses to offset the otherwise goal-driven narrative. *5x2* deploys reverse chronology to trace backwards a couple's journey from courtship to divorce. *Ni na bian ji dian* works with the modalities of the recently baptized "slow cinema" to chart the experience of characters emotionally stuck in time. *The Tree of Life* uses dynamic montage to explore the relationship between cosmic time and personal time. Carruthers looks closely at how each film uncovers the timeliness of experience — of both the characters in the film and of the spectator in front of it. The curious thing is that the dynamism of filmic temporality in each instance serves to reinforce the slipperiness of temporality. The quest for meaning always ends in the realization that, while meaning exists only in time, the experience of timeliness always puts the stability of meaning just out of reach. In *5x2*, for example, the reverse chronology of a marriage's breakdown, traced in five episodes, does not uncover a gradual deterioration that can be re-placed on an inverted trajectory of causal narration; rather, Carruthers highlights details in the film that suggest a repetitive pattern in the relationship from the very beginning and in each episode. And yet she goes on to argue, "[I]t's hard to say that *5x2* really resolves these premises, or indeed that this kind of clarification has ever been the film's project" (83).

The analysis offered of *The Limey* most clearly illustrates the author's desire to approach meaning only to go past it. The film's defamiliarizing techniques do little to distract the viewer too long from the goal-oriented narrative or from the progressive clarification of character motivation. Though these techniques are seemingly more disorienting than

those identified by Bordwell as constituting “intensified continuity,” they ultimately bear out his point that the seeming violation of continuity (and linearity in this instance) only serves to recuperate it better. While conceding this point, Carruthers identifies some fuzzy logic in the narrative and in shot details to push home the point that the film’s meaning cannot be completely recuperated. Following this analysis of *The Limey*, it is not surprising that she makes more persuasive cases for temporal elusiveness in Tsai’s and Malick’s films.

We can now look briefly at the challenge the book sets itself of reviving a hermeneutic practice in the academic study of film. While scholars such as Dudley Andrew, D. N. Rodowick, and Daniel Morgan have argued for the centrality of hermeneutics to disciplinary practice, the dilemmas involved in countering its current marginality are illustrated by Rodowick’s own recent work. His persuasive two-volume argument for a hermeneutics-driven humanistic practice in film studies has precious little space for engagement with particular films.² One of the things this suggests is that too much concern with the “why” of doing something may serve to deflect the difficulty of the “how.” Therefore, *Doing Time*, by looking closely at films themselves, goes further than many advocates of a hermeneutic practice in bringing out one or two challenges specific to our times in taking up film interpretation. The choice of “time,” especially conceived along the lines described above, as a topic with which to make a case for interpretation is a sign of this challenge.

Deleuze’s theorization of the time-image as loosening the sensory-motor schema may be seen as one factor among others in the depreciation of narrative and of hermeneutic practice in general (even if his own work cared enough about films to run a lifetime’s programming at the Parisian ciné-clubs through his conceptual machine). The valorization of temporalities that make room for the ambiguous, the indeterminate, and the inarticulable has played its part in undercutting claims to meaning. Though Carruthers consciously brackets Deleuze’s work in setting up her theoretical concerns, it cannot be denied that at a fundamental level her theorization of temporality is not incompatible with his. Thus, by seeking to rehabilitate our engagement with meaning and narrative through one of the channels of their erosion, this book displays the courage mentioned at the outset. However, while one can see the need to acknowledge the importance of the conceptual push against complacent interpretive practices, *Doing Time* finally ends up conceding too much to the discourse of the indeterminate. Thus, for example, *5x2* teaches us that “interpretati-

on is a kind of presumption" (64). More generally, "[t]he thought occurs that filmic time is most instructive as it gets away from us, exposing the limits of academic language and approved discourse" (9). The book is very aware of the paradox of always arriving at the meaning that meaning is slippery. The lesson it offers is that such slipperiness be understood as a kind of ambiguity that is not just a choice among multiple possibilities, but an accumulation of simultaneous meanings (23). This requires a careful mapping of a film's possibilities, rather than an *a priori*, abstract assertion of ambiguity, even if some of these possibilities may be logically incompatible. This is an ingenious but ultimately a tepid resolution to the problem of interpretation: one may interpret only on condition that meaning constantly undermine itself. And a certain understanding of time is indeed a well-suited theme for the task.

It is legitimate to wonder that at a time when the lessons of ambiguity are too easily learned in academic discourse, but also when it has once again become possible to assert dogmatic and populist certainties in the larger public sphere, might it not now be necessary to commit oneself to rigorous argumentation that identifies and works through doubt to arrive at something more philosophically and historically determinate. Such determinateness would invite contestation from the outside as opposed to a too consciously open discourse that anticipates, internalizes, and ultimately defuses the force of contestation. *Doing Time* indeed has several moments of determinate insight as, for example, the reading of the closing image of *5x2* as modeled on the most hackneyed conceptions of romance without being glibly ironic; or the claim that *Tree of Life* "advances[s] the ontological claim that the possibility of loss precedes all having" (131). But, given the overarching argument, such insights accumulate without being synthesized.

Despite the reservations expressed here, as suggested earlier, *Doing Time* genuinely advances the debate on the status of hermeneutics in film studies. By pushing the demands of interpretation against the theoretical insights of recent film theory that have taken some edge off those demands, and by doing so not only theoretically but through example, the book brings to a head some of the most intractable issues involved in reviving a hermeneutic practice.

1. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, and the Archive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2001).

2. D. N. Rodowick, *Elegy for Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Rodowick, *Philosophy's Artful Conversation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

HANAN AL-CINEMA: AFFECTIONS FOR THE MOVING IMAGE

Susana Mouzinho (IFILNOVA)

Laura U. Marks. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. ISBN: 9780262029308.

Ambitious in scope, Laura U. Marks's *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* is overall a valuable addition to film scholarship and to the studies on film production in and from the Arab world. The numerous works analyzed, from the last two decades and a half, put forth many different modes of engagement and thinking through and with the moving-image. Experimental in nature, these films reflect and construct modes of image making that summon in myriad ways a sense of belonging and of being affected by the moving image; experience and affect, the primary mode of a personal engagement with cinema according to Marks. To speak of experimental is already to refer to a major criterion in the selection of the films in analysis — Marks is partial to experimental film and its history — although this criterion is somewhat complicated: experimental as in the lived experience that informs many of the works in study as well as being synonymous with experimentation regarding the construction of narrative content, montage procedures, the use of different film mediums and image generations. The book's title hints at one of Marks's central arguments which calls for the moving image as a mode of relation, connection and engagement between artistic community, cinema and spectator, an inescapable relationship that aims to foreground an intricate reading of the moving-image in terms of its affective power and mobilizing potential.

The study opens with an overview of the modes of production and organization in Arab-speaking countries and the institutional and informal relations that are established between the different agents involved in art and film production such as the State, production companies, independent galleries, filmmakers, spectators, friends, in order to bring about an "unfolding of Arab cinema" in its diverse approaches to the moving-image. It follows a thematic organization with a few chapters interspersed throughout dedicated to the work of a single artist/filmmaker, such as Elia Souleiman, Mounir Fatmi, Mohamed Soueid, among others, which offer a case-study analysis of the major topics developed in neighboring chapters — such as body, landscape, algorithm, archive. The 15

chapters that make up this volume, as Marks notes in her introductory remarks, are dedicated to an analysis of a large corpus of films that are thought through the concept of “enfolding-unfolding aesthetics”, derived from Atomist Islamic philosophy and Deleuze’s theory of the fold. It is this concept of “enfolding-unfolding aesthetics” that informs her discussion of the way cinema can “make events perceptible and seek connections among them” (20). Drawing from extensive philosophical references such as Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Baruch Spinoza, Charles Sanders Peirce, Félix Guattari and, as mentioned, Gilles Deleuze, the following chapters are an enticing read on the moving-image in the Arab world, where manifold historical-political inflections and self-reflexiveness come up as expressive characteristics of this cinema.

Such an approach to film as Marks’s, works out a discussion of these films that is intent on locating that which is hidden in the folds of experience and how it is actualized in the image. In fact, a tri-partite relation is at the basis of what constitutes a semiotics of enfolding-unfolding aesthetics, the enfolding-unfolding of experience being one of experiential appearances and disappearances, derived from Charles Sanders Peirce, via Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the “plane of immanence,” where, in the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness of the sign, Marks finds the concepts that allow her to elaborate this aesthetics and thus work out a methodology for thinking the moving-image. Thus, the unfolding, the coming into immanence from infinity — that is, the whole of experience — is thought through the triadic model. The Peircean categories are named experience, information and image, the latter establishing a relation between experience and information. Through this triadic model, Marks aims to bring into discussion not only how and why certain images reach us from an abundance past and present, but also the socio-political organization that lies behind our experience of the world as well as the ways in which we react and interact with images. Marks suggests:

This model shows that in our time, much art is concerned with the nature of en/unfolding rather than with producing images; these artworks (and other things) thus are not so much representational as performative. Attending to the flow of unfolding and enfolding can help us understand artworks (and other things) as performative in their origins and their effects in the world. They become fluid and transformative, like the Peircean sign itself. (73).

The engagement with Deleuzian philosophy and the notion of an affect for the moving-image leads Marks to a discussion of modes of embodiment, further expanding the notion of the performativity of the moving-image, arguing for the affect as the mode for a continual passage from action to thought. This performative act is thus located in Marks's reading of the affection-image in Deleuze:

This moment of suspension (the affection-image) can give rise to what Deleuze calls time-image, images produced in creatively widened circuits of perception, memory and imagination. The affection-image suspends qualities that might become the basis for reactive acts and instead makes them vibrate with the potential for new kinds of acts, feelings, or perceptions. The time-image elevates the incapacity to act to a high creative principle that allows any image to connect with any other. (4)

Herein lies an ethics for a sustained circulation of images as it will involve the viewer in a relation with the image (again relating to Peirce's theory of the sign) that requires the investment of said viewer (or interpretant) in the image/sign, thus creating a connection from which a new sign may appear: "A sign grows stronger through use as it 'spreads among the peoples'." (282). The suggestion is that this may lead to the motion of action and thought, to an affection-image and to an emancipatory sociability of the image.

The concept of the affect is thus imported for a film theory that advocates its potentialities for the time-image. In the mobilization from action to thought, a movement is made for an impassioned relation with the world that moves beyond the photographic, beyond representation, towards performativity, affection and sociability (the time-image as a "belief in the world" that does not rely on the photographic as indexical evidence, instead, presumes the enfoldings and unfoldings of experience in their contingent meanings). This is a scholarship that argues for a cognitive and affective/embodied relation with the image, expanding on the concept of the "haptic" — Marks has developed the notion of the eye as an organ of touch — a mode of sensuous relation with the world and the film image that will potentially produce a culturally sensitive approach and a field of the ethical. The moving-image is the locus of a mediated encounter between the bodies on the screen and viewers' bodies. This "contact" Marks argues, is what lies at the base of the movement from affect to thought. The "affections" that the title of the book references, solicit the notion of experience — in keeping with a reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *plane of*

immanence where life and art events become manifest or *actualized* — with which to think, live and act in the world, film as a *bloc of sensations* activated by the viewer.

In fact, Marks champions an embodied reading of the image that relies on the particular subjectivities, which seems at odds with the Deleuzian idea of cinema's capacity for the creation of a non-embodied image of expressive matter, the *becoming* image as independent of a grounded subject. But for Marks the crucial move, in this reviewer's understanding, is the move beyond representation towards the affect — the "becoming molar of the molecular" — an affectivity that derives from an impression of bodies — art's bodies, cinema's bodies, neighboring bodies — upon the viewing subject, a performative knowledge of the world that is arrived at through the experience of the circulation of images. A well thought out book, and invaluable discussion of the recent history of Arab cinema, that argues for the potentials of the encounter with moving-images and the exemplary and multifarious ways in which a compelling corpus of films works these concepts.

*THE BODY AND THE SCREEN: FEMALE SUBJECTIVITIES
IN CONTEMPORARY WOMEN'S CINEMA*

Zorianna Zurba

Cate Ince. New York: Bloomsbury, 2017. 224 pp. ISBN: 9781623565206.

For some, feminist film studies still rings synonymous with inquiry on the gaze and spectatorship. Feminist film studies did come to a slow down in the 1990's through to the mid 2000's, and if perhaps there is any doubt that feminist film studies needs to be revitalized, then perhaps the slight oversight of feminist film studies from Robert Sinnerbrink's account of film philosophy's lineage in *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images*¹ is reason enough. As Cate Ince (2017) herself points out, Sinnerbrink "includes gender studies and queer theory in his cultural-historicist current, but makes no mention of feminist film studies as a separate set of approaches with its own distinct history" (28). No longer focused on spectatorship and representation, contemporary feminist film theorists are taking up interdisciplinary approaches and inquiring into the feminine or female consciousness, subjectivity, embodiment, agency, and ethics. Feminist film studies has had a particular resurgence within the burgeoning field of film philosophy. Contemporary feminist film theorists who have taken up female and feminist philosophers include: Boulé and Tidd² on Simone de Beauvoir; Caroline Bainbridge³ and Lucy Bolton⁴ on Luce Irigaray; and, Katherine J. Goodnow⁵ on Julia Kristeva. Of these, Cate Ince's feminist phenomenology, *The Body and the Screen*, is the first to "scrutinize embodied female subjectivity in film, either as it is represented or as it may be reinforced or constituted by the act of viewing such representations" (26).

Ince's opening chapter serves to trace the feminist development of a female subject, and her desire. Ince brings together Beauvoir, Irigaray and Battersby's work on embodiment and the ethical in conjunction with female subjectivity to form a feminist ethic of embodiment. With chapters entitled body, look, speech, performance, desire, and freedom, Ince takes up a broad range of existential and phenomenological concerns related to the female subject. The challenge, as she sets out, for feminist phenomenologists is to des-

cribe female desire in feminine terms, and the challenge for feminist filmmakers is how to portray female body without falling back onto male-coded forms.

Ince begins her phenomenological feminist analysis with the body. Ince aligns herself with Elena Del Rio⁶ who strives to both: focus on the female body as a lived materiality, rather than “a written and spoken sign” (quoted 50); and, combine psychoanalytic, semiotic, and phenomenological approaches in order to acknowledge that “bodily action [is] not only inherently significant, but also indivisible from symbolic and discursive structures” (quoted 50). She introduces Andrea Arnold, Sally Potter, Agnès Varda, and Catherine Breillat as the book’s four main film-makers, whose films

all feature what might be called a “primary look” between women that precedes the viewer’s look at a film, and this look may be understood as a duality within femaleness corresponding to its openness beyond what Derrida or Irigaray terms “the economy of the proper” — the realm of self-identity. (26)

Her readings of *Fishtank* (2009), *Orlando* (1992), *The Tango Lesson* (1997), *The Beaches of Agnes* (2008), *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse* (*The Gleaners and I*, 2000), and *Romance* (1999) describe the protagonists’ “pleasure in movement and bodily action, while also considering the meanings offered by their living, acting bodies and the symbolic frameworks within which their agency and physical actions take place” (50). Arnold’s *Fishtank* is heralded by Ince as feminist phenomenological theory in practice with its emphasis on Mia’s (Katie Jarvis) physical exertion and vitality by framing her shoulders and torso, and the sound of her breath. In *The Tango Lesson*, Sally Potter plays the tango-dancing protagonist who manages through her own physical performance to convey the experience of dancing. In a phenomenological — though not specifically feminist — analysis, Ince draws a parallel between Merleau-Ponty’s awareness of the body via space and Varda’s attention to the lived conditions of the physical female body in relation to its environment and the continued attention to her own body (not to mention the close attention given to the skin of her dying husband, Jacques Demy in *Jacquot de Nantes* [1991]). Ince’s commentary on *Romance*, one of Catherine Breillat’s “dramas of female subjectivity” (69), focuses closely on Marie’s (Caroline Ducey) embodied experience, the division she feels between the upper and lower halves of her body, and how this division is resolved during a sexual quest for liberation

which reaches its conclusion with the birth of her son and the killing of her husband. The phenomenological inquiry in this chapter, like in the chapters that follow, does not proceed from a set of unified texts, but rather each section is approached with a different set of texts and highlights a different aspect of female embodiment. Nevertheless, Ince successfully illustrates how feminist phenomenology brings out the “embodied agency, movements, and actions of the films’ female protagonist better than any other form of reading” (72).

For Ince, “Looking is not inevitably power laden” (73); ocular desire is not controlling, but ambivalent. Ince grounds her chapter on the look against the pervasive assumption of the gaze. She cites Joan Copjec as a representative Lacanian and Marian Keane’s (2009) close reading of Freud’s work on scopophilia to refute the commonplace assumptions that germinated from the work of Metz and Mulvey. For phenomenologists, with the exception of Hegel and Sartre, looking is an exercise of freedom. This is particularly true of Beauvoir, for whom the intersubjectivity of looking is an example of “mutually supporting freedoms” (85). Ince offers an analysis of Arnold’s short film *Wasp* (2003) as well as *Fish Tank* to argue that active female looking and desiring that cannot be explained by psychoanalytic film theory, or previous modes of decoding the mise-en-scene. Further, Ince references a fluid camera movement which connects Orlando’s eyes and body during an intimate moment with Shelmerdine (Billy Zane) as a feminist strategy to depict embodied active looking. In *Brève traversée* (*Brief Crossing*, 2001), Breillat uses the looks shared between a 17 year old boy and a 30 year old married woman as a means of observing an embodied male-female intersubjective relationship while depicting intimacy. Ince’s intention is a shift toward an ethical vision as suggested by Beauvoir’s notion of *devoilement* (disclosure). The ethical dimension of looking is not simply within and between the filmed looks, but the looking implied with the director’s camera. The artist is not detached from the world; on the contrary, their art is an expression of their engagement with the world.

In the fifth chapter, *Speech*, Ince continues her inquiry into ethical and intersubjective relationships. Indeed, she deliberately uses speech instead of voice since voice implies interiority, where speech is social. Unlike the previous chapters which focus on female subjectivity and phenomenology, here Ince engages with Irigaray’s socio-linguistic work on gendered speech and *parler femme*. As Rachel Jones explains, “*Parler femme* speaks of a way of articulating the female sex that would allow women to take up the position of speaking subjects

themselves, and thereby to relate to one another as women, whose differences and similarities can be registered without mediation through a male voice" (16). Ince suggests that the ethical and embodied speaking female subjectivity illustrated by the protagonists in the works of Breillat and Marleen Gorris' *The Hours*, an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, might be considered post-patriarchal female speaking subjects because of the way they struggle and succeed to articulate the truth of their experiences.

Where previous chapters made some reference to the relationship between the director and the filmic content, the fifth chapter, *Performance*, focuses closely on the relationship between the director and the female protagonist. This inquiry is intensified by a sample of films (*No Sex Last Night* [1995], *My Little Princess* [2011], *Tango Lesson* [1997], *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* [*Why (not) Brazil?*, 2004]) in which the director herself is the protagonist and the subject matter is taken from a given time in her life. Ince argues that this semi-autobiographical account allows the directors to self-reflect on female subjectivity more closely. Through her analysis, Ince suggests that women's control over the performance of women in the Symbolic order is needed to shift the representation of female subjectivity. Considering the role of the director, Jeanne (Anne Parillard), in the film within the film of Breillat's *Sex is Comedy* (2002), Ince comments that "Breillat's representation of the directing of desire in *Sex is Comedy* offers a *mise-en-scene* of the enacting of desire (the drives) in a context where the activity *is* representation, and vitally, artistic representation of which a woman is in charge" (148). Ince returns once more to the activity of the director when considering the attitude and methods that Jeanne uses when directing in the following chapter.

Of the chapters which make up this book, Ince perhaps offers her greatest contribution to feminist film theory in the chapter on desire. It is here where she more deeply engages in feminist phenomenological work by taking up Irigaray's proposition that women need to be able to relate to each other in non-phallic ways in a culture of their own. Curiously, she begins the chapter by drawing upon the inseparability of desire, subjectivity, and ethics in the work of Deleuze and Guattari before delving into Irigaray. For Irigaray, women's desire is stunted because of the phallogocentrism of the Symbolic order. The "lack of an auto-erotic, homo-sexual economy" (quoted 132) of women results in blockages and tensions, manifesting in behaviours such as hypernarcissism, difficult relations with the mother and other women, and a lack of social interest. Women require an alternative libidinal economy in order to support the formation of a feminine subjectivity.

Ince's chapter contributes to thinking about changing and disrupting the current libidinal economy. She cites Margaret Whitford's (1991) incisive reading of Irigaray's call for a reorganization of the death drive at the level of the symbolic which re-distributes the death drive between the sexes. Mia in *Fish Tank*, Morvern (Samantha Morton) in *Morvern Callar* (2002), Maria Vial (Isabelle Huppert) in *White Material* (2009), and Jeanne in *Sex is Comedy* are all protagonists who exhibit aggression and violence in order to survive, escape, or achieve a degree of independence from their immediate social situations. If within a patriarchal ethics women's death drives are used to sublimate and represent the male death drive, and not their own, then the challenge these violent women pose to "conventional 'civilized' (patriarchal) morality might just represent the beginnings of a new and *sexuate* ethical moral order" (151). By acting in antagonistic, aggressive, and violent ways they inhabit a 'zone' in which the "symbolic and social reorganization of *sexuate* desire is taking place, and a modification of the economy of masculine subjectivity is going on" (151). The moral and ethical quandaries posed by the violence of the protagonists is a "new moral 'territory' acquired for female subjectivity by the reorganization of economies of sexual subjectivity envisaged by Irigaray" (142).

Where the chapter on the look made mention of looking as a freedom, the final chapter considers how women's freedom has been represented by the directors Breillat and Denis. Freedom is an important concept for existentialism and Beauvoir in particular. Ince's examination focuses on sexual freedom. She notes in her conclusion that this chapter does "not affirm its title in as thoroughgoing a manner as the preceding chapters, since it approached freedom as a value and a praxis rather than as a foundation concept, but it did maintain that women's sexual freedom has been a major theme and a narrative element of film directed by Catherine Breillat and Claire Denis in the 2000s" (174). *Romance's* Marie is partly estranged from her body and refused intimacy by her partner, Paul (Sagamore Stevenin), who attempts to control her femininity; her sexual quest allows her to reconnect with her body, experience pleasure, and construct an embodied subjectivity. Despite the limits that Marie encounters, "we have to ask whether such representations of female desire do not open up unimagined ways of understanding sexual subjectivity and erotic relationality" (quoted 159). Ince analysis of Claire Denis' *Friday Night* (2002) focuses on camera technique and style where the freedom of embodied female subjectivity made is visible through "use of dissolves, travelling shots of varying speeds, and extreme close-ups on skin and textured clothing" (164). The intensity registered in Breillat and Denis'

films as the sensory representation of female freedom as an expression of desire is a successful example of not relying upon male coded representation; and, underscores the importance of women filmmakers and women directors in control order to shift the representation of the female subject.

Ince's book concludes with some notes on genealogy, suggesting that the development of ethical female subjectivity is not linear, but open and "in formation — the kind of self-formation, perhaps, that is suggested by Foucault's characterization of ethics as a practice of freedom" (176). It seems curious that Ince concludes her text this reference to Foucault rather than returning to the Irigarayan feminist genealogical work taken up by Whitford and Jones on the relationships between women, and the culture of women among themselves. An Irigarayan genealogy might be helpful when considering the relationship between *Fishtank's* Mia and her mother, and Mia's decision to have sex with her mother's boyfriend; *Romance's* Marie whose entry into motherhood coincides with the murdering her partner and son's father; Morvern's relationship with her best friend; and, other relations between women mentioned in the text.

Ince offers a vital contribution to feminist film studies in general, and feminist film phenomenology in particular. Her detailed descriptive analyses are exemplary of film phenomenology. This text would be a useful contribution to courses across disciplines: women's studies, media studies, cultural studies, and philosophy.

The Body and The Screen is part of "The Thinking Cinema" series published by Bloomsbury which examines film, philosophy, and theory. The Thinking Cinema series includes books by Elena Del Rio and Thomas Elsaesser. Bloomsbury has likewise published two other texts on feminist film theory in 2016: Mari Ruti's *Feminist Film Theory and Pretty Women* and Hilary Neroni's *Feminist Film Theory and "Cleo from 5 to 7."*

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1. Robert Sinnerbrink, *New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011).
 2. Jean-Pierre Boulé and Ursula Tidd (eds.), *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema: A Beauvoirian Perspective* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).
 3. Caroline Bainbridge, *A Feminine Cinematics: Luce Irigaray, Women and Film* (London: Palgrave, 2007).
 4. Lucy Bolton, *Film and Female Consciousness: Irigaray, Cinema and Thinking Women* (London: Palgrave, 2011).
 5. Katherine J. Goodnow, *Kristeva in Focus: From Theory to Film Analysis* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010). In her own literature review on contemporary film philosophy, Ince does not mention Goodnow's book on Kristeva. Goodnow's text is an exploration of female consciousness and experience, and gives considerable insight into how we can approach and question the representation of female consciousness and the filmic medium.

6. Elena Del Rio, "Rethinking Feminist Film Theory: Counter-Narcissistic Performance in Sally Potter's *Thriller*," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 21:1 (2004): 11-24.

*DELEUZE, JAPANESE CINEMA, AND THE ATOM
BOMB: THE SPECTRE OF IMPOSSIBILITY*

Wayne E. Arnold (The University of Kitakyushu)

David Deamer. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014. 326 pp. ISBN: 9781441178152.

David Deamer begins his project with the important question of how Japanese cinema can adequately depict the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki while also considering those suffering through the aftermath. These two history-altering events have been approached through a variety of cinematic styles, from authentic documentary footage to monsters crashing through cities to Japanese mafia (Yakuza) films. With the incorporation of several wide-ranging films, Deamer investigates the presence of the atom bomb (*pika*) and the affected survivors (*hibakusha*) while looking to the guidance of Gilles Deleuze, whose dual works, *Cinema 1*¹ and *2*,² serve as the roadmap for Deamer's cinematic exploration. The goal of this work is to provide a solid argument that Japanese directors have indeed created a vast film catalog of movies that directly or indirectly deal with the atomic events.

Worth noting is that while this work is an overarching look at Japanese atom bomb filmography, it is also a handbook of sorts for the application of Deleuzian film studies. As Deamer notes, Deleuze was no stranger to Japanese cinema, and *Cinema 1* and *2* incorporates thirty-one Japanese films. Deamer extrapolates the Deleuzian theories, including cinematic signs that become constructed into a semiotic system, and then he extends these by applying them to the thematic methodology found in more than thirty Japanese films. The specific focus in this work, then, is to use Deleuze's approach and engage it directly with films that Deamer believes represent "the mechanism of homogeneity" (13) of atom bomb films: a homogeneity through differences in the choice of depiction, as no director portrays the events in the same manner. Throughout much of the book, Deamer sufficiently engages the reader in his discussion, providing several black and white stills from sections of the film being discussed. Deamer extensively explains his terminology relating to cinematic theory by dividing each chapter into clearly

defined sections, first dealing with theory (predominantly Deleuze) and then applying that theory to a wide variety of films.

Deamer does not restrict his approach to merely a Deleuzian-based theory; rather, he freely incorporates certain critical concepts of Walter Benjamin, Charles Sanders Peirce, Henri Bergson, and Friedrich Nietzsche, among others, to support his arguments. Additionally, Deamer looks to previous scholarship from Japanese film scholars, often agreeing — as well as disagreeing — with the ideas of Donald Richie, Stephen Prince, and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto concerning the films under discussion. With the incorporation of these scholars, at times, Deamer does seem to be merely confirming their previous arguments, rather than advancing or demonstrating new essentials in the conversation. Indeed, in the analysis of certain popular films among critics, Deamer sometimes fails to bring about substantial new revelations concerning his interpretation of the film.

In-depth theoretical exploration of Deleuze's *Cinema 1* and *2* before each film analysis, often results in a feeling that certain films do not get enough attention, that they are too quickly examined and insufficiently utilized to prove a point. Such films as Tsukamoto Shinya's *Tetsuo* (1988) and Teshigahara Hiroshi's *Tanin no kao* (*The Face of Another*, 1966) are so briefly connected to Deamer's thesis that it seems the films could have just as easily been left out of the discussion. Nevertheless, Deamer adequately creates a sense that each chapter is building on the previous, often recalling both the points made in the prior chapters and the thematic images of the films. Back-referencing creates a cohesive whole to the work and proves a meaningful read in its entirety. The chapter on the Godzilla film series and the chapter on Kurosawa Akira are worth highlighting for their explanation and application of the Deleuzian ideas surrounding the action-image and the mental-image.

Occasionally becoming bogged down by Deamer's extensive focus on Deleuze's *Cinema 1* and *2* is an issue. Also, there are more than thirty tables that Deamer incorporates but they are far from transparent, suggesting that other forms of visuals might have proven more valuable for understanding the sometimes convoluted Deleuzian theories. Another drawback is Deamer's meticulous incorporation of Deleuzian theory that causes the reader to feel overburdened with the jargon and at times the text becomes rather tedious — causing the reader to want to plow through the theory parts to arrive at the more interesting film analysis sections. It is not that Deamer fails to be engaging, instead it is the extensive theory explanation followed by (sometimes) short film analyses

makes this work foremost an exposition on Deleuze and second an approach to Japanese atom bomb films — it is perhaps for this reason the Deleuze's name appears first in the title of the book. Overall, Deamer's work is worth exploring and the categorizing of each chapter (as well as a detailed index) provides readers an organized approach to the Japanese films dealing directly and indirectly with the atom bomb.

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1. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: L'Image-Mouvement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1983).
 2. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: L'Image-Temps* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985).

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPIKE LEE

Aspen Taylor Johnson (Metropolitan State University of Denver)

Mark T. Conard. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2011. 251 pp. ISBN: 9780813133812.

Whereas politics and art are fundamental categories of everyday experience, philosophy provides a critical lens through which politics and art come into deep focus. *The Philosophy of Spike Lee* follows a similar vein, providing thoughtful and in-depth readings of Lee's artistry and the ways in which it hosts subject matter pertinent to contemporary issues within pop culture, identity politics, and discrimination. This book is unique because of the way it addresses deep structures of racism, sexism, and violence through the cinematic form, which are so often neutralized in critiques of Lee via hasty acts of moralization and vies for political correctness. Although there's no doubt that Spike Lee's name is forever synonymous with controversy, the content of this book demonstrates a different approach to Lee through a philosophical lens; by deploying figures from Plato to Heidegger and beyond, the book extrapolates a philosophical texture from Lee's *oeuvre*, collecting perspectives on his aesthetic that have been in high demand and yet seemingly inaccessible.

By asking central questions within popular debates on race in films such as *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and *Bamboozled* (2000), as well as gender politics in *She's Gotta Have It* (1986) and *Girl 6* (1996), this text encourages its readers to extend their relationship with Lee's films beyond their run-times. Although not completely devoid of rote argumentation, the text highlights Lee's ability to challenge homogenous images and ideologies that permeate the history of Hollywood cinema, while also outlining examples in which Lee himself falls victim to stereotypes and an over-dependence on Hollywood convention. Each contributor confronts Lee in a way that grounds his work in a *telos* without resorting to either oversimplification or convolution of his films. While the ongoing debates surrounding Lee's work reaffirm his important role in the history of cinema, *The Philosophy of Spike Lee* embarks on more nuanced critiques of Lee's work and its inexhaustive potential to provoke dialogue on contemporary issues.

In flux with Lee's status as an auteur, this volume highlights the socio-political commentaries central to his point of view as well as his unprecedented assemblage of techniques as a filmmaker. This text manages to mirror the bold imagery of Lee's films through the contributors' candid descriptions of American history in general and film history in particular. For instance, Ronald Sundstrom's chapter on Lee's *Jungle Fever* (1991) revisits early films dealing with taboos linked to race and sexuality, opening with an extended commentary on the miscegenation-narrative in D.W. Griffith's notorious *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). In addition to highlighting the racist roots of Hollywood cinema, Sundstrom goes into the construction of race as it developed in the western world. By linking these two examples, the reader is exposed to the propagandistic undertow of American cinema and how societal influences are similarly translated into the apparatus of film.

Mark T. Conard, an associate professor of philosophy, chair of the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at Marymount Manhattan College in New York, and editor of the volume reviewed, acknowledges that this book can appeal to an eclectic audience. He states, "[w]hether you're a die-hard fan (or even a detractor!) of Spike Lee, a film buff generally, or someone with interest in philosophy, the following essays will help enrich your understanding of and appreciation for this iconic American filmmaker" (ix). Despite recognizing Lee's influence, Conard takes an ambivalent stance towards Lee's work in the preface, which provides the book as an accessible object for the reader to digest its content without tactical bias or intimidation. With similar effect, Conard thematically echoes many profound philosophers and critical theorists, all while denying any deep-seated backgrounds in philosophy or film studies. In this way, Conard does not try and convert the reader, but rather guides them toward further reflection and in-depth interpretation.

The book itself is broken down into three main sections: the first, "Justice, Value, and the Nature of Evil," the second, "Race, Sexuality, and Community," and the third and final section, "Time, the Subject, and Transcendence." Among the philosophical features, the reader will find detailed explications of Lee's signature shots, and important themes that define Lee as a filmmaker. For instance, Jerold J. Abrams looks closely at Lee's "floating-man" effect and the films the technique is featured in. Not only does Abrams address Lee's cinematic ability to mix realism with expressionism but incorporates the psychological results that the effect has on spectators. Restoring responsibility in the

spectator is crucial in the ongoing task of meaning-making and a common thread throughout the book, considering its commitment to theory and other philosophical investigations.

This text is an ideal aid for learning about Lee given that he is a figure who demands critical analysis, and therefore, a sharp philosophical lens. Lucid explications of the complex details in Lee's mise-en-scène, sound design and cinematographic style are paired well with their philosophical correlates, aiding understanding of the conjunction between cinema and philosophy. The reader gets to know Lee through his style and aesthetic choices rather than forcing Lee's personal experiences to be the basic rationale for these choices, which is often the fault of many interpretations of black filmmakers. In this way, *The Philosophy of Spike Lee* is in contrast to other texts on Lee's body of work, such as the 2005 autobiography, *That's My Story and I'm Sticking to It*, which emphasizes Lee's experience more than his artistry. While detailed accounts of Lee's life are important, they may stifle the freedom of interpretation fostered by philosophical inquiry. This book offers a wellspring of supplemental information pertaining to Lee's aesthetic.

In addition to the distinguished perspectives of the contributors, there is a well-blended mix of sources referenced and cross-examined. By visiting ancient, modern, and contemporary philosophies, the reader is able to become acquainted with thinkers such as Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Marx, Locke, Hume, James Baldwin, Slavoj Žižek, bell hooks, Cornel West, James Cone, and others in new and innovative ways. In similar fashion, the book evokes classical and bygone epochs, such as in the volume's opening essay by Douglas McFarland, who discusses Lee's *Clockers* (1995) within the frame of Greek tragedy, evoking the idea of contagion, the symbolism of blood, and violence in the development of ritualized civic narratives. This essay is particularly relevant for today, as it seems to forecast one of Lee's recent films, *Chiraq* (2015), and its explicit resemblance to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Although some may read this as relevant to Lee's more contemporary work, this book may come off to some readers as a bit dated, given that Lee's most recent titles *Oldboy* (2013), and *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* (2014) among others were released after the 2011 publication of this volume.

While each contributors' approach is inviting with clear arguments, there are certainly moments where ideas wander and it may be easily forgotten that Spike Lee is the topic at hand. While abstracting Lee's work is useful insofar as it assures the reader that his robust personality is not the only gauge of his cinematic potential, it would have

been welcomed for more coordinates to have been drawn within Lee's *oeuvre*; a greater degree of cross-reference between titles and motifs within Lee's body of work would support his paramount status as an auteur and his distinctive voice in New Black Cinema. This would also aid the reader in gaining a stronger ability in recognizing/distinguishing the styles and characteristics belonging to Lee.

Despite this minor setback, one particularly strong argument comes from Michael Silberstein's chapter entitled, "The Dialectic of King and X in *Do the Right Thing*." Silberstein comments on the still photograph of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and the way in which their politics were paradoxically unified and at odds during the Civil Rights Movement. For Silberstein, the photograph goes beyond signifying the disparate approaches belonging to the two revolutionaries by converging on underlying ethical conditions toward the larger concept of justice. While Silberstein's thesis applies to *Do the Right Thing*, it may easily suffice as a fair description of Lee's work in full when he observes,

no conclusion is ever reached regarding the question of which ideology is more *right* [...] since one of the characteristics of a rich and thought-provoking film is that it raises important questions without imposing definitive answers. Viewers are left to fend for themselves and consider the merit of each position. (128)

Expanding this perspective disengages the passivity of many spectators as well as it initiates new ways of thinking and acting in an unsettling social climate.

At first glance, this book's cover bears little contrast to other texts on Spike Lee, offering yet another portrait of Lee's ultra-serious gaze emanating from behind his wire-rimmed glasses. However, the content within the edited volume marks a vast departure, freeing Lee's work from constrictive perspectives of the past while welcoming a new form of contextual exploration of the filmmaker's impressive filmography. By targeting ways in which Lee's aesthetic output receives emotionally charged responses, this book pinpoints the philosophical ideas necessary in making the problems of a single auteur the problems of a collective body, endlessly interpreted, negotiated, and defended. Whether or not the reader approaches Lee in a favorable light, this volume illuminates the philosophical importance of his subversive brand of cinema.