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- 27 1967 EL ZAWGA EL SANIA (*The Second Wife*).
- 28 1968 EL KADIA 68 (*Case 68*).
- 29 1969 AWDIT EL ROH (*The Return of the Spirit*) – in the making.

Abu Saif won the following awards :

- Certificate of merits for *The Monster* – Cannes 1954.
- Critics' award for *A Woman's Youth* – Cannes 1956.
- National prize for best direction for *A Woman's Youth* in 1958.
- Catholic Centre for the Cinema award for *Between Heaven and Earth*, 1959.
- Certificates of merits for *I Am Free* – Milan 1959.
- National prize for best direction for *This Is Love* in 1960.
- National prize for best direction for *Beginning and End* in 1962.
- United Arab Nation's award for best direction for *Cairo 30* in 1968.
- National award for best direction for *The Second Wife* in 1968.

Books written on Abu Saif :

- The Diary Of A Film* by Hashim El-Nahas (written during preparation, scripting, shooting and editing of CAIRO 30).
- The People's Artist: Salah Abu Saif* by Saad-Edine Tawfiq.

2. YOUSSEF SHAHIN.

Born in 1925, in a well-to-do family, Shahin showed a gift for music and painting from his childhood. His love for the cinema was inspired by a desire to paint with a camera. A friend tells us of Shahin as a young boy strolling at night in a cemetery. Colleagues in the industry describe how involved he is with the making of each of his films. Shahin himself admitted that during the making of FAJR YUM JADID (*Dawn of a New Day*), 1964, a colour film which was developed and printed in Egypt, he used to spend the night on the floor beside the machines, supervising the developing himself. Some think of Shahin as an eccentric, a painter of film

rather than a dramatist. His films are dependent on the visual, poetically composed and at times hauntingly effective. Shahin's expertise as a technician strived to make his films to an international standard. Although his films were never of the same social importance as those of Salah Abu Saif, he is better known to some western critics, particularly as the man who discovered Omar Sharif. Shahin made thrillers, musicals, melodramas and adventure films without a concurrent theme to link them. Thus his contribution is primarily technical, he had transferred the image of a static camera of the old Egyptian cinema, to a mobile and expressive one. It would be unfair to assume that his films were never entertaining because they were highly entertaining but mostly due to their technical bravados, with a few masterly exceptions. It is these exceptions which are worth discussing. Abu Saif's films as a whole needed a full study, while Shahin's gives us a choice for selection.

The greater part of *BAB EL HADED (Iron Gate)*, 1958, was filmed in Cairo's railway station known as the "Iron Gate". Shahin himself brilliantly played that part of Kinawi, the newspaper vendor who is a cripple and in love with Hannouma, the lemonade seller. Kinawi also believes that the iron gates surrounding the station are the obstacles to his happiness. Hannouma is beautiful and desirable, but she's going to marry Abu Seri, the porter, who is handsome and earns a great deal of money. Kinawi is hurt and plans to revenge in his tortured mind . . . but how? Will the victim be Hannouma who has broken his heart? . . . will it be Abu Seri, the lucky rival? . . . or will it be the society in which he lives and which is also the cause of his misfortune? Will he himself be destroyed? These are the questions which Shahin's images attempts to answer but deliberately evades direct statements. The images are disturbing; Kinawi is put finally into a straight-jacket and taken away as the crowds go and come each day through the station. Shahin's shots were long and at times deliberately uncomfortable; he held on a face long enough for the audience to see through it without a single word being uttered. This was a new experience for the Egyptian cinema whose audiences were trained to listen as much

as they can. Here Shahin asked them just to look and think. Many couldn't understand the film, many thought it was pretentious but Shahin's *Iron Gate* will remain tough and meaningful for a long time. The station was the society, the people in it were its citizens, the gates were its boundaries and Kinawi was its victim. Shahin never said so, but he made us think so. Unsuccessfully, Shahin tried to add to the film's major theme a sub-plot about the need to form a union between the station porters, to protect their rights. This sub-plot was indeed pretentious particularly since it concerned the character of Abu Seri, while the real interest lay in Kinawi's fate. *Iron Gate* was screened in Berlin's festival and was well received.

GAMILA BOHRAID (*Djamila*), 1958, was about the Algerian girl commando of the title who was tortured by the French during the Algerian troubles. The film was an exercise in action. Shahin's camera could hardly fail. His long torture sequences were not merely sadistic but reflected the whole Algerian struggle for freedom.

In 1963 he was chosen to direct the first Egyptian epic, EL NASER SALLAHEDINE (*Salladin*), which was highly acclaimed in Moscow. With Egypt's modest technical resources, Shahin made a film in the Hollywood tradition. His visual competence made miracles with the battle scenes and added depth to others. The film at least was not as naïve as the Hollywood production of David Butler's *King Richard And The Crusaders*, 1954, which presented the great Salladin as if he was Chief Yellow Horn out of their stock of Red Indians. Shahin's *Salladin* was fair to both sides and excellently performed by an entirely Egyptian cast. Shahin's technique was ahead of its time. Although he didn't use the split screen technique, now perfected and commonly used, he used instead a split set and with the width of Cinemascope presented two trials occurring in different places on the screen at the same time. This he achieved by darkening half the screen then switching to the other half and vice versa. Sometimes we saw both trials at the same time. They were the trials of Luisa and the King of Acca. The technique served the film dramatically in balancing the meaning of justice on the two sides.

FAJR YUM JADID (*Dawn of a New Day*), 1964, was a modern love story between a married woman and a much younger man. Shahin uses colour to glamorize Cairo; particularly beautiful was Cairo's tower which he used in the Felini tradition as the church tower in *La Dolce Vita*, where the camera climbs with the characters while they're talking, the higher they climb, the more we understand about them and the more we see around them. Shahin's film was intellectually pretentious but his

In 1965 Shine abandoned a film project which he started shooting around the Aswan Dam and decided to go to the Lebanon. During his absence from Egypt he made two films. The first was BAYA EL KHAWATIM (*The Ring Seller*), 1965, a camera work remains fascinating.

musical which was shown in the 1965 Beirut Film Festival and highly admired. It was even compared by some critics to Jaques Demy's *Les Parapluies De Cherbourg*. The film was based on a Lebanese operetta and although Lebanon's top singer, Firoz, is no actress, Shanin's camera beautifully captured Lebanon's landscape and made every song or dance a delight to watch. He drove the Lebanese producers mad by his eccentric moods, taking his time with every shot, caring for every colour; a professionalism the Lebanese cinema was too young to appreciate. Lebanese producers were afraid to back any more projects by this daring Egyptian. The only way he could find backers was through a Lebanese-Egyptian-Spanish co-production. He went to Spain to film RIMAL MIN ZAHAB (*Sand of Gold*), 1966, with Egypt's Faten Hamama in the lead. *Sand of Gold* is a remake of *Blood and Sand*. The film suffered endless delays and ended in a legal contest between one producer and the other. Shahin realized that the only way to continue with his work satisfactorily was to return to Egypt.

Upon his return to Egypt, he was chosen to direct the first Russian-Egyptian co-production. The film was EL NAS WAL NIL (*People and the Nile*), 1968, which dealt with a Russian engineer working on the high dam, whose marriage is threatened when his bored wife decides to go back to Russia. Shahin was provided

with extra equipment, using all the tools he could lay his hands on to go on painting with his camera. For Shanin, the making of this film must have been a fascinating experience which equipped him to tackle his latest film, *EL ARD (The Land)*, 1969. *The Land* tells the story of a whole generation of *fellahin*; it is the combination of many stories, problems and dreams. Shahin's outstanding achievement was in turning all of these tales into a compact film. His framework and camera movements were designed precisely to serve each whole sequence and in turn the complete film. His expertise with colour did not attempt, as he did to Cairo with *Dawn of a New Day*, to glamorize the countryside. Instead, he captured what is already there, simple and beautiful. It is unfair to attempt an explanation of all these different stories, since in such a process one would ultimately miss Shahin's own contribution in making them into one big story. Therefore, there is no one big story to write, but there is one big film to see. Egyptian critics regard *The Land* as Shahin's best work to date.

YOUSSEF SHAHIN'S FILMOGRAPHY

- 1 1950 BABA AMINE (*Father Amine*).
- 2 1951 IBN EL NIL (*The Nile's Son*).
- 3 EL MUHARRAJ EL KABIR (*The Great Clown*).
- 4 1952 SAYIDET EL KITAR (*The Lady in the Train*).
- 5 NESSA BALA REJAL (*Women without Men*).
- 6 1953 SERA'A FIL WADI (*Struggle in the Valley*).
- 7 1954 SHAITAN EL SAHARA (*Devil of the Desert*).
- 8 1955 SERA'A FIL MINA (*Struggle in the Pier*).
- 9 1956 INTA HABIBI (*You are my Love*).
- 10 1957 WADAAT HOBAK (*Farewell to your Love*).
- 11 1958 BAB EL HADED (*Iron Gate*).
- 12 GAMILA BOHRAID (*Djamili*).

- 13 1959 HUB ILLAL ABAD (*Forever Yours*).
- 14 1960 BAYN IDEAK (*Between Your Hands*).
- 15 1961 NEDAA EL OCHAK (*Lover's Call*).
- 16 RAJOL FI HAYATI (*A Man in my Life*).
- 17 1963 EL NASER SALLAHEDINE (*Salladin*).
- 18 1964 FAJR YUM JADID (*Dawn of a New Day*).
- 19 1965 BAYA EL KHAWATIM (*The Ring Seller*).
- 20 1966 RIMAL MIN ZAHAB (*Sand of Gold*).
- 21 1968 EL NAS WAL NIL (*People and the Nile*).
- 22 1969 EL ARD (*The Land*).

3. HUSSEIN KAMAL

Hussein Kamal is Egypt's most promising young film director today. Kamal studied direction at the *I.D.H.E.C.* in France, where he graduated in 1954. Upon his return to Egypt he joined Cairo's television broadcasting, where he directed some dozens of plays. In 1964 he won a national prize for his short television film, *EL MAATAF* (*The Coat*), based on a short story by Naguib Mahfouz. *THE COAT* takes place on a station platform, where a poor man exchanges his belongings for a soldier's coat to keep himself warm, but only to be mistakingly shot later as a deserter. Kamal showed an economy in technique and visual imagination which immediately led to his first feature film assignment.

AL MOSTAHEEL (*The Impossible*), 1965, was a tale of conflicts: the middle-aged engineer, still dominated by his dead father, torn between his obligations towards his wife and son, and his desire to free himself. The wife he learned to love was his father's choice, and the two women he tries to love were only escapades. In the end, like a sheep on its way to the slaughterhouse, he returns to his family. *The Impossible's* claustrophobic sets, decor and lighting, plus Kamal's restrained direction,