

highlighting the oppression and persecution of Shiis worldwide and adopted a human rights discourse to gain worldwide recognition. Members of the Al-Hakim family have been much more openly involved in Iraqi politics, from Muhsin Al-Hakim's clear denunciation of the secularization policies implemented by the socialist Iraqi government under 'Abd Al-Karim Qasim (1958–63) to the active involvement of his son in the exilic politics of SCIRI. The political activism of members of the Al-Hakim family continued post-2003, with SCIRI's successor party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), headed by Muhsin Al-Hakim's grandson.

This is a very useful, accessible and readable book providing rich and detailed information and analysis of the various trajectories of transnational Shii clerical networks in the last fifty years. For this reason, it is an important source for anyone interested in developments within contemporary Iraqi Shiism. The book is based on extensive and multi-sited research including archival research in places like Iran, various biographical sources as well as interviews with major figures and stakeholders in the networks discussed. The only point of criticism one might raise is that Corboz perhaps overestimates the significance of familial ties in the perpetuation of religio-political authority. While it is true that the descendants of Muhsin Al-Hakim and Al-Khu'i have used their fathers' and grandfathers' names to advance their own position within transnational and local Iraqi Shiism, the relatively poor performance of SCIRI/ISCI in Iraqi elections or controversies around the management of the Al-Khoie Foundation after Al-Khu'i's death illustrate that having the name of a great Shia clerical figure alone is not enough to be recognized as a religious or political leader in contemporary Shiism.

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ROBERT LANG:

*New Tunisian Cinema: Allegories of Resistance.*

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In this well-researched book, Robert Lang, professor of cinema at the University of Hartford, sheds light on important historical, cultural, psychological and political aspects of cinema in post-independence Tunisia. In spring 2011, Tunisians rose up against Ben Ali in a wave of civil resistance. Lang argues that the “new Tunisian cinema” made during the period preceding the Jasmine Revolution, from 1986 to 2006, served as “allegories of resistance” to the authoritarian regimes of Habib Bourguiba and especially the 23-year dictatorship of his successor Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011). This book is a powerful investigation of films that have inspired Tunisians to take actions against political establishments that have estranged their own citizens and implemented a state of fear, oppression and marginalization.

Lang shows that Tunisian directors have “kept the cinema alive as a form of public pedagogy and as a unique site of cultural politics that tries to influence the debate about national identity” (preface, p. x). Through a thorough analysis that draws on cultural studies, psychoanalysis and political commentaries, Lang demonstrates the power of Tunisian cinema to define debates about national identity and cultural

politics. Cinema reflected Tunisians' efforts to reshape their political priorities, to reconcile modern, secular ideals with traditional heritage. The filmmakers' rewriting of a national narrative is among the major characteristics of the New Tunisian Cinema. Lang shows how the intellectual elite fought hard to redefine national identity during a period of political upheavals, social tensions and economic dependency. The book's publication coincides with an era of historical transition following the ousting of one of the dictators that filmmakers have allegorically criticized in their feature films.

Lang analyses eight major Tunisian films: *Man of Ashes* (1986), *Bezness* (1992) and *Making Of* (2006) by Nouri Bouzid; *Halfaouine* (1990) by Férid Boughedir; *The Silences of the Palace* (1994) by Moufida Tlatli; *Essaïda* (1997) by Mohamed Zran; *Bedwin Hacker* (2002) by Nadia El Fani and *The TV Is Coming* (2006) by Moncef Dhouib. In his discussions of these feature films, Lang investigates major issues such as gender dynamics, class relationships in a patriarchal society and the struggle between tradition and modernity.

Drawing on works by scholars such as Béatrice Hibou, a political scientist, and Hélé Béji, a Tunisian writer, Lang examines the complex relationships between "the disciplinary instrumentalization of nationalism" (Hibou) and the concept of "nationalitarianism" (Béji) that ties Tunisia to the global market. Lang deftly links the economic denominator to the overall concept of *tunisianité* that operates in a hybrid space of ambivalence, identity contradictions and negotiations. In Bouzid's acclaimed film *Bezness*, for example, the complexity of *tunisianité* is embodied in the three main characters: the hustler Roufa, his fiancée Khomsa and the French photographer Fred. Each of these characters symbolizes a schizophrenic quest for a new identity in a fluid, ambivalent and hybrid cultural space. The film is emblematic of the shifting dynamics that characterize traditional societies' obligation to negotiate their position in a globalizing economic order. The three characters' psychological wanderings are an allegory of loss and alienation in a universe where their perceived identity is an illusion.

Each film studied touches on fundamental issues that complicate the process of modernization. Lang reveals how the filmmakers contribute to the ongoing debate about the place that Tunisia should occupy in relationship to both the Arab and the Western world. The twenty-year period examined in this book was mined by "illiberal trends" that first emerged during Bourguiba's presidency. The films reflect nostalgia for a promising first post-independence president who ultimately failed to meet the expectations of his citizens and disillusionment for his successor who sank the country further into dictatorship.

Lang's research responds to a need for a multifaceted reading of a national cinema committed to denouncing contradictions of a seemingly modern state. The author's interdisciplinary reading of the films helps elucidate the historical dynamics that have shaped Tunisian cultural identity. His knowledge of Tunisia's political history allows him to broaden his understanding of the relationships between politics and cultural productions under the authority of two dictators who have defined the parameters of political power in the modern state. While outlining the strategies maintained by two successive dictatorial regimes to silence any forms of cultural or political dissidence, the author shows how filmmakers succeeded in undermining censorship through the use of allegory.

As the first monograph published in the US on Tunisian cinema, Lang's book fills a major gap in scholarship. It provides readers with thought-provoking analyses of major film productions in one North African nation. While Viola Shafik's *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (1998) has been a must-read for scholars, only one chapter is devoted to Tunisian cinema. Others have contributed to the enrichment of scholarship on Arab or North African cinema in comprehensive

books such as Lina Khatib's *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (2007) and Roy Armes' *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (2005). Josef Gugler's *Film in the Middle East and North Africa: Creative Dissidence* (2011) takes a similar view of film-making as a form of political protest in the Arab world, as does Valérie Orlando's insightful book *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (2011), which focuses on Moroccan films since 1999.

This excellent study is accessible to students and enriching for scholars interested in North African studies. It will be sure to stimulate further scholarship on the rich production of Tunisian cinema.

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FATEMEH KESHAVARZ:

*Lyrics of Life. Sa'di on Love, Cosmopolitanism and Care of the Self.* (Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture.) vii, 217 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015. £70. ISBN 978 0 7486 9692 5.

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For her fourth major monograph, and ten years after *Reading Mystical Lyric: the Case of Jalal-al-Din Rumi*, Keshavarz discusses another giant of the Persian poetical tradition in this enthusiastic monograph on the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa'di of Shiraz. The book consists of seven chapters, a bibliography and an index, it uses Forughī's Tehran 1366/1987 edition of Sa'di's *Kolliyāt*, and targets a non-specialist readership, aiming at familiarizing them with several themes which the author wishes to discuss, documenting her arguments with generous excerpts of Sa'di works in her own English translations (unfortunately lacking the Persian original). The text flows easily and introduces notes of familiarity in authorial asides, in harmony with her perception of Sa'di's humorous ethics. Although Sa'di is among the towering figures of Persian poetry, his work (consisting of a *divan*, the *Bustan masnavi* and the *Golestan* prosimetric text) has not yet received the detailed scholarly attention it cries out for from the Western academic community. Keshavarz, by contrast, makes abundant use of monographs and articles written in Persian, as is obvious from her extensive bibliography.

This is an unusual study, the author argues, in which academic robustness goes hand-in-hand with "personal emotions and subjectivity" (p. 196). Chapter 1 (pp. 1–41) explains Keshavarz's traditional Iranian perception of the poet and his oeuvre, briefly discusses his life and background, and continues with an interesting examination of the modern and current reception of his poetry in Iran (where the critique appears most perilously built on the shifting sands of subjective social, political and moral principles (p. 14)). Influenced by D. Soelle's *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, Keshavarz meanders through Sa'di's poetic corpus and turns her back on academia's "hermeneutics of suspicion", favouring "a hunger for hearing and absorbing as many thoughts, images, ideas and rhythms as these texts and traditions have to offer" (pp. 26–7).

In the second chapter (pp. 42–78), Keshavarz challenges criticism of Sa'di's work by positing a cosmopolitan worldview shared by Sa'di and contemporary poets, which she coins as a "conceptual Silk Road of the imagination", but she is