1.4   Vorträge des DAVO-Kongresses
Papers Presented at the Congress of DAVO 2000

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1. Cinema in the Middle East
Chair: **Anton Escher, Konrad Meisig, Günter Meyer**, **Ursula Verhoeven** (Mainz), **Viola Shafik** (Kairo)

Randolph Galla (Amman): The Mua'assasa al-`Āmma li-s-Sīnamā fī Dimašqi: Working Conditions for Cinema Directors

In 1963 the Ba`ath regime established the Mua'assasa al-`Āmma li-s-Sīnamā, which since then has dominated Syrian cinema. With this organization the institute's directors carry far greater responsibilities than they would in an open competitive system, but are neither exposed to market pressures nor need to comply with the expectations of a particular audience. Technical and artistic advice, counseling and expertise always available, directors take the leading role in the entire production. While administrative routines in the Mua'assasa can be slow and tiring, filmmakers have greater artistic freedom than their colleagues in other sectors of the Syrian media. At the same time lack of money and partly outdated technical equipment restrain possibilities. No director has any rights over the Mua'assasa's films. The procedure of decision-making and the authorization of projects are highly personalized, which means filmmakers with better connections are more likely to obtain approval of a "critical" project. This may explain the fact that some films express open criticism of the present situation in Syria. Directors work in considerable inde-pendence, even if critical, as long as the results promise international acclamation. The Syrian authorities regard cinema today as a visiting-card to the world, promoting a positive picture and reputation of the country.

Ingy Salama Al-Sayed (Cairo): Fifty Years: Palestine on the Cinema

A study was undertaken to examine whether political documentaries on the Palestinian conflict correspond to the political moods in the West and the Arab World, and to determine the extent to which they are able to draw differentiated portrayals of the prolonged Palestinian struggle. Findings show that documentary cinema has succeeded in highlighting certain aspects of the history of the Palestinian resistance. Documentaries' propensity to support any of the solutions for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict depends on the prevailing political atmosphere at time of the film's making.

The study's results conclude that documentary cinema dealing with the Palestinian question arose as response to the ongoing political process. In the wake of the events of the sixties, seventies and early eighties, coupled with a wider revolutionary mood in the Middle East, films tend to support the Palestinian side. In the late eighties and the early nineties, concomitant to the rise of the left-wing Labor Party in Israel, the idea of a peaceful coexistence between Palestine and Israel is, astonishingly, addressed in these films. Hence, the respective political position in the West and the Middle East on the question of Palestine, determines to a large extent the political outlook of the documentary film.

Ala Al-Hamarneh (Mainz): Re-thinking the Civil War in Lebanon. "West Beirut", a Film by Ziad Doueiri

Set in 1975 during the early phase of Lebanon's civil war Ziad Doueiri's first film and script work is based on autobiographical motives as well as on a reso-nant tradition of the children/war paradigm in interna-tional cinematography. Doueiri imputes that the reli-gious factor dominated the war from its outset, which in historical terms, however, is debatable, as the chief political players in 1975 West Beirut were inter-religious and secular oriented parties.

The general construction of the film is based on three correlating believes; firstly, the senselessness of this war, or for that matter, any other war; secondly, after over 100,000 deaths, there is no victor and all possibilities of a democratic alternative have been eliminated; and finally, it questions the internal logic of the war and its effects on the common man.

The film's implicit, but resounding conclusion states it is time to cry out the tragedy, time to resist the im-position of the mainstream, time to find new hopes and perhaps time to leave. Doueiri had left Lebanon and from a professional distance made a valuable autobiographic film, including historic elements on the civil war in West Beirut.

Viola Shafik (Cairo): Prostitute for a Good Reason: Stars and Morality in Egypt

This paper provides a brief outline of the history of the Egyptian film industry and introduces some of the most popular actors. It discusses the artistic level of Egyptian cinema as well as current trends of public morals. Including heuristic debates of moral politics in the mass media into the analysis, the paper discusses the extent to which Egyptian stars attain the aura of the legendary and the moral concepts conveyed and represented by them. The paper discusses the rising popularity of veiling among actresses during the early 1990s, tracing the correlation of the impact of ongoing ideological tensions. As the role of women is central in the debate of morality and public culture, this paper pays particular attention on the position of actresses such top star Nadia al-Gandhi, whose image and film persona seem to indicate a very specific interaction between differing moral concepts of dissimilar origins, including Islamism and modernism on the one hand and cultural taboos of sexuality and power on the other hand.

Azadeh Saljooghi (Salt Lake City)**:** Sublime Documentation; a Close Up of the "Close-Up"

In the late 1980s, Husayn Sabzian a divorced and unemployed print-worker, was arrested in Tehran for masquerading as the film director Mohsen Makhmalbaf. He convinced the affluent Ahankhah family that he was the distinguished film director Makhmalbaf. Abbas Kiarostami, another of Iran's renowned filmmakers and screenwriters, based his groundbreaking work "Close-Up" (1990, 100 min, Color) on this incident. The film's plot is simple. A poor man deceives a rich family by posing as one of their favorite filmmakers. He gets caught, is tried, and pleads not guilty to charges of fraud and embezzlement. His defense is rooted in his unemployment and hunger, his admiration for the filmmaker, his love of cinema, his interest in art, and his desire to experience

"Close-Up" engages such contemporary cinematographic themes as subjectivity, objectivity, gaze, fictitious reality, and a visual heteroglossic discourse. Kiarostami proposes new meanings for cinema, audience, and human imagination. He artfully erases the line between the celebrated and uncelebrated, the poor and the rich, the real and the unreal, the mundane and the ideal without redrawing it. "Close-Up" questions the definitions of fact and fiction, muddies the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, allows for a new definition of the gaze, and complicates the representation of the real and fictitious world.

Diana Wenzel (Mainz): The Construction of Cleopatra in Film: An Egyptian Queen as a Symbol of Oriental Culture

One of the projects emerging from the Mainz research venture on "Cinema and the Middle East," is a dissertation on the representation of Cleopatra in film.

The leading goals and questions of this dissertation research are presented in this paper. Basic perceptions still prevailing in films about the last Egyptian queen were established by ancient authors like Plutarch and Cicero. Over the centuries Cleopatra's destiny has been represented in countless literary works, paintings and stage-plays. Since the first film screening of the *Cléopâtre* by Georges Méliès in 1899, almost 40 films were produced on the Cleopatra theme, which raise essential questions about the historical and literary-fictitious persona behind it. Special attention is paid to the images of Cleopatra as a woman, as Oriental and as "the Other." For example, it appears that the Cleopatra-image was also transposed onto royal women of other periods of Egyptian history. A further part of research on these films, inquires into the impact of the influence of archaeological discoveries and Egyptological research on equipment and costumes.

Regina Heilmann (Mainz): The Ancient Near East in Film and Babylon's Reception as a Paradigm for the Other. A Contribution of Near Eastern Archaeology to Orientalism

Subject of this dissertation is the representation of ancient oriental cultures in 20th-century movies. It is structured in three parts: silent films, which reflect a first Orient boom; sound films from the fifties and sixties, which shape the second stage of development; and lastly the evolution of fragmentarily interspersed metaphorical terms taken from the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic Orient. All three phases are closely intertwined with perceptions of the Ancient Orient by the Old Testament, Christian-Occidental values and their representation in film. The productions are analyzed separately, according to the country of production, also taking into consideration the influence of the occasionally politically motivated history of research on the films. From this follows the inquiry into both areas, i.e. the film producers' interest in historical research of Orientalism and the active contribution of Orientalists working on the ancient Middle East to the medium of film. On the basis of this research's preliminary results and differentiating between documentaries, the scenery and the plot of the films as well as the spoken dialogues of later sound films, are to be examined.

Wolfgang Zwickel (Mainz): The Arc of the Covenant – Cinematic Representation of a Biblical Object

Many film directors do not pay enough attention to the character of the texts, which they transform and mold into a bible-film. In most cases biblical texts do not comprise historically reliable sources and ought to be considered fictional texts, written to explain certain facts or messages to their readers.

Texts describing a historical event are often centuries younger than the described event itself and reflect not necessarily the circumstances of the time they are recounting, rather than those of their own time.

This paper examines the past 150 years of exegetical scholarly work not with regard to the films' content but with respect to their material equipment. It analyses and explains the problematic way of utilizing biblical texts based on Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones* and Bruce Beresford's *King David*, both films, which deal with the subject of the ark of the covenant.

Sven Andreßen (Frankfurt): The Legend of Anârkalî and Indian Historical Film

Anârkalî is a part of a 400-year-old legend, widely known in South Asia. It is the story of a tragic love affair between the Hindu slave girl Anârkalî and the Muslim Prince Salîm, the future Mughal emperor Jahângîr (1605-1627), son of Akbar the Great (1556-1605).

The legend of Anârkalî is an ever-returning theme in Indian literature and film. The story was set into film ten times, beginning with two silent films produced in the 1920s. Some films on this topic were made in South India and show the legend from the South Indian point of view. The most widely known movies of this genre are in the Hindi language, entitled *Anarkali* (1953) and *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960). The latter is the basis and chief focus for this paper, which examines different aspects of the Anârkalî theme in films of various periods and surroundings.

Claudia Preckel (Bochum): "Amar, Akbar, Anthony" – A Model of Religious Tolerance?

Christopher Lukinbeal (Connecticut): How Landscape Functions in Popular American Cinema

Nezar Andary (Los Angeles): Visual Representation of the al-Andalus

Arab/Islamic Andalusia remains a space where diverse artists have created an imaginative geography. The works range from Hollywood's El Cid and Columbus movies to examples in Arab cinema. For instance, Yusuf Shahin's, *al-Masir*, is a recreation of the life of Ibn Rushd (Averoes), which demands comparison to other Arab film makers, who have tried to recreate lives of certain canonical thinkers, such as Saadallah Wannus's effort with Ibn Khaldun. The paper also attempts to incorporate other works from Arabic and Western Literature. Examples range from the early American writer Washington Irving to the Francophone Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf. Historical representations may often seem to reiterate dominant cultural ideas and values, but a closer scrutiny reveals that popular history represented throughout cinema and literature is a pastiche of conceptions about the world. The plethora of works concerning the recreation of Andalusia, not only addresses specific contemporary themes in the Middle East like the relationship between state and society, but also crucial theoretical and aesthetical questions about the representation of history.

Stefan Zimmermann (Mainz): Cinema's View of Marrakech

The cinematic space of Marrakech follows certain regular patterns of stereotypes. The depicted space is usually an environment the viewer would consider exotic and starkly different from the everyday location in the western world. A place not only different in terms of depicted colors, people, architecture and light, but also in terms of experiences the main characters, and therefore the viewers, are confronted with. The basic cinematic images resemble the picture postcards tourists send home as gloating greetings from the "mystical Orient."

Cinema's view of Marrakech is an excellent case documenting how "Orientalism" functions and how it has evolved over the years. It is moreover an example of how similar these images are in different western countries and societies. Even if stories and the main patterns of the movies differ in time, the depicted Marrakech and the portrayed places persist unaltered over the years.

Martin Noweck (München): The Struggle of the Sons of Light: Arab Stereotypes in Movies by Menahem Golan (Golan Globus)

Avo Dan Santo (Austin): The Proliferation of Russian-Language Media in Israel During the 1990s

Since 1989, nearly 1,000,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union have arrived in Israel. This growing "Russian" community has quickly gained access to political power, as well as to other cultural, and predominantly mediated, forms of self-representation. Through these media outlets, they have not only been able to maintain use of the Russian language as a cultural unifier, but have also been able to designate a distinct communal identity and depicted their unique diaspora experiences. Though it has been argued by some that the proliferation of ethnic/minority media aids the preservation of cultural identity and restricts the processes of assimilation, it is the contention of this paper that these "Russian" media texts cannot be fully divorced from their institutionalized modes of production. These contradictions have contributed to the emergence of competing integrationist and segregationist discourses that can be traced throughout these texts. The paper examines these contradictory discourses as they are manifested in four Israeli films from the 1990s, which deal with the Russian immigration experience.

Nese Ihtiyar (Bochum): Religious Discussions on Turkish TV – Yasar Nuri Öztürk

With the appearance of private broadcasting stations since the early 1990s Turkish television has reached a growing importance and influence. Innumerable soap operas, game and music shows attract millions of spectators, while in political programs Islam is undoubtedly one of the most discussed topics. In round-table-conversations academics from fields of theology,

sociology and law debate all issues of Islam. A leading figure in this context is the theologian Yasar Nuri Öztürk. Apart from several published books and newspaper articles he attained popularity first and foremost through his continuous presence on TV, where he propagates to the masses his quest for the return to the Qur`an. The spectrum of his programs ranges from round-table-conversations to one-man-shows as well as talk shows.

What course will this development take in Turkey? Is Turkey going to face a phenomenon like the "TV-Churches" in the USA? ─ All questions and issues, which necessitate further inquiry.

Annelies Moors (Amsterdam): "Enemies:" Inclusions and Exclusions in the Benetton Jewish/Palestinian Friendship Campaign

Individual, mostly friendly relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are the focus of the catalogue the clothing multinational Benetton published in early 1998 under the title *Enemies*.

This catalogue was widely distributed not only through the Benetton outlets, but also as a supplement with upscale dailies and weeklies, such as *Vrij Nederland* (Netherlands), *Le Monde* (France), *Newsweek* (USA), and *Ha'aretz* (Israel). The photographs, generally those of smiling people, express a sense of hope and expectation; its central message insinuates that individual friendships between Israelis and Palestinians are possible--a welcome contrast to the 'enmity' of the politicians on the state level. The accompanying text, statements by those depicted, show a broader range of opinions. Whereas they point to various bases for friendship: political activism, commerce, motherhood and so on, ambiguities and ambivalences are also expressed.

This paper discusses the strategies of inclusion and exclusion employed in this catalogue. It analyzes what kind of 'imagined community' is produced and which issues are absent.

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