

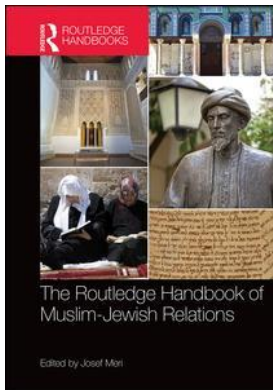
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Muslim-Jewish relations on screen

Dinah Assouline Stillman and Aomar Boum

As a Muslim Arab living in an Islamic land, how can I talk fairly about the friendship and tolerance between Jews and Arabs, between Muslims and Catholics in Tunisia, at a time when people kill one another because of their religion, and when fundamentalists would like to impose everywhere their one and only diktat? How can I convey the daily sensuality of my society, which always put life above all dogmas? Only by speaking about these simple things I used to feel.¹

The relations between Jews and Muslims have been and continue to be a cinematic theme not only in the Islamic world and Israel,² where one might expect it to be treated, but in Western film – particularly in French cinema. The portrayal, however, varies greatly depending upon when and where the movies were made and distributed. For example, Egyptian films in the 1930s discussed the subject lightheartedly,³ whereas after several Arab-Israeli wars, Egyptian and Syrian movies and television series of the twenty-first century became heavily propagandistic and indulged in crude and even lurid anti-Semitism.

Unlike many television productions – meant to engage viewers throughout the Arab world – that focus on the plight of the Palestinian people, North African films in recent years have portrayed and discussed social and cultural issues about the once significant Jewish communities that emigrated en masse in the mid-twentieth century. In the early years of Israel, films usually depicted the relationship between Jews and Muslims in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with heroic versus inimical stereotypes facing one another in an epic struggle.⁴ However, in recent years, the Israeli cinematic treatment of the interface between Muslims and Jews has been far more nuanced and complex, with a concerted effort to show empathy toward both sides, and even, at times, highly self-critical. And whereas both commercial and documentary filmmakers in Western countries have taken up the subject, no country's movie industry has produced as much and been more probing and more varied in its examination than that of France, which is home to the largest population of Jews and Muslims from the former French colonies in the Maghreb.⁵

In the contextualization of social and political events in the films and despite the significant number of films that focus on Israel and its Jewish citizens as a moral and political danger

to the stability of the Arab world, we argue that there is an emerging wave of cinema that highlights positive social relations between Jews and Muslims not only as historical pre-colonial subjects and neighbors but also as potential post-colonial citizens of modern North African and Middle Eastern states. These films reflect the historical, cultural, and linguistic diversity and the social and personal dynamics between Jews and Muslims.⁶ Furthermore, they highlight a new intellectual project that challenges the dominant representation of the Middle Eastern conflict, mostly of the political violence, and instead underscores other common personal relations. New debates about shared cultural issues such as music and food, discussions of the communal void left by Jewish emigration and the longing for Jewish-Muslim coexistence, and even the subject of the long-ignored Holocaust, emerge in all sorts of visual media accessible to all countries, spurring even more initiatives among young generations desirous to uncover their parents' and grandparents' pasts.

Indeed, one of the most striking trends in recent movies, documentaries, and feature films devoted to Jewish-Muslim relationships is the emphasis on the common cultures they shared in their countries of origin. North African and French directors in particular have consciously taken the approach to stage new social relations involving Jewish and Muslim characters going as far as breaking social, cultural, and religious taboos – and even forbidden love between a Jew and a Muslim.

As Middle Eastern societies continue to be engulfed in large and expanding networks of globalization, different forms of media including cinema are becoming the dominant and significant means of expressing social and political attitudes toward local Middle Eastern problems and issues. Films are screened through local television, satellite networks, and movie theatres reflecting traditional and shifting social values and fading taboos. Videos posted on the Internet are increasingly viewed by hundreds of thousands of people who comment freely on movie characters, actors, and musicians. In this context, North African and French Jewish and Muslim producers and filmmakers have used the political conflict of the present and the historical realities and memories of the past to debate critical questions at the center of Jewish-Muslim relations.⁷ Unlike the dominant focus on the politics of the Middle Eastern conflict, an increasing number of movies, feature films, and documentaries about social and cultural Jewish-Muslim relations have been released in the last decades. Although the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still central to the narrative plot in many of these films, large sections of their scripts are about screening out past Jewish-Muslim relations and highlighting memories of closeness, friendship, love, religious encounters, or disagreement and social conflict.

Maghreb cinema remembers its Jews.

Boughedir's post on the first images of his famous comedy *Summer in La Goulette* (1995) echoes Tunisian director Nouri Bouzid's words defending the memories of his past against the controversy over his brief inclusion of a minor Jewish character, old Mr. Levy, in his award-winning 1986 film, *Man of Ashes* (Arab. *Rih Essed*). The gripping drama involved the tortured identity still felt in their adult years by two men who had been sexually molested by their carpenter boss during their apprenticeship as an allegory of the Tunisian people suffering under a dictatorial regime. Curiously at the film's reception, a fleeting evocation of Jewish-Muslim friendship between Hechmi, the principal character, and Jacqui, Mr. Levy's son, who along with all the Jews had long left the country, brought scandal to the Carthage Festival, as if that were a taboo theme. Bouzid even makes the old Jewish musician and teacher a positive father-figure, not only representing one of the rare Jews left in Tunisia after

the 1967 Israeli-Arab War drained the country of its large Jewish population, but representing the symbiosis of Muslim-Jewish traditional Arabic music, as he had been Hechmi's teacher. Bouzid, who eventually received the Tanit d'Or for his movie, declared that "no one could erase his own memories."

Merely ten years later, while the Oslo peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis seemed to augur better of the conflict, Boughedir's film explored Jewish-Muslim-Christian interactions just before June 1967 as a comedy. Through benign vignettes in the town of La Goulette, a beach resort a few miles from Tunis, Jews, Muslims and Christians play chess in a neighborhood café, drink tea in a Jewish club, sing together, attend the Alliance Israélite Universelle school, go fishing, pray together for rain in times of drought, visit a Jewish shrine when one cannot bear children, and so on. The men share a business, the women exchange dishes, and the daughters even venture on potential illicit sexual encounters, creating rifts between best friends of different religions, for whom this could not be tolerated. Throughout the comedic sequences caused by the outrageous plot of the three girls' vow of losing their virginity to a male from another religion, Boughedir unveils a world in which different religious communities live side by side peacefully, essentially sharing the same rich Oriental culture of food, music, traditional beliefs, and relaxed ways of life under the same sun-drenched skies. The Jewish wedding is a particular example of musical *convivencia* between Muslims, Jews and Italian Christians. Irrespective of their different traditions, women and men sit apart, extremely bored as the orchestra plays classical music in honor of the special guest, the Tunisian-born Italian movie star Claudia Cardinale. As soon as the orchestra starts to play Arabic music, everyone becomes animated and rushes to the dance floor. Jean-Marie Sénia, a prolific artist born in Algeria, composed the music for the entire film.

Tunisian films such as *Man of Ashes*, *Summer in La Goulette*, and *The Wedding Song* (*Le Chant des mariées*, Karin Albou, 2008), albeit different in the time periods in which they are set, all include scenes confirming the attraction of both Jews and Muslims to "Oriental" music or songs. In the last one, the wedding song of the title is in Arabic and sung by both the Jewish and the Muslim girlfriends. This film also shows many shared traditional practices, such as the "Oriental" wedding preparation for the Jewish bride, implying the "plucking" of all her body hair at the *ḥammām*, which is performed by a Muslim woman.

Likewise in recent Moroccan movies such as *Marock* (Laila Marrakchi, 2005) and *Fin Mashi, Ya Moshe?* (*Where Are you Going, Moshe?*) (Benjelloun, 2007), music takes a large role. In the more recent movie, set in the 1960s in a Southern village, the character of Moshe is played by the only authentic Jewish man in the film, Simon Elbaz, who is a famous musician of *maṭrūz*⁸ in real life. He perfectly represents the symbiosis of Jewish and Muslim tradition, whereas in sharp contrast in *Marock*, the Moroccan youths are completely infatuated with the loud 1990s Anglo-Saxon pop music to which they party for most of the film. Rita, the young Muslim heroine who eventually falls in love with a Jewish boy, Youri, eagerly listens to pop/rock to the exclusion of any other music. However, Youri delights in listening to Arabo-Andalusi music with his Muslim chauffeur, giving hope that there is a continuity of taste even between different generations and that Youri's death in the film does not symbolize the death of the Jewish community or its taste for that music.

Actually, this common love for traditional Andalusi music, *maṭrūz*, and *malḥūn* songs is the subject of many documentaries made by Moroccan-born Izza Genini. She left Morocco with her family for Paris in 1960, and when she visited Morocco years later for a few days, she rediscovered her roots – and especially the music. She developed two passions: cinema and the music of her native country. She studied literature and languages, Arabic among them. She managed a cinema house for professionals, Studio 70, in which

she screened Moroccan and Francophone African movies, founded a production and distribution firm, OHRA (formerly SOGEAV), and began distributing films in Africa and African films internationally.⁹ When Studio 70 closed in 1986, she embarked on exploring more of her native country with a camera. Eighteen films later, her oeuvre is recognized as an invaluable ethnographic and musicological work, while all her love for the subjects she films translates into stunning images of the countryside, villages and towns, and their inhabitants.

A number of her films explore the music genres performed and appreciated to this day by Jews, Arabs, and Berbers: *malhūn*, *matrūz*, *nūba*, and *Ala* (Andalusi music). *Nouba d'or et de lumière* (Nuba of Gold and Light, 2008), her last award-winning film, embroiders different Jewish and Muslim music encounters in Hebrew and Arabic.¹⁰ Among other titles exploring the common musical heritage are *Cantique brodé* (Embroidered Canticles, 1990); *Racines Judéo-Arabes* (Jewish-Arab Roots, 2005); and *Chants pour un Shabbat* (Shabbat Songs, 2004).

They Were Promised the Sea, by Canadian Jewish Kathy Wazana (2013), lays out the complexity of dual identity and the social as well as psychological disruption that emerges from emigration, with a political edge. Born in Casablanca, Wazana searches for answers on why Moroccan Jews left for Israel during the 1960s. She anchors her film in the idyllic and nostalgic world of Muslim Spain and the Moroccan representation of twentieth-century Jewish-Muslim coexistence and tolerance. As a matter of fact, a good part of the movie showcases the Andalusian Music Festival in Essaouira, with the famous Rabbi Haim Louk and Si Thami Harrak performing together. The communion they show at playing together reverberates in the rave appreciation of the mixed audience of Jews and Muslims, one of whom is no less than André Azoulay, the Jewish adviser to King Mohamed VI. Shooting in beautiful landscapes and architectural spaces, she interviews the late Simon Lévy, a Moroccan Jewish Communist who became the first director of the Museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca, and ordinary Muslims, mostly from southern villages, for answers. The film, regrettably, lacks nuance and historical balance.¹¹

Another documentary highlighting the theme of nostalgia for a Jewish presence in Morocco is *Tinghir-Jerusalem: Echoes from the Mellah* (2012). Made by Muslim Kamal Hachkar, who never saw a Jew in Tinghir, it focuses on older Muslim and Jewish generations retelling their stories, folktales, and songs in Berber dialect. As he “revisits [Morocco’s] plural heritage,” his idea is to reinsert the Jewish story in the national narrative. He travels between Tinghir and Jerusalem in a project that makes Muslims and Jews reconnect again, even through Skype. He states: “What I found is that after fifty years in Israel, these Jewish Berbers have not forgotten their language, their culture.” However, as in the case of Laila Marrakchi’s film, anti-Israel groups in Morocco attacked Hachkar’s film as a Zionist project aimed at ‘normalizing ties with Israel.’¹²

Tunisian Selma Baccar’s fictionalized movie *La Danse du feu* (Habiba M’Sika/The Dance of Fire, 1995), on the tumultuous life of Jewish singer and actress Habiba Messika, revisits the vibrant culture of French and Arabic Tunisian theatre and music during the last three years of Messika’s life, from 1928 to 1931. A liberated woman and a nationalist, the actress was a star who drew throngs of passionate men of all religions and was at the height of her fame when she tragically died, burnt by her spurned Jewish lover. Selma Baccar, in her television interview in the *Diwen el Cinema* program on June 22, 2014, explains to host Khemais Khayati that she spent ten years researching the period and the actress’s life and songs in order to render the effervescent culture that was part of life in Tunis during the Roaring Twenties.¹³ Baccar’s film was not well received at the time by Jews or Muslims for quite different reasons: Muslims were upset with a story about a Jewish woman attracting

Arab men, and Jews were embarrassed by her story, but her film influenced much writing and a new film made by a French Jewish director of Tunisian origin, Sarah Benillouche, *Ciao, Habiba* (2015).¹⁴

While Algeria was the only one of the Maghreb countries that did not produce feature films about its once-thriving Jewish population and seemed to prefer to be oblivious of its Jewish past,¹⁵ a seminal documentary about Jewish and Muslim *Shââbi* musicians torn apart by war took Algerians both inside the country and abroad by storm. The Algerian-Irish filmmaker Safinez Bousbia was visiting her birth country for the first time in 2003 when a shopkeeper in Algiers told her about the orchestra composed of Muslims and Jews in which he played long ago. She began interviewing the former members in Algeria, then the others in France. *El Gusto* was completed over a period of eight years in 2011. It relies on the nostalgic memories of the music played together by Jewish and Muslim musicians and singers before the Jews left Algeria en masse with the *pièds noirs* in 1962. The film goes back and forth between Algeria and France, alternating interviews of the musicians in both countries reminiscing about their numerous rehearsals and concerts together. Finally, the film reunites them in France for emotional moments and glorious concerts.

Jewish musicians equally revered by Jews and Muslims – Lili (Elie) Boniche, who died in 2008, and Maurice El Medioni – appear in interviews scattered throughout *El Gusto* and in concerts in France. Boniche not only sang to the end of his life but was so popular that his songs were incorporated in French movies such as *Le Grand pardon*, dir. Alexandre Arcady, 1982; *La vérité si je mens*, dir. Thomas Gilou, 1997; *Mémoires d'immigrés*, dir. Yamina Benguigui, 1998; and *Dans la vie* (Two ladies), dir. Philippe Faucon, 2007. Well into his eighties, Maurice El Medioni, the grandson of the famous Saoud l'Oranais who instructed both Reinette l'Oranaise and Lili Boniche in the 1930s, still performs to packed audiences. He is a virtuoso pianist who blends Andalusi music with tango, mambo, and jazz and mixes French and Arabic in his popular songs.

These singers represent so much traditional and popular music in their native country that their biographies are on all Algerian websites, even though Jews as such are still a taboo topic in official Algeria. Robert Castel, the son of another iconic musician, Lili Labassi (Elie Moyal), often appears in *El Gusto*'s interviews made in France. He vividly recalls the atmosphere of conviviality that surrounded all the orchestra's encounters.¹⁶

The only female member in the orchestra was Reinette l'Oranaise, the legendary blind singer and gifted 'ud player, who mesmerized Algerian audiences with her passionate voice. She died before Bousbia's discovery of the popular music genre and does not appear in her film, but she is the central figure in the documentary made in 1991 by Jacqueline Gozland, *Le Port des amours*. Reinette reminisces about her childhood and how her infirmity motivated her to learn music and song under the masters of lute and traditional music. When she died in November 1998, Reinette was mourned by Algerian Jews and Muslims alike. After she recorded a last album in 1997, she was the star of the event called *Les belles nuits du Ramadan* (Ramadan Nights) in Paris and Brussels in 1998. Muslims and Jews who flocked to her concerts, aware of the exceptional event considering her age, never imagined they were to be her last public appearances. In the same documentary also appears Line Monty, called the Diva of French and Arabic songs, who was idolized for her exceptional mellow voice and her great beauty. She performed internationally and lived, among other places, in Paris and New York. When she was invited to Egypt to sing with Farid El Atrache, even Oum Kulthum and Mohamed Abd El Wahab came to listen to her. She also appeared in Arcady's *Le Grand Pardon*. She died in 2003, but her songs still haunt her numerous fans all over the Judeo-

Arabic world, as do the albino Blond Blond/Albert Rouimi's and Salim Halali's, who opened a cabaret in Casablanca after World War II.

Such films and innumerable video excerpts of concerts by these artists mushroom on the web and are streamed on the Internet. Videos of young singers of North African origin performing in France, North Africa, and Israel in Arabic appear on the web, too, continuing the tradition. Many Algerian Muslim fans write delighted comments, maybe the only positive ones they can make about Jews, whose stereotyped image in absentia is invariably linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the term *Zionist*.¹⁷

North African filmmakers break taboos

We already mentioned the sexual and religious taboos vowed to be broken in *Summer in La Goulette* by the three daughters of a Christian, a Jew, and a Muslim trio of best friends in Tunisia, but they are never fulfilled, to the relief of audiences of all three religions while, for the first time, the 1967 Israeli-Arab war is mentioned and blamed for the departure of the Jews.¹⁸

No such relief occurs with the Moroccan movie *Marock* (Laila Marrakchi, 2005), which is set in modern Casablanca, as Rita, a rebellious high-school girl from an upper-class family, indulges in a romantic relationship with Youri, a local Jew. Influenced by Laila Marrakchi's own adolescent personal experience, her film highlights the shifting social and cultural dynamics in Moroccan society and increasing ideological contradictions and conflicts between religious orthodoxy and secular expressions. While Rita drinks whiskey, does not observe Ramadan, and smokes hashish, her brother begins to sport a beard and adopts a conservative Islamic lifestyle and behavior. Through the romantic Jewish-Muslim relationship, the film provides a critique to the rising religious intolerance in Moroccan society.¹⁹ Laila Marrakchi also focuses on the decreasing social relations between Jews and Muslims in modern Morocco, with the exception of the few cases when upper-class Jewish and Muslim young adults encounter one another in new social spaces. There is less exposure to the lives of Jews and Muslims in the traditional historical contexts. The film provides a picture on the realities of life for the remaining Jewish community in Morocco largely separated from the rest of society and concentrated in Casablanca. The decision of Marrakchi to kill Youri through a staged car accident could be interpreted as a symbol of the dwindling community dominated by elderly residents in the urban centers of Rabat, Marrakesh, Fez, and Casablanca as their children continue to leave for France, North America, and Israel.

Interestingly, Rita and her rich Muslim classmates in high school seem to care only about parties, flirting, and leaving the country for their college studies. By contrast, Jewish Youri loves listening to traditional Andalusí music with his Muslim driver and does not want to leave the country, even though his parents are determined to immigrate to North America. This reversal of stereotypes should have made him more likable to Arab audiences, but the taboo of dating a Muslim girl is too strong.

Où vas-tu Moshe? made in 2007 by Hassan Benjelloun, is set in the early 1960s in a village whose only cabaret might close because of new regulations conforming more to Muslim ethics. The law requires that one can serve alcohol in the cabaret only if it is owned by a non-Muslim. It points out different aspects of Jewish-Muslim relations before the Jewish community began to leave for Israel. Set in the Moroccan interior town of Boujad, which was home to a Jewish community from the seventeenth century,²⁰ the choice of the location is important because of the religious significance of Boujad as the center of the Zāwiya Sharqāwiyya, a religious brotherhood founded by Sīdī Bou'abīd Sharqī in the sixteenth

century. As one of the most important *zāwiyas* in Morocco, it played a significant role in the history of the Jewish community of the region not only for its protection as part of the “*dhimmi* status of Jews,” but in building economic and social relations with Jewish families and individuals. Jews were, therefore, central to social and economic life in Boujad. Their emigration would mean social and economic chaos in the town but also a new era in Morocco society.

The plot of the movie revolves around a different taboo for Muslims but a permissible issue for Jews: the cabaret. Mustapha manages the only cabaret in Boujad, where Jews and secular Muslims go to socialize and drink alcohol. At the dawn of independence, the new Muslim political leadership wanted to close the bar, but because it served Jews, they could not do so. The entire film is about Mustapha’s attempt to convince local Jews to help the bar to remain open and the new postcolonial Moroccan authorities’ frustration that they cannot shut down his business. As Boujad gets emptier week-by-week of its Jewish community, local authorities strike deals with departing Jews to buy their property. At the same time, Muslims debate the impact that Jewish emigration will have on the economy and society of Boujad. The local council does little to curb the migration. Mustapha seems to be the only one worried about it as Moshé, the sole Jew remaining in town, is planning to leave for Israel to join his wife, Freḥa, and daughter, Rachel, endangering his business.

Adieu, mères emphasizes the history of social coexistence between Jews and Muslims in Morocco through the friendship between Brahim and Henry, who manage an sawmill inherited from their fathers, and Brahim’s and Henry’s wives, Fatima and Ruth, who worked for the same insurance company. Also set in Casablanca in the 1960s, it has for background the historical event of underground Jewish emigration and the tragic sinking of the small boat *Pisces* with all its Jewish passengers aboard while heading for Israel. As Fatima cannot bear children, she treats Ruth’s children with affection. Parallel to their story, Mehdi, a young Muslim man, develops a romantic relationship with Eliane, a Jewish girl, despite the objection of their parents. As Henry faces financial issues with his business, he encounters Benchetrit, an Israeli recruiter of Moroccan Jewish emigrants, who manages to convince him to move to Israel. Entrusting his family to Brahim and Fatima, he dies at sea with the *Pisces*. Ruth’s mother passes away after being attacked by a group of Muslims. When Ruth dies of cancer, she leaves her children to the loving care of Brahim and Fatima. Ouaknine, Ruth’s and Fatima’s boss, also leaves for Israel to join his family, while Benchekroun, who buys Jewish property including Ouaknine’s, mistreats Eliane, his son’s girlfriend, after she gets pregnant.

Où vas-tu Moshé and *Adieu, mères* are partly reconstructions of the idyllic past and the social realities of Jewish-Muslim harmony before Jewish emigration to Israel. These memories are rendered visible through complex personal stories that sometimes violate social and religious boundaries. At the same time, parts of the films underscore official Moroccan and North African discourse about Jewish-Muslim dialogue that amounts to the Middle Ages Andalousi *convivencia*. Therefore, these films indirectly tend to support an already existing state narrative in Morocco and other Middle Eastern countries that tries to stress a nonviolent world of Jewish-Muslim relations before the establishment of Israel.

Friendship and forbidden love in secular France

The majority of films on the subject of Muslim-Jewish relations are staged in France – and partially in Israel, Gaza, Tunisia, Morocco, and New York – where the daily encounters between Jews and Muslims take place on a larger scale. The films that fall in the category

of longing and nostalgia for a historical past of social and cultural coexistence highlight questions of emigration, social relations, economic partnership, and daily encounters before Jews left Arab-Muslim societies for France.²¹ The forms of nostalgia are constructed through common themes that structure the plot of the majority of the films. The theme of “forbidden love” that stands as one of the common denominators in Israeli and Middle Eastern and North African films is treated with the unique brand of French secularism, *laïcité*, which means religion is not a factor of separation.

The possibility of friendship and acceptability of social relations between Jewish and Muslim lovers is a central story in the majority of these films. *Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran*/ *Monsieur Ibrahim* (Francois Dupeyron, 2003); *La Petite Jérusalem*/Little Jerusalem (Karin Albou, 2005); *Mauvaise foi*/Bad Faith (Roshdy Zem 2006), *Le Nom des gens*/The Names of Love (Michel Leclerc, 2010); and others share the theme of taboo love affairs or marital relationships involving Jews and Muslims.²² For these French movies, the trope of the romantic Muslim-Jewish mixed couple is mostly used to highlight the nuances of social and religious conflicts and compromises; the interfaith pair is a cinematic motif used to describe different aspects of the complex historical Muslim-Jewish relations. While the relationships do not end in marriage in films set in Morocco, such as *Marock*, or in Palestine/Israel/Germany, such as *Strangers* (Erez Tadmor/Guy Nattiv, 2007), although shot in Europe for the latter, they end up either in marriage or bearing children in French contexts.

Through the common clichéd subject of illicit romance, these films are mostly set in the context of France where large numbers of Muslim and Jewish émigrés from North Africa reside: in fact France is home today to the largest Jewish community in Europe as well as the biggest community of Muslims.²³ It is no surprise that films involving Jewish-Muslim relations are staged in Paris or Parisian outskirt neighborhoods (the *banlieues*), such as Sarcelles, where Jews and Muslims negotiate new meanings of life and neighborliness away from their native countries. These films try to capture social dynamics and stories that start either in France or other countries but end in French spaces where Muslims and Jews carve out new relations and build upon old ones, negotiating new frameworks and models of compromise and coexistence in the French secular worldview while their communities cling to their religious scriptures.

Starring Omar Sharif, *Monsieur Ibrahim* is the 2003 film adaptation of philosopher Eric Emmanuel-Schmitt’s eponymous novella turned successful play, *Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran*. It is the story of a young Jewish boy, Moïse, also known as Momo, and Ibrahim, a Turkish grocer. Neglected by his depressed father, Momo shoplifts every time he visits Ibrahim’s store. The prostitutes who line his street, in the notorious Pigalle district, attract him from an early age. He tries to seduce them all, but they show him somewhat of a motherly affection. Momo’s mother left him at birth to be raised by his father, who later commits suicide. The significance of religion in the movie emerges from the characters’ names. The connection between Abraham and Moses is shown through the relationship Momo develops with Ibrahim after his father’s death. Ibrahim is a Muslim Sufi; he is attached to his religion but is open to other religious scriptures and societies in general. He has a beautiful sentence from the Qur’an ready for each situation. When Ibrahim suddenly dies, Momo inherits his grocery shop and his Qur’an and becomes the “neighborhood Arab,” a common nickname for Muslim grocers in France.

Set in the multi-ethnic and religious neighborhood of Sarcelles in Paris, one of the mushroom *cités* (projects) hastily built in the 1960s to accommodate the hundreds of thousands of Algerian *pièds noirs* and Jewish refugees who came to live in France, *Little Jerusalem* develops the story of a Tunisian Jewish family from the island of Djerba. Laura and her widowed mother share a flat with her sister Mathilde’s Orthodox family of six. The film

shows interesting aspects of Jewish religious practices that vary between the Orthodox rituals of Ariel, Mathilde's husband, and his mother-in-law's belief in supernatural forces. Laura, the young philosophy student addicted to Kant, falls in love with Djamel, an illegal secular Algerian Muslim immigrant. Djamel worked as a journalist in Algeria before he fled the civil war. Living in France with his uncle's family, he found a job as a cleaner in the local primary school. When Laura passes by the mosque on her daily Kantian walks, the camera focuses on Djamel (with whom she comes to have an affair) sitting on the steps, but Djamel's and Laura's families express negative attitudes toward their relations. Laura's mother tries to steer her away from her attraction to him by talismans used by both Tunisian Jews and Muslims. The ritual mint tea and pastries served to Djamel and Laura when they meet his family look very much like traditional Maghrebi pastries made by Jewish and Muslim women, but the conviviality ends soon when Djamel's uncle understands who Laura is: He is adamant she will have to convert to Islam if Djamel marries her. While Djamel reluctantly accepts the family view, Laura attempts suicide. After a wave of anti-Semitic attacks against the Jewish community, Ariel and his family leave for Israel, like many Jews of North African origin, accepting the idea of a second exile.

Bad Faith narrates the love story between Clara, a young Jewish woman, and Ismaël, a Maghrebi-French teacher of music. The double meaning of the title works in both French and English, as bad religion and bad intention, or even hypocrisy. In this case, the movie is a reflection on the communal rejection of religious strangers in secular French society. Best friends from childhood, Ismaël, the secular Muslim, and Milou, the Jewish Algerian, share a flat together until Clara, pregnant, comes to live with Ismaël. Paradoxically, Ismaël defies all French stereotypes about *Beurs* (Arabs in backslang *verlan*) by giving classical piano lessons and sharing with Milou a passion for jazz. One of the scenes, in which their mothers share traditional pastries during their respective religious festivals, is but a common practice also witnessed in *Summer in La Goulette*. In both films, parents of different religions are best friends, but whereas in *La Goulette* no sexual taboo is broken in reality in spite of the three daughters' vow of losing their virginity, Clara is pregnant with Ismaël's child. To her mother's question – "Ismaël is Muslim, you are Jewish, what will the child be?" – her answer "French!" works well with the Republic's secularism but would not work at all in a Muslim country in which religion is fully part of the state.

As a matter of fact, the sexual taboo that is broken in *Dans la vie*/Two ladies (2007), dir. Philippe Faucon, is not between Muslims and Jews but between Selima, an Algerian-born secular nurse (beloved by Esther, the handicapped Jewish lady whom she looks after), and her West African boyfriend. Obviously, none of them care about religious traditions, but Selima is careful not to introduce him to her devout Muslim parents and inquisitive relatives.

The misleading English rendering of the title of the film *Le Nom des gens* as *The Names of Love* has more to do with the sexual affairs of the principal protagonist in the film, Baya Benmahmud, than the debate on identity it is really about. Baya, the daughter of a benign Muslim man from Algeria and a strident left-wing French woman, makes a quirky statement on both religious and sexual taboos by sleeping with conservative or religious men to "convert" them to her political and secular beliefs. Directed in 2010 by the real-life couple Michel Leclerc, a Jew on his mother's side, and Baya Kasmi, a Muslim Algerian on her father's side, it expresses the debate on identity that was ongoing after conservative President Sarkozy established a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity when he was elected in 2007. This new ministry sparked uproar among the opposition at the time. The Socialists even viewed the idea as racist, if not downright "fascist," as Baya frequently calls anyone who is not leftist. When Eric Besson became the head of this ministry in 2009, he initiated a national

debate on those controversial topics. One year of (sometimes rabid) discussions later, the results were inconclusive if the intention was to discriminate against immigrants. While they showed that 90 per cent of the French believe national identity rests on three main things – French history, the civic duty of voting, and the tricolor flag – the survey also showed that 68 per cent of the French did not find immigration threatening.²⁴ However, the new social realities of Jews and Muslims outside their North African homeland are reflected throughout the film by several themes. Baya, who insists on pronouncing her name Bennaġumud with a strong Arabic accent, nevertheless is adamant that she has no religious background or interest. When she meets the middle-aged Arthur Martin (the French equivalent of “John Smith,” and more comically the name of a famous French brand of appliances), she sets out to “convert” him. His reserved demeanor and conservative looks make her believe he is a staunch member of Sarkozy’s UMP, but Arthur is a dedicated Socialist. Moreover, his mother was a hidden child after her parents were rounded up in Paris and gassed in Auschwitz in 1942. The movie indirectly brings together the traumatic histories of French colonialism and the Algerian war of independence as well as the newly discovered Vichy responsibility in the death of French Jews during the Holocaust and the current trend in French cinema to explore them.²⁵ Despite the fact that Baya does not learn about Arthur’s Jewish heritage until late in the film, she responds positively to the news: “That’s so cool! The two of us embody France... Our parents suffered because of the French police... We should have children together... We are the future of humanity!” Leclerc and Kasmi focus on personal names and the personal histories of each character in order to show their humanistic similarities although they look different. Arthur’s mother received a fake name at the orphanage to replace her too obvious Jewish original name and apparently married an indigenous Frenchman by the neutral name of Martin to make sure she would not face a dangerous situation again due to her name. The subject of war and the Holocaust was taboo, and no religion was allowed at home. Martin doggedly repeats he is not Jewish. When dragged by Baya to the Shoah Memorial in Paris to find his grandparents’ names inscribed in the Memory Wall, he accuses her of stigmatizing him as a Jew. By pointing out the historical origins of each biography, the film engages in a different style of memory, which calls on the future generation of North African and French Jews and Muslims to learn from the traumas of their past and engage in the present for a better future. When Arthur separates from Baya in the middle of the movie, she sets her sights on another challenge, converting to her secular beliefs a devout Muslim intellectual that she sees debating on television with a secular North African over Muslim identity in France. She ends up wearing the *hijab* and almost marrying him, much to Arthur’s distress and incomprehension. She tells him the stares she gets because of her veil make her feel Muslim for the first time in her life. Nevertheless, the two lovers, more secular than ever, reunite and marry. The film music is used to connect the different stories of the past to the present realities of Arthur and Baya. At the very end, Baya comes up with the name Tchang for their newborn son, with no relation whatsoever to her origins or Arthur’s. In voiceover, they both sing “From Benissaf to Salonika,” an idealistic stand for multi-ethnic love, and the realization of Baya’s wish for humanity to be composed of intermarriage “bastards,” so “peace will come back to the world.”

While *The Names of Love* breaks the generational silence over the period of the Holocaust for a French Jewish family haunted by its past, *Les Hommes libres* (*Free Men*, 2011), by Moroccan-French director Ismail Ferroukhi, broke a taboo among the rising culture of Holocaust denial in the Islamic world. It follows the narrative of historian Robert Satloff’s *Among the Righteous*, and his groundbreaking assertion that Arabs saved Jews during World War II.²⁶ The book, published in 2006, was followed by the famous 2010 eponymous documentary. It is at its

core a personal project conceptualized and written in the context of 9/11, Iranian President Ahmadinejad's anti-Semitic rhetoric and Iran's Holocaust cartoon contest. Satloff contended that if one could prove that one Arab saved Jews during the Holocaust, it would change the attitudes of Arabs and Muslims toward the Holocaust and stop their denial of its history. He claims that Khaled Abdul Wahab, the son of a Tunisian writer, risked his life saving many Tunisian Jews, making him a candidate for Yad Vashem's "Righteous Among the Nations" title. Regardless of whether we accept Satloff's story, which Yad Vashem apparently is still debating, one of the positive things that emerged from Satloff's book and the documentary is a new debate about the Holocaust in North African cinema.

Set in Paris in 1942, *Free Men*'s events take place for a large part in or around the Grand Mosque of Paris in which Si Kaddour Benghabrit is the Rector. He is rumored to have hidden Jews as Muslims, and although there is no tangible proof about claims made in recent years of a hundred, or even of a thousand, saved by him, we know he saved Salim (Simon) Halali, a successful Algerian Jewish singer, by providing him with a Muslim certificate of birth.²⁷ The plot revolves around a young Algerian man, Younes, living off the black market and forced by the French police to spy on the Mosque's activities. There he encounters the rector's protégé, Salim Halali, who sings in Arabic. He becomes his friend, saving him in extremis from the Nazis when even the Muslim identification card Benghabrit provided does not prove enough for their suspicions. Younes evolves from an uneducated and apolitical individual to the stature of a Resistant influenced by his Algerian nationalist cousin. Interestingly, in this film there is no taboo broken between a Jewish girl/boy and a Muslim boy/girl, but by Salim Halali having sex with a Muslim boy. The film blends several trends in current French cinema: Algerian filmmaking revisiting French colonialism; the long unknown story of the 1942 Vel' d'Hiv roundup as perpetrated by French police collaborating with the Nazis; Muslim and Jewish friendly relations even in times of war and conflict; and finally the rising taste of the French for Oriental music since the 1990s Algerian *rai* success. Although the music in the film sounds overwhelmingly Arab, it is a Jewish musicologist of Moroccan heritage, Armand Amar, who composed the score. The Palestinian actor Mahmud Shalaby, who plays the part of Salim Halali, is dubbed by Pinhas Cohen, a renowned singer of Andalusí music in Morocco. Ismail Ferroukhi, in an interview for Film Movement, the American distributor for this film, says Halali's popular Andalusí genre moves him, as it not only represents the link between the three communities – Jewish, Muslim, and Christian – at the time of the Spanish Golden Age's *convivencia*, but also, while he had never heard of Halali before the idea of the film started to form in his mind, he realized he had often heard his songs at home when he was little, as his parents were fond of them.

The new theme of the Holocaust in North African films

If Jewish-Muslim relations were thematic footnotes of North African cinema until recent decades, the Holocaust has been one of its major historical taboos. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Middle Eastern conversations about the Holocaust began to take place in public media. They ranged between denial and acceptance of the mass killings of European Jews by Hitler's forces. In addition to newspaper reports about public figures, and intellectual views of the Holocaust, filmmakers took part in these national conversations. Instead of taking controversial approaches, these movies acknowledge the history of the Holocaust while they imagine different forms of friendship and animosity between Jews and Muslims during World War II. This new trend is represented by three major films that include the made-for-television film *Villa Jasmin* (Férid Boughedir, 2008); Karin Albou's

second award-winning movie *Le Chant des mariées* (*The Wedding Song*, 2008), both set in Tunisia; and *Les Hommes libres/ Free Men* (Ferroukhi, 2011) mentioned earlier and located in France. The first two focus on the Nazi presence in Tunis between November 1942 and May 1943, while the third narrates the story of Algerian Jews saved by Muslims in Paris.

Villa Jasmin navigates multiple ethnic and religious identities – Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Arab, Tunisian, French, and Italian – in Tunis during the French colonial period. Serge, born Henri, returns in the 1970s to Tunis with his young wife to see where he was born and where his family lived. Guided by a young Tunisian Arab boy who professes to know the cemetery's dead – “Catholics, Italian Jews, Tunisian Jews, or French Jews,” – Serge locates the tombstones of his parents and later rediscovers Villa Jasmin where he grew up in the rue Courbet (now rue Palestine). The landmarks of Tunis serve as symbols of memory that take the viewers to different moments of Tunisian Jewish history until the German occupation of Tunisia. The film dramatizes various historical events, including Pétain's rise to power and the promulgation of anti-Jewish laws. It shows the rift between the leadership of the Jewish communities, Ahmed Pasha Bey, and the French Protectorate attitude's vis-à-vis Tunisian Jews and their deportations to Nazi camps, including Sachsenhausen camp where Serge's father was interned. *Villa Jasmin* witnesses the struggles of Tunisian Jews during and after World War II to negotiate their inclusion/exclusion into the nationalist movement for independence.

Unlike *Villa Jasmin*, built around the personal histories of two Jewish generations and adapted from the eponymous memoirs of the famous Tunisian-born French television filmmaker Serge Moati, *The Wedding Song* discusses the Nazi presence in Tunisia through the fictional friendship of two girls, one Jewish, one Muslim, who lived around the same courtyard in the old medina of Tunis during the war. Both poor, Myriam and Nour share and discuss their love secrets. As the German forces begin to implement their anti-Jewish laws sending Tunisian Jews into desert labor camps, Nour clandestinely sees her lover, Khaled, with the help of Myriam. Nour's father refuses to accept their marriage until Khaled finds a job. Khaled finds work as an informer for the Nazis and, as a result, his hatred towards the Jews intensifies. He creates animosity between Myriam and Nour by feeding her the anti-Semitic German propaganda about Jewish conspiracies and hatred of Islam. While the film underlines moments of Muslim-Jewish divide expressed through personal vignettes, it shows key moments of friendship and Jewish-Muslim understanding through the relationship of the girls as well as the encounters of their families. For instance, when Nour tries to read a passage of the Qur'an that fits the anti-Jewish propaganda that her lover taught her, her father shows her a different and more sympathetic verse toward Jews and Judaism in the Qur'an.

A new twist in French films: French language and Israeli-Palestinian relations

Lorraine Lévy's *Le Fils de l'autre/The Other Son* and Thierry Benisti's *Une bouteille à la mer/A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, both released in 2012, are the most recent French films discussing Jewish-Muslim relations but this time in Israeli-Palestinian contexts with connections to the French Jewish community. They convey an important change in Jewish emigration. North African Jews who left their native countries for France²⁸ instead of Israel in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and subsequently after each Arab-Israeli war, seemed to find a home in France, a country whose values they appreciated because of their French education through Alliance Israélite Universelle. The assimilation tendency of French secular education did not embarrass them as most kept their vibrant religious traditions, either by creating new

religious schools or by supplementing their public school attendance with complementary religious education. Others totally embraced French culture, intermarried, and blended into the population, until anti-Semitism, that traditionally was attributed to the Front National party or neo-Nazis hooligans, became after the 2001 second Intifada almost exclusively Arab. Attacks against Jewish neighbors in the Parisian *banlieues* such as Sarcelles and Créteil – often not condemned enough “for fear of copycat attacks” at the time by the authorities – made many families leave either for better Paris neighborhoods or for Israel, as did Laura’s family in *La Petite Jérusalem*. The numbers of Jews who since 2002 have left France every year to live in Israel have been exponential, especially since the terrorist attacks on a Toulouse Jewish school in March 2012 and those on the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket in January 2015.

The hooks on which *The Other Son* and *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* hang this subject are, on one hand, having Israeli protagonists of French origin and, on the other hand, having Palestinian principal characters with family members who either have lived in France or who are studying the French language and thereby are able to bond via language. This plays well with the French ideal of *Francophonie*, and on the practical level this device allows for a significant part of the films’ dialogue to be in French and not exclusively in Hebrew and Arabic, bridging the gap between the two politically and culturally antagonistic sides. Remarkably, the actors chosen for most of the Palestinian characters are genuine Palestinians, reacting to the plot situations convincingly and giving these films an additional touch of verisimilitude. Most of the principal Jewish protagonists are French Sephardim. Like the earlier wave of French films with a Jewish-Arab theme, the current crop reflects an element of optimism, albeit guarded, vis-à-vis the future.

Lorraine Lévy’s *The Other Son* starts with the unthinkable: two newborn babies, one Jewish, the other Arab, were exchanged. It happened at a Haifa hospital during the first Gulf War in 1991 when patients had to be evacuated during an Iraqi Scud missile attack. When Joseph, the Israeli protagonist, (played by Jules Sitruk), is about to enter the army after high school, doctors realize from his blood tests he is not the son of his parents. To complicate the matter further, his father is a high officer in the Israeli Army, played by Pascal Elbé (Milou in *Bad Faith*). The real child is Yacine, a Palestinian who has just returned to his West Bank hometown from France. Having completed his high-school diploma, the baccalaureate, with honors, he is now planning on studying medicine upon his return to Paris. Interestingly, Yacine, played by Mehdi Dehbi, a *Beur* actor born in Belgium, is a charming individual far more socially at ease than Joseph.

Relations between the two families evolve from awkward, aggressive, sometimes just embarrassed in their attempts at better communication, and finally to respect and friendship. The two sons remarkably manage to reach out to each other and to their genetic families in spite of all the obstacles in their way. The concrete partition Wall is not the only wall between them. The wall of prejudices between the two peoples, and the men in particular, looks formidable but is efficiently downplayed by their wives, acting like universal mothers whose sole concerns are to approach their real children while giving their unqualified love to the others.

Although the plot of children switched at birth seems fabricated and unlikely, it has often been the subject of comedies in France, providing a good laugh at the socioeconomic differences and the discrepancies in manners when the children first visit their biological families,²⁹ but it is no laughing matter here, and the realistic implications for each of the exchanged sons are soon displayed. Joseph’s first reaction when his mother discloses the truth to him is shaking in disbelief. “You mean I am the other son? I am the Other?” The

first consequence is that he cannot be accepted in the army anymore, which he considers a serious blow to his pride. Ironically a few of his pacifist friends, recruited against their will, think it comes from his father's protection. However, even more disturbing come the news that he cannot be considered a Jew anymore, even by his rabbi, who has known him since his early childhood and performed his bar mitzva. Can Joseph still go to the synagogue and pray like he always did? His rabbi now tells him that he first needs to be converted to Judaism, as his biological mother is not Jewish, while Yacine, brought up as a Muslim in the West Bank, is considered more Jewish than he is, because of his Jewish mother.

The fathers are both locked in their denial of what happened and cannot communicate easily in spite of their wives' efforts. They first clash angrily, but later they try to meet more calmly, although no words manage to come to them. The Palestinian actor Mahmud Shalabi plays Bilal here, Yacine's brother who hates all Jews and who – although he loved his brother just a minute before the news – unleashes the most hateful words to him. He also vows he will never accept the one who was brought up as an Israeli Jew, but Joseph's good will and first visit to the Palestinian family in the West Bank overcome the uneasiness when he sings in Arabic at the dinner table and everyone joins in. The father himself, played by Khalifa Natur (who played an Egyptian in the Israeli movie *The Band's Visit*), even plays the 'ud to accompany him, and Bilal softens and becomes friendlier with Joseph.

Yacine becomes an Israeli in the eyes of the soldiers at the checkpoint, and it is much easier for him to travel back and forth. He bonds with his Israeli mother, with whom he has a common language as she is French. His charm makes him a much better ice-cream vendor for pocket money at the Tel Aviv beach than Joseph, who is a shy and soulful type. He endears himself to Joseph's friends (to whom he is introduced as a cousin from France) who invite him to a party. Yacine's family also uses the same ruse with their Arab neighbors, telling them Joseph is a visiting cousin from Paris.

All this progress in their relationships would not have been possible without the use of French as a common language. Joseph's mother Orit, played by Emmanuelle Devos, is a French immigrant to Israel, and his father's parents were born and raised in France. Yacine is fluent in French as he is studying in Paris, and his mother, played by Palestinian actress Areen Omari, learned the language for him. His father is seen surreptitiously learning French, too, as a consequence of Joseph's existence.

Allusions to shared tastes for music also abound in these movies shot in Israel. While Joseph and Yacine's families are devastated by the awkward situation created by the news of the exchanged sons, it is music that serves as the true genetic bond between the Palestinian family and Joseph, whose passion is singing. His biological father loves music and plays the 'ud. When Joseph comes to visit and sings the symbolic Palestinian song "I have been away for so long, but now I am home," everyone joins in, even Bilal, who plays the flute. When he drives Joseph back to the checkpoint, they both listen to Arabic music in the car.

In the other French film set in Israel and Gaza, *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, music is less omnipresent. However, there is a scene at the beginning of the movie in which the 17 year-old Tal Levine whose French family recently immigrated to Israel, is irritated when she hears her parents listening to *Mizrahi* music, but when she becomes friends with Palestinian Naim on the Internet, she herself starts to listen to Zohar Argov, dubbed "the king of Mizrahi music." To her father, who happens to catch her doing that, she answers, "Only idiots do not change!"

Tal, is a witness to a terrorist attack in a bus in Jerusalem. She wants to understand why this interminable conflict is still making everyone miserable. She gives her brother, doing

his military service near Gaza, a message in a bottle to throw in the sea, wishing to reach Palestinians and communicate via the Internet. It is met with derisive laughter from the group of young Gazans who find the bottle, but Naim secretly decides to answer under the pseudonym of “Gazaman.” At first aggressive, he gradually changes his attitude thanks to her sincere answers and especially when he learns that she is French: “Ah, maybe you are not so bad, then!” and starts to learn French in order to communicate with her in this language. Naim, once again Mahmud Shalaby, was nominated for the César 2013 “Most Promising Actor” award for his convincing role in this new film.

Eventually, the correspondence between Tal and Naim becomes an online romance, since they never can meet. The story evolves with a concatenation of dramatic events – terrorism in Israel, Hamas rockets, and retaliatory Israeli military incursions into Gaza. Both worry for the other when violence strikes. The film remarkably manages to stay apolitical by showing how badly things are felt on either side. This is what constitutes the positive side of the film: how the viewers are drawn to understand better what is going on in Israel and in Gaza. It also conveys a message of hope for Naim. The young man, helped by Tal, does so well in his study of French in just one year that he receives a scholarship to study in France to become a French teacher.

As a bridge between the two sides, the French language plays a no less important role in *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*, directed by Thierry Binisti³⁰ and co-written by French writer Valerie Zenatti. Based on her award-winning 2005 eponymous novel for young adults,³¹ it has become the subject of study in French high schools³².

Naim’s widowed mother, played by renowned Palestinian actress Hiam Abbass, is a lover of France and the French language since the time she lived there with her husband. She encourages her son to leave despite the crush of separation. One is left with the feeling that the two youngsters might meet in France. In her comment on the importance of films like *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* to change the conversation about Jewish–Muslim relations, Rebecca Conget, the Film Movement representative, notes how these films stress the “positive power of individual personal relationships over collective beliefs and generalizations, with reason and hope triumphing at the end.”³³

Egypt: From stereotypes to personal relationships

Before the establishment of Israel, Togo Mizrahi (1901–1986), a Jew from Alexandria with Italian nationality, was one of the founding fathers of Egyptian cinema, producing films that featured Jewish and Muslim actors such as Leila Murad, Umm Kulthum, and Ali al-Kassar. Mizrahi, also known under his acting name of Ahmed Mishriki, directed and produced some of the early Middle Eastern films that featured Jewish comedians such as Shalom.³⁴ Between 1932 and 1937, Mizrahi released five films produced in Alexandria starring Shalom, who played a Jewish character also known as “Shalom”: *5001* (1932); *Al-Mandouban* (The Two Representatives, 1934); *Shalom al-Dragoman* (Shalom the Dragoman, 1935); *Shalom al-Riyadi* (Shalom, the Sportsman, 1937); and *al-Izz Bahdala* (Mistreated by Affluence, 1937). In the majority based on silent narratives, these films were social comedies that drew on improvised Egyptian theatre (*al-masrah al-irtijāli*).³⁵ Despite the positive depiction of Jewish-Muslim relations that Mizrahi reflected in his films about Shalom, attesting to the tolerance and peaceful coexistence of the two communities in that period, Shalom was never popular among Egyptian audiences, unlike the famous Muslim actor Ali al-Kassar, who appeared with him, and the naïve character of Shalom from Alexandria had disappeared from Egyptian screens by 1938.

Mistreated by Affluence is one of the first movies about the place of Jews in a Middle Eastern geographical and social context, revolving around the question of coexistence.³⁶ Shalom shares a room with his Muslim friend 'Abdu in a poor Egyptian neighborhood. The two men also are engaged to girls from their respective Jewish and Muslim faiths. Ahmed Raf'at Bahgat, in his 2005 book *Jews and cinema in Egypt and the Arab world*, was critical of Mizrahi's views of the Jews in Egypt through Shalom's character, arguing that he had been "influenced by his Ashkenazi bias and Zionist beliefs."³⁷

In the Arab world, and particularly in the Middle East, in the growing physical absence of Jews in cities and towns, Jewishness was silenced and erased from national cinemas, giving room to the dominance of Israeli villain characters in serialized television dramas. In the context of the protracted Israeli-Palestinian political and military violence, Jews of Middle Eastern background in the Arab-Islamic world or in Israel were often portrayed as enemies of Islam and Muslims. For example, during the Islamic month of fasting, viewers around the Arab world are annually glued to television screens as they watch Egyptian, and more recently Iranian and Turkish, television serials about Jews, Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The immensely popular Egyptian television series *Fāris bilā Jawād* (Horseman without a Steed), which was screened throughout Ramadan in 2007, was heavily based upon the anti-Semitic screed *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and portrayed a secret Jewish cabal plotting to control the world. In 2010, a popular Turkish television series *Valley of the Wolves* featured Israeli Mossad agents spying inside Turkey and kidnapping babies.³⁸ The airing of the episodes created a diplomatic rift between Turkey and Israel.

In 2012, one of Ramadan's most popular shows was an Egyptian television series titled *Firqat Naji Atallah* (The Naji Atallah Squad). It revolves around a retired Egyptian administrative officer at the Egyptian Embassy in Tel Aviv. Naji Atallah, the main character played by Adel Imam, becomes politically involved in Palestinian issues after which his bank account is frozen following the discovery of a large amount of unjustified income. Naji Atallah recruits a group of eight Egyptian men and stages a payback operation inside Israel through tunnels into Gaza. After attending the funeral of an "Islamic martyr," they enter Israel as a group of Hassidim. They rob the Bank of Leumi in Tel Aviv and flee through Lebanon. They are captured by Hezbollah, which announces their capture as Israeli hostages.

In 2013, the satellite network Dubai Television and other television channels in Algeria and Egypt aired *Khaybar*, a television drama portraying the rocky historical relations between Muslims and Jews in the Arabian oasis of Khaybar in the early decades of Islam. The series depicts Jews as enemies of Muslims and Islam. Episodes also highlight what is thought to be the immoral and greedy nature of Jews. These series are full of stereotypes about Jews and give little information about the nature of Jewish-Muslim relations before the Jewish emigration despite a few references to moments of social coexistence between Jewish and Muslim communities. They also follow the same narrative plot of the "Jewish/Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands" and "conspiracy to destroy the Arab and Islamic world."

The Embassy in the Building (*al-sifāra fi'l-'imāra*) (Amr Arafa, 2005) also starring Adel Imam, is one of the first Egyptian movies to highlight this continuous focus on Israel in Arab films and television series. The film plot revolves around Sherif, an Egyptian petrol engineer, who resides in Dubai until he is caught sleeping with his boss's wife. He is fired and forced to move back to Cairo, where he finds out that his apartment is in the same building that houses the Israeli Embassy. The movie deals with the question of ordinary Egyptians' reluctance to accept their country's diplomatic relations with Israel.

In the context of these television and cinematic productions that focus on Israel and the questions of Israel-Palestine and Jerusalem, Middle Eastern and Israeli cinemas have recently

engaged in new narratives and plots dealing with historical questions of Jews and Muslims living side by side. Among these themes are nostalgia for positive memories of Muslim-Jewish coexistence; Jewish emigration to Israel and the emptying of Jewish neighborhoods in cities and towns throughout the Muslim world; and even the historically taboo subject of the Holocaust. *Jews of Egypt*, a documentary made by young director Amir Ramses in 2012, researches the lives of members of the Egyptian Jewish community in the first half of the twentieth century, when Jews and Muslims lived in a plural society marked by tolerance. All the interviewees, most of them leftists and nationalists who were expelled by Nasser and live in France now, express their love and nostalgia for Egypt. The film also explores the lives of famous personalities long dead, like the star of Egyptian cinema Leila Murad, who converted to Islam, or political activist figures such as Henri Curiel, who founded the Egyptian communist organization Democratic Movement for National Liberation (Hadato). After the film starts with asking people in the street what they think of the Jewish people – “Damned” says one, “Enemies of Islam” says another, “Doomed by God,” says a third man – for once, the Egyptian Jews portrayed in it are positive figures. And although at first forbidden from viewing on the eve of its public release on March 13, 2013, “for fear it would cause an uproar” because of the Muslim Brotherhood, thanks to public demand, it was authorized two weeks later. Interviewed at the time of the first screening, Ramses sees the 1930s and 1940s as Egypt’s golden period. “I think for tolerance and acceptance of the other, Egypt was a utopia back then.”³⁹

Finally, breaking with the tradition of anti-Semitic television series, *Jewish Quarter* (Ḥārat al-Yahūd), aired during Ramadan 2015, became the subject of controversy when the soap opera showed less negative images of Jews than usual before the creation of the state of Israel, portraying even a scandalous love relationship between a Jew and a Muslim.⁴⁰

The evolution of Israeli cinema: from the Mizraḥi Jew as the Other to encounters between him/her and the Palestinian Arab

In its beginning, the young Israeli cinema negatively portrayed or marginalized North African and Middle Eastern Jewries, known as Mizraḥim and Sephardim. They were stereotypically portrayed in the early 1960s and until recent years.⁴¹ As a genre of Israeli filmmaking known as *Bourekas*, named after a popular fast-food pastry, these films flourished in the 1960s and 1970s depicting Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern origins as poor, uneducated, and primitive.⁴² For Uri Klein, *Bourekas* is “a peculiarly Israeli genre of comic melodramas or tearjerkers directed by Ze’ev Revach, George Obadiah and others, based on ethnic stereotypes...” He adds: “*Bourekas* films never really died. Even though officially they ceased to be produced in quantity by the 1980s, their heritage continues to exist in more sophisticated and analytical ways.”⁴³

Sallah Shabbati, also known as *Sallah* (Ephraim Kishon, 1964), embodies this early cinematic tradition, where there is little focus on positive aspects of the Oriental and Arab culture and history of Mizraḥi Jews. When *Sallah* arrives in Israel with his large family, the viewer is provided no prior historical or geographical context to his place of origin, Yemen. It is simply erased from the narrative. Life in North African and Middle Eastern villages and cities was mostly bracketed off from the story of Oriental Jews as they landed in Israel. However, *Sallah Sabbati* is more than a poor Mizraḥi Jew segregated by European Ashkenazis. He manages to point at the failures of the establishment (at the time the Labor Party) to address the problem of hundreds of thousands of immigrants living in tents and mocks the rigid administration of the kibbutz, the emblem of Israeli society then. His naïve character even manages to successfully trick crafty political men.⁴⁴

However, by the 1980s, a post-*Bourekas* film tradition began to emerge in cinematic Israeli circles, especially as Middle Eastern and North African Jews in Israel began to embrace their Middle Eastern cultures and heritage. A number of filmmakers turned their eyes to this new trend and began producing films and documentaries that emphasize this “renaissance” of Middle Eastern food, music, culture, and languages. Influenced by his Egyptian upbringing, Moshe Mizrahi is one of the early Israeli filmmakers and producers who represented the Sephardic cultural tradition in Israel through “sensitive and intimate portrayals of cultural conflict. His films address the central theme of love, often forbidden, and portray ethnic characters as idealistic rather than stereotypic.” *The House on Chelouche Street* (1973) represents one of the early moments in the positive shift in Israeli cinematic productions about the travails of the Jewish immigrants and their struggles to fit in the Jewish state.

Israeli–Palestinian perspectives: illicit relations versus violent contexts

In Israel and Palestine, more films are being made nowadays about the subject of Jewish-Muslim relationships, although recently with less violent political content. A number of them seem to showcase understanding between Jews originating from Arab countries and Muslims of those countries or Israeli Arabs, like the films *The Band's Visit* (*Bikkur Ha-tizmoret*, dir. Eran Kolirin, 2007) and *Jaffa* by Keren Yedaya (2010). The hugely successful *The Band's Visit* is about an Egyptian brass band invited to perform for a cultural event in Petah-Tikva, in the outskirts of Tel-Aviv. The members get lost in one of the so-called development towns in the desert. Stuck there for the night for lack of transportation, they are fed and lodged thanks to the efforts of Dinah, the only café owner, played by Ronit Elkabetz, of Moroccan origin. Sasson Gabbai, a veteran Israeli actor of Iraqi origin, very credibly plays the lonely Egyptian leader of the band. The communication between the Egyptians and the inhabitants becomes friendlier as the night sets in. The exchanges are in broken English except for when Dinah recalls the Egyptian movies she used to see with her mother every Friday afternoon on Israeli television, and expresses her nostalgia about them in Arabic. The film was selected for Best Foreign Film for the Eightieth Academy Awards, only to be rejected at the last moment because more than 50 percent of the dialogue was in English. Nonetheless, it received many international awards and no less than eight Ophir Awards in Israel, becoming one of the biggest Israeli box-office successes. During the Israeli Film Academy Awards ceremony in September 2007, Elkabetz, after taking a bow before the film's director, said: “You reminded us of a thing or two that we have already managed to forget. You showed us what would happen if we would stand before each other, Jews and Arabs, and look each other in the eye.”

By contrast, the compelling drama *Jaffa* staging a love story between a young Arab employee (again Mahmud Shalaby, playing in his first film) and the daughter of his garage boss in the outskirts of Tel Aviv, although a critical success, never received the ovation of *The Band's Visit*. It is perhaps revealing of the reluctance of the two communities to accept mixed couples.

Jaffa, inhabited by both Jews and Arabs, is the place and subject of several award-winning feature films such as *Ajami* (2009) and documentaries such as *Dancing in Jaffa* (2013) in which friendly cohabitation is seen as possible. While *Kazablan*, a 1974 *Bourekas* musical film, described prejudice and difficult cohabitation in Jaffa between poor Mizrahis and Ashkenazis without allusions to the Arab inhabitants, nowadays many Israeli stories revolve around relationships between Jews of Mizrahi origin and Arabs living in this neighborhood.

When one thinks about Israeli cinema dealing with Jewish and Muslim relationships in commercial films and especially documentaries, *abundance*, *better quality*, and *more compassion for the Palestinians* are the words that may characterize it.⁴⁵ The nationalist heroes who were the norms in the first years of the creation of the state and until the late 1960s have disappeared. They are more and more replaced by a greater awareness of the difficult identity struggles of the Israeli Arabs, often having to cope with impossible situations in their day-to-day reality.

In the first category, Israeli Jewish Eran Riklis' award-winning films *Cup Final* (1991), *The Syrian Bride* (2001), *The Lemon Tree* (2009), *Zeytoun*, (2012), and his last one, *A Borrowed Identity/Dancing Arabs* (2014), are all deep, compelling personal histories embedded in the complications of war, boundaries and politics. *Dancing Arabs* is adapted from two novels by Sayid Kashua, the famous Israeli Arab writer: *Dancing Arabs* and *Second Person*. It narrates his autobiographical experience as a bright Palestinian boy who receives a grant to study in the best Jewish school in Jerusalem. Riklis takes the story to new heights of conflicting identity. In *Said Kashua* (Forever Scared) (2009, dir. Dorit Zimbalist), Kashua talks candidly to the camera about his ambivalent relationship to Israel, his decision to write in Hebrew, and how living in Jerusalem among Jews has both enriched and complicated his identity. He is not only the acclaimed writer of the novel *Dancing Arabs* but the writer of the very successful eponymous television series about Arabs in Israel, in which one couple is Jewish-Muslim.

Other noted Israeli filmmakers who embrace better relationships of Jews and Arabs are the France-based Amos Gitai and more recently the actress Ronit Elkabetz. Gitai is a prolific documentary and fiction filmmaker who almost always focuses on the cohabitation and problematic understanding of the two populations in Israel. He seems to favor trilogies, whether in his documentaries or in his fiction films. The *Wadi* trilogy, shot over a period of 30 years (1981, 1991, 2001), shows a poor mixed neighborhood in Haifa and a mixed marriage gone awry. His *Devarim/City Trilogy* (1995–1999) includes *Yom Yom*, a comic tale of actual Jewish and Arab neighbors in Haifa driven by their divided loyalties. His fiction film trilogies focus on historical events such as the 1973 Yom Kippur war in *Kippur* (2001) or a foreign-born couple who cannot find their place in the new-born country, as in *Eden* (2001) or the immigration of Nazi camps' survivors to Palestine and the 1948 war after the creation of Israel, as in *Kedma* (2002). His films are typically devoid of sensationalism and seem to be influenced by the French New Wave in their treatment of the characters and cinematography. *Promised Land* (2004) is the first one of his *Border* trilogy, with *Free Zone* (2005) the second and *Disengagement* (2007) the last one, treating of personal histories of women within the political situation inside a conflicted area. His last film on the subject, *Ana Arabia* (2013), is set in Jaffa, a stunning and unique *plan-sequence* (Steadycam shot take) of one hour and twenty-five minutes, aiming at convincing the viewers that Jews and Arabs can peacefully live together.

Palestinian fiction film directors, such as the hugely acclaimed Nazareth-born Elia Suleiman and Hany Abu-Assad, concentrate in their stories on the human factor in the resistance to the Israeli occupation. Elia Suleiman is beloved by French cinema fans for the deadpan humor in his films in the midst of the most complicated situations, as in *Divine Intervention* (2002) and *The Time That Remains* (2009), while Abu-Assad in *Rana's Wedding* (2002), *Paradise Now* (2005), and *Omar* (2013) illustrates the moral throes of individuals and their dilemmas over their actions, more often than not dictated by their political allegiance.

Among the plethora of documentaries made every year by both Palestinians and Israeli filmmakers, sometimes jointly writing and directing them, one of the salient features is their illustration of the plight of villagers in the Occupied Territories or of nomadic Bedouins in the desert. Paradoxically, most of these films are directed by Jewish filmmakers, who are either

the instigators of concrete steps to help, or who, by filming difficult individual or collective situations, have chosen to bear witness to the issues and touch large audiences into helping to ameliorate their conditions. For example, *The Human Turbine* (2010, dir. Danny Verete) comes after three feature films made about the Bedouins. The documentary shows Jewish individuals attempting to harness wind and solar energy for the benefit of the residents of the Palestinian village of Susia. Working through action, rather than through protest, this group of determined individuals demonstrates how they have figuratively and literally lightened up Bedouin lives. Uri Rosenwaks, who produced the award-winning *The Film Class* in 2007, in which he instructed four Bedouin women in how to film their everyday lives, also made *Back and Forth* (2011), guiding four promising male Bedouin directors from the Negev Desert to point a camera at themselves and record a “self- portrait” of their community and its hardships.

However, the most famous of these international award-winning documentaries are *Budrus* (2010, dir. Julia Bacha) and *Five Broken Cameras* (2011, dir. Emad Burnat, co-director and writer Guy Davidi). *Budrus* follows a Palestinian leader who unites Fatah, Hamas, and Israelis in an unarmed movement to save his village from partition because of the Wall. Success eludes them until his 15-year-old daughter jumps into the fray. *Five Broken Cameras*, on the same subject as *Budrus*, is a powerful documentary about a Palestinian farmer’s chronicle of his nonviolent resistance to the actions of the Israeli army and a very disturbing portrait of life under military occupation. In Emad’s village, Bil’in, a separation barrier is being built, and the villagers start to resist this decision. For more than five years, Emad films the struggle, led by two of his best friends, and records Gibreel, his fourth son who was born when he received his first camera. Daily arrests and night raids scare his family; his friends, brothers, and himself are either shot at or arrested. One camera after another is shot or smashed. Each of the five cameras tells part of his story. The movie received eighteen Israeli and international awards.

It is worth noting that more and more women filmmakers from the two sides are taking up these themes and making quality documentaries about women’s issues in a Muslim society or showcasing positive educational initiatives between Arabs and Jews. *Promises* (2001, S.P. Goldberg, Justine Shapiro) and *Dancing in Jaffa* (2013, Hilla Medalia) educate young Jews and Arabs to communicate peacefully. Hilla Medalia also made in 2007 *To Die in Jerusalem*, a riveting documentary on two mothers who lost their daughters, one a Palestinian suicide bomber, the other a Jewish Israeli who died in a terror attack.

Education, peace, and forbidden love are all blended in the life story of Arna Mer-Khamis, an Israeli peace activist who married a communist Christian Arab and founded a theatre school in Jenin refugee camp. Her son, Juliano, made the award-winning documentary about her and her students in *Arna’s Children* in 2004 and continued her work until he was murdered in 2011.

Ibtissam Mara’ana, a gifted Israeli Arab filmmaker and a political activist fighting for women’s rights, founded her own production company in 2003, Ibtissam Films, and made several award-winning documentaries like *Paradise Lost* (2004), about the hidden history of Fureidis, her village. When she starts researching it, she is warned not to be like Suad, her infamous cousin, who was accused and imprisoned by the Israelis as a PLO member in the 1970s. *Lady Kul Arab* (2008) focuses on the authentic story of a Druze young woman who successfully entered the Miss Israel competition but was forced to drop out of it as she received death threats from her community. In 2010, her film *Seventy-seven Steps* documented her personal journey when she left her Arab village to live in Tel Aviv. In her attempt to find an apartment in the city, she encounters discrimination and rejection by most landlords. She

finally finds an apartment and meets her neighbor Jonathan, a Jewish-Canadian and recent immigrant to Israel. Their complicated love story is followed by their marriage (she signs her name Ibtissam Mara'ana Menu'in). Her newest film, *Write Down: I am an Arab* (2014), is a biographical documentary film about national Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. The movie covers his life, his love letters to his Jewish girlfriend from the past, Tamar Ben-Ami, his marriage with Rana Kabbani, his first wife, and the role he played in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Life Sentences (2013, dir. Nurit Kedar, Yaron Shani) is the real-life story of an Arab man who marries a Jewish woman. They live in quiet harmony within the Arab-Jewish community with their son and daughter until she discovers that her husband was the perpetrator of dozens of mysterious terrorist attacks that took place in the late 1960s. She flees the country with her children to the other side of the world and settles in Montreal's Jewish-Orthodox community. When the children grow up, they want to go back to their motherland and meet their father, but they experience the greatest difficulties finding their identity.

(Gay) sex and the city

Among the large number of documentaries made in Israel about Israeli/Palestinian relationships, more and more films covering gay Jews and Arabs living together stand out.⁴⁶ Given the struggles that many gay and lesbian Palestinians face in their communities, many seek refuge in Israel where homosexuality is much more acceptable, and especially in Tel Aviv, the Israeli capital of secularism. *Zero Degrees of Separation* (2005, dir. Elle Flanders) is an award-winning documentary produced by Elle Flanders, a Jewish Canadian lesbian and peace activist. This experimental film represents one of the earliest films that uses queer culture as a way to document social and political life in Israel/Palestine. *The Invisible Men* (2012, Yariv Moser) is the story of three gay Palestinians – Louie, Abdu, and Fares – who hide in Tel Aviv as they seek asylum outside Israel/Palestine. *Out in the Dark* (2012, Michael Mayer) is the story of the homosexual relationship between Roy, an Israeli lawyer, and Nimr, a Palestinian psychology student as they struggle to maintain a normal life in a world divided by violence. *Oriented* (2015, Jake Wizenfeld), the most recent movie, was made just after the 2014 Gaza war. It deals with the identity throes of three Palestinian gay men living in Tel Aviv in their struggles to be accepted as Palestinian gays and as part of a national struggle for liberation.

Among gay feature films, *The Bubble/HaBu'a* (Eytan Fox, 2006) is one of the most romantic, and also the saddest, encounters between Israelis and Palestinians, when the exceptional love between Noam and Ashraf is doomed by both Muslim prejudice against homosexuals and the ongoing conflict responsible for the death of Ashraf's sister. It ends with Ashraf detonating his suicide belt just as Noam has rushed out of a café to give him a kiss.

Rewriting Jewish-Muslim history through cinema

The situation in the 1990s was different than nowadays, with the Oslo Agreements promising to turn a page in the history of the Middle East. French television contributed to a revival of Judeo-Muslim friendship almost everywhere, screening new movies and documentaries, such as *Au commencement, il était une fois des Juifs arabes* (In the beginning there were Arabs and Jews) in 1997, by Serge Lalou, a well-known television filmmaker. It showcases the story of his Algerian Jewish family who lived harmoniously with their Muslim neighbors. He presented it with these words: "It was in Algeria, in Laghouat, not so long ago; to think of

today in the light of yesterday.” Television also showed music stars of both religions singing together, such as Algerian-born Patrick Bruel and Khaled (who even after the second Intifada performed for Peace in Rome) and the famous Enrico Macias, who had vowed he would never return to Algeria. He was indeed invited in 2000 by the Algerian government, and would gladly have accepted, except for the demonstrations against him by Islamists.

Although films made by French directors in France also carry traditional Arab-Andalusi music when dealing with the subject of friendship between Jews and Muslims, with young protagonists such as 20-year-old Ely and Lila in *Tout ce qui brille/All That Glitters* (2010), Geraldine Nakkache and Herve Mimran), Arab music is nonexistent. Here again, it is Anglo-Saxon pop music that unites the two friends and the lure of rich youths’ parties in Paris on the other side of the tracks. This teen movie was extremely popular with all young French and Maghrebi-French audiences and received many awards in France. The fact that in the narrative it is never mentioned that Ely was of North African Jewish descent and Lila of Algerian Muslim parents allowed the viewers to see the friends as totally French in a secular way and to accept their relationship without consideration of divisive ethnicity or religion.

Conclusion

Since the establishment of Israel, Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent have been part of a migration circuit in changing political, economic, and ideological contexts. While some chose to reside in Israel, others made Europe or the Americas their home. Yet their emotional and personal ties to their birthplace remain strong and are reflected either through autobiographical works or intermittent visits. As the Middle East is emptied of its Jewries, France has become one of the capitals of North African Judaism despite the rise of anti-Semitic attitudes and the increasing trend of their relocation to Israel and the Americas. In this context of Middle Eastern conflict and the rise of negative attitudes toward Israel and Jews, a new cinema is emerging in the Middle East and France concentrating on positive social, historical, and cultural connections between Jews and Muslims. Set in the main in a French social and geographical background, these films have managed to focus on personal and human stories with relations and themes that challenge normative beliefs of today’s Jewish-Muslim relations. These cinematic angles symbolize in certain ways the historical social and economic encounters that Jews and Muslims experienced for centuries in Islamic cities and rural villages and hamlets. As French citizens and living in a secular world, Jews and Muslims are permitted to break the religious laws regarding sexual taboos and reconstruct new possibilities of social life in the outskirts of Paris, Tel Aviv, Alexandria, and Casablanca.

As the final proofs of this essay were about to go to publication, three new films on Jewish-Muslim relations were released that seem to embody the discussions of this article. *The Midnight Orchestra* (Jerome Cohen-Olivar, 2015, Morocco-France), tells the story of a son (Gad Elmaleh), long gone from his native Morocco, who reconnects with the musicians with whom his Jewish father used to play. *Dough* (John Goldschmidt, 2015, UK-Hungary) is a sweet comedy about an old Jewish baker and his Muslim apprentice that helps revive him and his bakery. It exemplifies the tendencies of fiction filmmakers to extoll Jewish-Muslim friendships. *Junction 48*, an Israeli docu-fiction (Udi Aloni, 2015) about two young Palestinian rappers who struggle between the Israeli society’s and their own conservative community’s prejudices, again shows how some Israeli directors help to promote positive relations between Jews and Arabs.

Notes

- 1 Foreword to Férid Boughedir's film, *Un Été à la Goulette* (Arab. *Ḥalq al-Wādī*; Eng. *Summer in La Goulette*, 1995). This comment has been used by many nostalgic Tunisians and is the opening paragraph to the site Association Tunisienne de Soutien aux Minorités, created in 2013 after the Jasmine Revolution. Karim Dridi, a well-known French filmmaker of Tunisian parents, uploaded his own presentation of the film with the same foreword in May 2015. All translations are the authors' unless stated otherwise.
- 2 Yael Munk, "Looking at the Other: Israeli and Palestinian Cinema," in *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present*, Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora, eds, pp. 594–604. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- 3 Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation*, Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 2007; Walker Robins, "Jews in Arabic Cinema," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, vol. 1, pp. 611–616, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010.
- 4 See Yosefa Loshitzky, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001; Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, revised edition, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010.
- 5 Catherine Portuges, "Colonial Legacies in Contemporary French Cinema Jews and Muslims on Screen," in *A Companion to the Historical Film*, Robert Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu, eds, pp. 590–512. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2013; Dinah Assouline Stillman, "Grapes of Wrath or Concord? Muslim-Jewish Relationships in French Cinema since the Second Intifada," unpublished lecture for Emory University, 14 February 2013.
- 6 Mehammed Mack, "Le Retour d l'Arabité: Arab-Jewish Métissage and Maghrebian Jewish Identity," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13, 3 (2009), pp. 311–319.
- 7 Oren Kosansky, and Aomar Boum, "'The Jewish Question' in Postcolonial Moroccan Cinema," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, 3 (2012), pp. 421–442.
- 8 *Maṭrūz* is a traditional Judeo-Arabic music genre that embroiders Hebrew and Arabic poetry into mystical songs and 'ud playing.
- 9 She produced the celebrated *Trances* (El Hal, Ahmed Maanouni, 1981) that propelled to fame the group Nass El Ghiwane. Martin Scorsese used their music for *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988).
- 10 For a knowledgeable exploration of the genres and the compiling of traditional Moroccan and Algerian music, see Jonathan Glasser, "The News From Al-Andalus: Muslims, Jews, and Musical Intimacy in North Africa," *EthnoScripts* 13, 1 (4-2011), pp. 43–56; and "Edmond Yafil and Andalus Music Revival in early 20th-Century Algeria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 44 (2012), pp. 671–692.
- 11 Norman A. Stillman, review of "They Were Promised the Sea," *Review of Middle East Studies* 48, 1–2 (2014), pp. 50–52.
- 12 Tzvi Ben-Gedalyahu, "Film on Moroccan Jews Survives Zionist Propaganda Charges," *TheJewishPress.com* 26 February 2013 <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/moroccan-film-on-jews-survives-charges-of-zionist-propaganda/2013/02/26/?src=atagance> (accessed 6 May 2016); Brian T. Edwards, "Marock in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation," *Journal of North African Studies* 12, 3 (2007), pp. 287–307.
- 13 "La danse du feu" (Habiba Messika), *Diwen el Cinema*, June 22, 2014 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tk_3YnpUg5E (accessed 6 May 2016); Yosef Tobi, "Habiba Messika: A Star of Arab Theatre in Tunisia," *Journal of Theatre and Drama* 3 (1997), pp. 129–146.
- 14 "Habiba Msika, l'aimée de tous", un nouveau film de Sarah Benillouche" 12 July 2012 <http://www.harissa.com/news/article/%C2%AB-habiba-msika-l%E2%80%99aim%C3%A9e-de-tous-%C2%BB-un-nouveau-film-de-sarah-benillouche?page=5> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 15 The rare films made in Algeria by French directors of Algerian origin involving Muslim-Jewish friendships were never funded by Algerian authorities, for example, Mehdi Charef's *Cartouches gauloises* (2007). None of Alexandre Arcady's films was made in Algeria, although all of them showcase either colonial or postcolonial Muslim-Jewish friendships between Algerians or French Algerians of the two faiths. Even Arcady's 2012 adaptation of Yasmina Khadra's 2008 eponymous novel, *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit* (*What the Day Owes the Night*, 2013) entirely set in Algeria from 1930 to 1962, was filmed in Tunisia and France. Merzak Allouache made a film in France in 1996 while in exile: *Salut Cousin* (*Hey, Cousin!*) in which there is a scene showing an Algerian Jew's nostalgia for his native country, left in 1962.

- 16 For a thorough exploration of Jewish musicians in Muslim countries and the genres they covered, see Edwin Seroussi, "Music," *Encyclopedia of the Jews in the Islamic World* vol. 3 (2010), pp. 498–519. He uses the concept of *convergence* to describe the shared musical culture of Jews and Muslims in their native countries.
- 17 One such comment about Lili Labassi's music: "The Algerian Jews (Maghrebi in general) are the living memory of our cultural heritage. We must never forget it. Honor to them." Another comment from an Algerian about Line Monty: "What a beautiful voice ... I can't understand why in Algeria they don't talk about her ... thanks to YouTube I have discovered one of the most talented artist of all times." The answer provided by another fan: "because we are racist."
- 18 They were 105,000 in 1940; there are only 1,500 left today, mostly in Tunis and Djerba.
- 19 Karim Boukhari, "Marock: le film de tous les tabous," *Tel Quel* 223 (2006), pp. 40–47; Hicham Houdaifa and Feduoa Tounassi, "Maroc: le vrai débat," *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* 257 (2006), pp. 18–25.
- 20 Dale Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- 21 Dinah Assouline Stillman, "Muslims as Jews, Jews as Muslims, and Both as the Other in Recent French Cinema," *AJS Perspectives* Spring (2012), pp. 32–34.
- 22 Catherine Portuges, "Colonial Legacies in Contemporary French Cinema Jews and Muslims on Screen," in *A Companion to the Historical Film*, Robert Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu, eds, pp. 590–512. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2013; Brian T. Edwards, "Marock in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation." *Journal of North African Studies* 12, 3 (2007), pp. 287–307.
- 23 Michel Abitbol and Alan Astro, "The Integration of North African Jews in France," *Yale French Studies* 85 (1994), pp. 248–261.
- 24 See survey results: <http://www.20minutes.fr/france/380561-20100131-debat-identite-nationale-convaincu-francais> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 25 See Dinah Assouline Stillman, "The Vel d'Hiv Roundup: The New Fascination in French Cinema," *Image and Narrative* 14, 2 (2013); <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/314> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 26 Robert Satloff, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*, New York: Public Affairs (2006).
- 27 For a discussion summarizing the debate about the historical truth of Benghazi's saving Jews during the Nazi occupation of Paris, see Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- 28 On North African Jewish immigration to France, see Colette Zynicki, "Du rapatrié au séfaraïde: l'intégration des juifs d'Afrique du nord dans la société française-essai de bilan." *Archives Juives* 38, 2 (2005), pp. 84–102.
- 29 The most famous French comedy on this theme is *La vie est un long fleuve tranquille* (*Life is a long quiet river*, 1988) by Etienne Chatiliez.
- 30 *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* (*Une bouteille à la mer*, 2011; Thierry Binisti) received the Best Film by Young Directors Award at the Saint-Jean-de-Luz Festival, and Best Film Award by High-School Students, 2013. It is studied in French and other European high-schools: <https://www.wiesbaden.de/microsite/medienzentrum/medien/bindata/UneBouteilleALaMer.pdf> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 31 Valérie Zenatti, *Une bouteille dans la mer de Gaza*, (Paris, L'Ecole des Loisirs, 2005), received many awards in France, among them the 2011 High-School Students Award, and when translated into English in 2008, won both the 2009 Sydney Taylor Jewish Book Award and Honorable Mention for the 2009 Middle East Book Award.
- 32 Valérie Zenatti, "Dossier Pédagogique: Une Bouteille dans la Mer de Gaza" http://www.ambafrance-at.org/IMG/pdf/Une_bouteille_dans_la_mer_de_Gaza.pdf?6018/105ed84dbf07b4b34efda495b64b14d9eab9f1b8, and other "fiches de lecture." (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 33 Nigel M. Smith, "Film Movement Acquires 'A Bottle in the Gaza Sea'," (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 34 Viola Shafik, "Egyptian Cinema," in Oliver Leaman, *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Cinema*, London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 50–51.
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- 36 Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class, and Nation*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007.
- 37 Ahmed Raf 'at Bahgat, *Jews and cinema in Egypt and the Arab world (al-yahūd wa'l-sīnimā fi Miṣr)*, Cairo: Sharikat al-Qaṣr lil-Tibā'a wal-Di'āya, 2005, p. 199
- 38 See a discussion of the controversy at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0aC3Vn--GCK> (accessed 6 May 2016).
- 39 Eyal Sagui Bizawe, "'Jews of Egypt': A Flawed but Praiseworthy Documentary" <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/television/premium-1.623183> (accessed 1 March 2016). Patrick Keddie, interview with Amir Ramses, Bright Lights, 30 April 2013, <http://brightlightsfilm.com/it-could-cause-a-popular-uproar-interview-with-amir-ramses-on-his-controversial-documentary-jews-of-egypt/#.Vy3FNnpmy4> (accessed 6 May 2016).
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- 41 Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010, pp. 210–216.
- 42 Terri Ginsberg and Chris Lippard, *Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema*, 2010, pp. 69–70.
- 43 Uri Klein, "And then there was one," *Haaretz*, 16 December 2008.
- 44 Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, first edition, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1989, pp. 138–156.
- 45 Shmuel Shepkaru, "Jewish-Arab Relations through the Lense of Israeli Cinema, Then and Now." *The Levantine Review* 2, 1 (2013), pp. 66–83.
- 46 Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israel*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Filmography

- Adieu, mères* [Goodbye, Mothers] (Mohamed Ismail, 2008).
- al-'Izz Bahdala* [Mistreated by Affluence] (Togo Mizrahi, 1937).
- Al-Mandouban* [The Two Representatives] (Togo Mizrahi, 1934).
- Ana Arabia* (Amos Gitai, 2013). A one-sequence shot of 85 minutes. It is a moment in the life of a small community of outcasts, Jews and Arabs.
- Arna's Children* (Juliano Mer-Khamis, 2004). About Arna Mer-Khamis's foundation of a theatre school for Palestinian refugee children.
- Au commencement, il était une fois des Juifs arabes* (Serge Lalou, 1997). Documentary on Lalou's parents' village life in the south of Algeria.
- Back and Forth* (Uri Rosenwaks, 2011). The director teaches Bedouin men to film their life.
- Bikkur Ha-Tizmoret* [The Band's Visit] (Eran Kolirin, 2007). Egyptian musicians on their way to play in Tel Aviv's outskirts get stuck in a small development village.
- A Borrowed Identity/Dancing Arabs* (Eran Riklis, 2014). A gifted Arab student gets a scholarship to study in the best Israeli school and befriends a Jewish student.
- Budrus* (Julia Bacha, 2010). The fight of Palestinian inhabitants in a small village against the security wall that would divide it.
- Cantique brodé* [Embroidered Canticles] (Izza Genini, 1990). It is about *maṭrūz*, which alternates Arabic and Hebrew poetry in the same song.
- Chants pour un Shabbat/ [Shabbat Songs]* (Izza Genini, 1989). Judeo-Moroccan songs for Shabbat with Rabbi Haim Louk.
- Ciao, Habiba* (Sarah Benillouche, 2015). A documentary about Habiba Msika.
- Cup Final* (Eran Riklis, 1991). An Israeli prisoner and his Palestinian guard share a passion for soccer.
- Dancing in Jaffa* (Hilla Medalia, 2013). Pierre Dulaine, a native of Jaffa, comes back in his retirement to teach ballroom dancing to Jewish and Arab students.
- Devarim* trilogy (Amos Gitai, 1995–1999), with *Yom Yom*, 1998, and *Kadosh*, 1999.
- Disengagement* (Amos Gitai, 2007). An inside look at the disengagement in Gaza in 2005.
- Divine Intervention* (Elia Suleiman, 2002). Separated by a checkpoint, two Palestinian lovers from Ramallah and Jerusalem try to arrange clandestine meetings.

- Eden* (Amos Gitai, 2001). A loose adaptation of Arthur Miller's short story *Homely Girl, A Life*, 1992.
- El Gusto* (Safinez Bousbia, 2011). The story of a mixed Jewish/Muslim Shaabi orchestra reunited 50 years after the Algerian war separated them.
- Five Broken Cameras* (Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, 2011).
- Free Zone* (Amos Gitai, 2005).
- Ha-Bayit Berechov Chelouche* [The House on Chelouche Street] (Moshé Mizrahi, 1973).
- Jaffa* (Keren Yedaya, 2010).
- Jews of Egypt* (Amir Ramses, 2012).
- Kedma* (Amos Gitai, 2002).
- Kippur* (Amos Gitai, 2000).
- Lady Kul Arab* (Ibtissam Mara'ana, 2008). An Arab beauty queen is forbidden to compete for the title by her relatives.
- La Danse du feu* [Habiba M'sika/The Dance of Fire] (Selma Baccar, 1995). Biopic of the legendary Tunisian Jewish singer/actress during the Roaring Twenties.
- La Petite Jérusalem* [Little Jerusalem] (Karin Albou, 2005). An Orthodox Tunisian Jewish philosophy student falls in love with an Algerian Muslim man.
- Le Chant des mariées* [The Wedding Song] (Karin Albou, 2008). Two friends, one Jewish, the other Muslim, live through trying times during the Nazi occupation of Tunisia in 1942.
- Le Fils de l'autre* [The Other Son] (Lorraine Levy, 2012). A young Israeli man discovers that he and a Palestinian baby were exchanged at birth. Life becomes complicated...
- Le Grand pardon* (Alexandre Arcady, 1981). Two gangs, one Jewish, the other Muslim, wage war against each other.
- Le Nom des gens* [The Names of Love] (Michel Leclerc, 2010). A comedy in which a leftist activist sleeps with her political enemies to convert them to socialism.
- Le Port des amours* (Jacqueline Gozland, 1991). Documentary about the famous Algerian Jewish singer Reinette l'Oranaise.
- Les Hommes libres* [Free Men] (Ismaël Ferroukhi, 2011). A fiction movie based on the legendary story of the Grand Mosque's Rector saving Jews from the Nazis in Paris in 1942.
- Marock* (Laila Marrakchi, 2005).
- Mauvaise foi* [Bad Faith] (Roschdy Zem, 2006). Secular Muslim man and Jewish woman encounter difficulties telling their parents they want to marry.
- Mishpatei Hahaim* [Life Sentences] (Yaron Shani and Nurit Kedar, 2013).
- Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran* (François Dupeyron, 2003).
- Nouba d'or et de lumière* [Nuba of Gold and Light] (Izza Genini, 2008). Documentary that showcases traditional Arabo-Andalusi music known as 'Ala.
- Omar* (Hani Abu-Assad, 2013). A Palestinian man agrees to work as an informant after he is forced to admit he helped kill an Israeli soldier.
- Oriented* (Jake Witzenfeld, 2015). Three gay Palestinians living in Tel Aviv tell about their identity crises.
- Où vas-tu Moshe?* [Where Are You Going, Moshé?] (Hassan Benjelloun, 2010).
- Out in the Dark* (Michael Mayer, 2012).
- Paradise Now* (Hany Abu-Assad, 2005).
- Promised Land* (Amos Gitai, 2004). First of his "Border" trilogy; followed by *Free Zone* and *Disengagement*.
- Promises* (S. P. Goldberg, Justine Shapiro, Carlos Bolado, 2001).
- Racines Judéo-Arabes* [Jewish-Arab Roots] (2005).
- Rana's Wedding* (Hany Abu-Assad, 2003).
- Said Kashua* [Forever Scared] (Dorit Zimbalist, 2009).
- Seventy-seven Steps* (Ibtissam Mara'ana, 2010).
- Shalom al-Dragoma* [Shalom the Dragoman] (Togo Mizrahi, 1935).
- Shalom al-Riyadi* [Shalom, the Sportsman] (Togo Mizrahi, 1937).
- al-Sifāra fi'l-'Imāra* [The Embassy in the Building] (Amr Arafa, 2005).

- The Bubble/HaBu'a* (Eytan Fox, 2006).
- The Film Class* (Uri Rosenwaks, 2007). The director teaches four Bedouin women how to film their village.
- The Human Turbine* (Danny Verete, 2010). Jewish individuals set out to help Bedouins get water and electricity.
- The Invisible Men* (Yariv Moser, 2012).
- The Lemon Tree* (Eran Riklis, 2009). A Palestinian woman whose lemon orchard is threatened because of its vicinity to a high Israeli official's new house fights for her rights.
- The Syrian Bride* (Eran Riklis, 2001). When Mona, a Druze woman who lives on the Israeli border, marries a Syrian Druze she has never seen, she must renounce seeing her family forever.
- The Time That Remains* (Elia Suleiman, 2009).
- They Were Promised the Sea* (Kathy Wazana, 2013).
- Tinghir-Jerusalem: Echoes from the Mellah* (Kamal Hachkar, 2012).
- Tout ce qui brille* [All That Glitters] (Géraldine Nakache and Hervé Mimran, 2010). Teenage comedy on living in the banlieue as opposed to glamorous Paris.
- Un été à la Goulette* [Summer in La Goulette] (Férid Boughedir, 1996). Three friends of different faiths living in Tunisia in the 1960s must overcome their anger when their daughters vow to each lose their virginity with a man of another religion.
- Une bouteille à la mer* [A Bottle in the Gaza Sea] (Thierry Binisti, 2011). A young Israeli woman and a young Palestinian man start a correspondence on the Internet.
- Villa Jasmin* (Férid Boughedir, 2008).
- Wādī* trilogy (Amos Gitai, 1981, 1991, 2001). Three movies made over 30 years, exploring mixed couples' relationships in a poor place near Haifa where Jews and Arabs live side by side.
- Write Down: I Am an Arab* (Ibtissam Mara'ana, 2014). Documentary on Mahmoud Darwish, the conic Palestinian national poet, and his love letters.
- Zarim* [Strangers] (Guy Nattiv and Erez Tadmor, 2007).
- Zero Degrees of Separation* (Elle Flanders, 2005).
- Zeytoun*, (Eran Riklis, 2012). A young boy, a Palestinian refugee, wants to visit his ancestral home and helps an Israeli IDF pilot escape PLO captivity.

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