

Transculturality in Algiers: The Cinema of Merzak Allouache

Joseph McGonagle

Thanks to its rich and diverse history, the city of Algiers is undoubtedly a privileged site of transculturality. This was certainly the case in the French colonial period when, as Zeynep Çelik argues, colonial Algeria was the most important but most problematic of the French overseas territories and constituted “the colonial city par excellence, the terrain of many battles—cultural, political, military, urban, architectural.”¹ Furthermore, as Martin Evans and John Phillips point out: “French rule in Algeria lasted for 132 years, as opposed to 75 years in Tunisia and 44 in Morocco, a depth and duration of colonial experience unique within the Arab world.”² As a consequence, France “remains an omnipresent feature of Algeria,” and the complexity of its historical legacy helps ensure that Algeria is “the most francophone of France’s former territories.”³ Crucially, the Bay of Algiers forms a major economic maritime hub. As Tom Trevor has asserted regarding port cities more broadly, such spaces provide “symbolic sites of cultural exchange. They are the points of entry and departure, the mouth of an imagined body of the nation-state, where the foreign gets muddled up with the familiar and land-locked certainty is blurred by maritime exchange.”⁴ Given that Algiers is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, Trevor’s argument pertains all the more, as the profound cultural and linguistic diversity of this geographical space “encourages a reshuffling of the usual cards of national belonging and unilateral framing.”⁵

As the capital city and seat of state power, Algiers has played a pivotal role in the formation of Algeria as a nation and the development of Algerian cultural identity. Accordingly, it has functioned as an important site in both Maghrebi and French visual culture: the city inspired many painters throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has drawn the attention of filmmakers

1 Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1.

2 Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 27.

3 Evans and Phillips, *Algeria*, 28.

4 Tom Trevor, “Introduction,” in *Port City: On Mobility and Exchange*, ed. Tom Trevor (Bristol: Arnolfini, 2007), 14.

5 Iain Chambers, “The Mediterranean: A Postcolonial Sea,” *Third Text* 18, no. 5 (2006): 427.

both during French colonial rule and since independence.⁶ The predominance of the city in the national imagination is reflected in Algerian cinema, for which the capital and its surrounding region have often provided a setting. Indeed, out of all Algerian cities, it is surely unrivaled in this regard, and due to the global notoriety of films such as *La Bataille d'Alger* (The battle of Algiers),⁷ Algiers may, for foreign audiences, seem synonymous with Algeria as a whole.

Although research on the role of cities in film now covers a multitude of countries and continents, the ways in which Algerian cities have been depicted on screen have been comparatively overlooked. This is all the more curious given that Algeria is Africa's largest country by landmass and its strategic geopolitical importance has only increased with attempts to combat Islamist terrorism in the post-9/11 era. While there have been many studies of key historical films set in Algiers, these studies have focused on elements of the city's urban geography, and analysis has often been limited to discrete individual examples rather than a detailed survey of a wider corpus of works. By interrogation of a primary corpus of films set in Algiers spanning five decades, this article builds on previous scholarship and provides a longitudinal focus that allows greater consideration of how representations of Algiers have evolved. Furthermore, since Algiers lies on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, representations of the Algerian capital can provide a broader insight into how spaces within the Mediterranean region have been depicted. Moreover, as Chambers argues, works hailing from southern shores can challenge normative perceptions that emanate from the North by approaching the Mediterranean as "a critical space, a site of interrogations and unsuspected maps of meaning."⁸ Equally, "a North viewed from the South of the world represents not a simple overturning but, rather, a revaluation of the terms employed and the distinctions that have historically constructed the contrasts and the complexities of this space."⁹ Close scrutiny of such works therefore has the potential to challenge dominant Eurocentric assumptions about the Mediterranean region.

In order to explore this further, this article concentrates on a select corpus of films by one of the most important Algerian directors working today: Merzak Allouache. Described as "the most prolific filmmaker to stem from

6 Nadira Laggoune, *Alger dans la peinture* (Algiers: Régie Sud Méditerranée, 2000).

7 *The Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo (Algiers: Casbah Film, 1966).

8 Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 34.

9 Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, 34.

the Maghreb,”¹⁰ Allouache’s work has undoubtedly achieved greater global recognition than that of any other contemporary Algerian director. With a career now spanning more than five decades, Allouache occupies a unique position within Algerian cinema. Given his focus on Algerian society, his oeuvre collectively provides an unparalleled portrait of life for multiple generations within post-colonial Algeria. His birthplace of Algiers has been a key setting throughout his films, and through analysis of five feature-length works from across his career—ranging from his debut *Omar Gatlato* (1976)¹¹ to *Les Terrasses* (The rooftops) (2015)¹²—this article probes the ways in which Allouache’s representation of this pivotal port city has evolved over time and seeks to gauge how he has configured the Algerian capital on screen for both domestic and international audiences. In doing so, it will analyze some of Allouache’s recent films that have yet to attract substantial critical attention. These recent films constitute a distinct phase in his oeuvre thanks to their acute focus on a series of pressing social and political questions facing Algiers and Algeria more widely. As noted above, due to its history, geographical position, and political significance, Algiers has provided a forum for myriad forms of transcultural exchange. But to what extent do Allouache’s films present the city on screen as a transcultural space, and what role does transculturality play in these cinematic depictions? By closely examining five of his key films set in the Algerian capital, this article explores how the revered director engages with notions of the transcultural within his cinematic visions of the city.

Before turning to these films, however, the precise notion of “transcultural” deployed herein must be clarified. In her work on transcultural memories, Astrid Erll defines transcultural as “an umbrella term for what in other academic contexts might be described with concepts of the transnational, diasporic, hybrid, syncretistic, postcolonial, translocal, creolized, global, or cosmopolitan.”¹³ Such a purposefully broad interpretation of the term is preferred here for two reasons. First, it enables as many qualifying elements as possible across Allouache’s oeuvre to be identified and analyzed together—elements that may otherwise escape attention. Second, it facilitates engagement with Erll’s wider argument regarding travel and memory, which acknowledges that “in the production of cultural memory, people, media, mnemonic forms,

10 Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 98.

11 *Omar Gatlato*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Algiers: Office National pour le Commerce et l’Industrie Cinématographique, 1976).

12 *Les Terrasses*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Algiers: Baya Films, 2015).

13 Astrid Erll, “Travelling Memory,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 9.

contents, and practices are in constant, unceasing motion.”¹⁴ Furthermore, as Abu-Er-Rub et al. argue, “one of the principal assumptions of transcultural studies has been that a ‘culture’ is constituted by processes of interaction, circulation, and reconfiguration,” and therefore “culture is constantly changing, moving, adapting—and is doing this through contact and exchange beyond real or perceived borders.”¹⁵ Such a perspective of transculturality is particularly suitable for cinema given the medium’s specificities of production, distribution, and circulation, all of which are characterized by transnational collaboration and the crossing of borders both physical and virtual. Moreover, by means of a holistic view of this important transcultural element of Allouache’s oeuvre, this article explores how his representation of Algiers evolves over time as his engagement with transcultural elements shifts in line with wider political and societal imperatives.

Before proceeding further, a brief overview of Allouache’s career to date is necessary. Born in 1944 in Algiers, Allouache studied filmmaking at the Institut National du Cinéma before moving to France, where he continued his studies at the renowned Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques and graduated in 1967.¹⁶ He subsequently returned to Algeria, where he made several short films before directing his first feature-length film, *Omar Gatlato* (1976). *Omar Gatlato* brought Allouache commercial success and helped to establish his reputation as a key commentator on life in contemporary Algeria. A steady output over the next two decades followed, including films made on both sides of the Mediterranean. The events of the “black decade” (1992–2002), however, forced many filmmakers to cease operations as violent conflict raged in Algeria.¹⁷ This period of prolonged armed warfare began after the cancellation of legislative elections in December 1991, in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party looked set to gain power by defeating the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN). The Algerian military seized control of the government, the FIS was banned, and there were widespread arrests of FIS members. In response, Islamist fighters began a guerrilla campaign against the government and army that would endure throughout the 1990s and lead to the loss of many thousands of lives. Remarkably, despite this climate of violence and terror, Allouache completed his film *Bab el-Oued City* (1994)

14 Erll, “Travelling Memory,” 12.

15 Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter, “Introduction: Engaging Transculturality,” in *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter (London: Routledge, 2019), xxiii.

16 Darren Waldron, “From Critique to Compliance: Images of Ethnicity in *Salut Cousin* (1996) and *Chouchou* (2003),” *Studies in European Cinema* 4, no. 1 (2007): 37.

17 Guy Austin, *Algerian National Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 29.

during the spring of 1993 in Algiers.¹⁸ His achievements were duly recognized at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival, where the film received the FIPRESCI Prize. Allouache was based chiefly in Paris thereafter, and the 2000s were notable due to the significant commercial success he achieved—especially in France—with his comedy *Chouchou* (2003).¹⁹ His filmography now comprises well over a dozen feature-length films, including his latest release, *Enquête au paradis* (Investigating paradise) (2018).²⁰

***Omar Gatlato* (1976)**

Returning now to the beginning of Allouache's career and to his debut feature-length film set in Algiers, *Omar Gatlato* (1976), is a landmark of Algerian cinema. The film broke domestic records, attracting over 300,000 viewers at the box office.²¹ It broke with established codes in Algerian cinema by depicting everyday life in the Algerian capital in the mid-1970s and heralded the director's recurrent focus on daily lived experience in the city, especially for working-class characters. The use of humor and light relief in this film would become a trademark of many of Allouache's subsequent films. Furthermore, as Viola Shafik notes, *Omar Gatlato's* "young protagonists speak a slang typical of the capital's youth."²² By embracing the local specificities of language in the city rather than deploying a "cleansed colloquial Arabic, without taking local dialects and vernaculars into account,"²³ the film signaled a further break from cinematic convention at a time when the state's policy on language in education and society was one of Arabization. Allouache's choice thereby illustrates how language in post-colonial Algeria, particularly the choice of language, is always political. A series of early establishing shots immediately introduce the location where the film's eponymous protagonist lives, which is high above the city center in a cluster of tenements above Algiers known as Bab el-Oued. The use of direct address to the camera by the protagonist, Omar, in this opening sequence sets the tone for the film as a whole, as he remains the sole narrator and chief point of focalization. Audiences therefore discover the city via Omar, although it is telling that the emphasis is immediately placed not on exterior spaces but interior ones. By means of a series of medium shots of

18 *Bab el-Oued City*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Algiers: Flash-Back Audiovisuel, 1994).

19 *Chouchou*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Paris: Canal+, 2003).

20 *Enquête au paradis*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Paris: Les Asphofilms, 2018).

21 Roy Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North African Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 105.

22 Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2007), 84.

23 Shafik, *Arab Cinema*, 84.

Omar resting on his bed within a small room in his home, Allouache highlights the problem of overcrowding in local housing, a problem that becomes even more evident as Omar introduces the many family members with whom he lives. Although there is no direct point of comparison, from the beginning of the film there is a strong sense that Omar's experiences are representative of many others within the wider city and that the film provides a realistic portrait of life for such families in the mid-1970s. This undoubtedly explains part of the film's resonance and appeal among domestic audiences.

By having Omar introduce, one by one, a range of different individuals who make up his social circle—family members, friends, acquaintances, and colleagues—Allouache paints a decidedly intimate portrait of daily life in Algiers and emphasizes social interaction and the city as lived space. Indeed, as the above-mentioned theme of overcrowding may indicate, the struggle for the inhabitants of the city to live comfortably is a leitmotif of the film, later reinforced in scenes on packed public transport. Although Omar's likeable personality and humorous tone lend a playful feel to the film, Allouache does not shy away from depicting social problems in Algiers. For example, on more than one occasion Omar warns about the prevalence of pickpockets, and in one sinister sequence he and a friend become victims of a violent street robbery when walking home one night.

The recurrent use of direct camera address to break the fourth wall and several long shots showing packed auditoria accentuate the sense that Allouache's film holds a mirror up to Algerian society. This theme of representation pervades the film, including such examples as Omar's penchant for listening to music on cassette tapes and recording songs while visiting the cinema, scenes featuring musicians playing *chaâbi* (a popular style often associated with Algiers), and the theatrical and mime performances curtailed by a restless audience. An extended sequence at the cinema in which Omar watches a Hindi film—and surreptitiously records songs from the soundtrack on his prized cassette recorder—is notable for the amount of time the camera is trained on the projection screen. Aside from providing a *mise-en-abîme*, thereby highlighting the filmmaking process and spectatorship itself, the sight of an auditorium packed with so many young audience members suggests their generation's thirst for a diverse variety of cultural representations, particularly representations emanating from beyond Europe and the West. Given that French decolonization had only ended just over a decade earlier and that any residual enthusiasm for French culture or language is apparently absent from *Omar Gatlato*, the choice of a Hindi film for this scene is even more pointed. It suggests a profound rupture with the past, as well as a youthful generation, represented by Omar, that has already developed transcultural affiliations that bypass the linguistic and cultural legacies of French colonialism. As such, it provides a vivid reminder of David MacDougall's argument that "cultural

difference is at best a fragile concept, often undone by perceptions that create sudden affinities between ourselves and others apparently so different from us.”²⁴ In terms of popular culture, Allouache’s inference seems clear: it is not artists and works from the North that capture this generation’s imagination, but those from the East.

Regarding the depiction of different generations within Algiers, the film adopts a marked tone of irreverence towards older members of society. This helps distinguish the young majority from their elder fellow citizens and implies a clear divergence of outlook and experience. A lengthy sequence at Omar’s workplace shows his confrontation with a furious older man sent there to reclaim items for his jewelry business and is a strong illustration of the above-mentioned language politics. As his anger mounts at Omar’s impassiveness, the man chooses to conduct his condescending diatribe in French—presumably to connote social prestige—although he eventually reverts to Arabic in exasperation. A later scene evokes Algiers’s history. When Omar’s uncle Tahar recounts his supposed military exploits during the war of independence against France, Omar is quick to point out his lies. By providing such a wry look at Algerian society, Allouache’s iconoclastic approach suggests that younger Algerians are not prepared to remain deferent to their elders and, crucially, are unafraid to challenge their authority.

Omar Gatlato’s representation of gender in Algiers is striking. Given that the film’s emphasis remains largely on Omar and on men more generally, the city space is constructed as male. Women are only fleetingly glimpsed, and little insight is provided into their experience. This emphasis on men and masculinity is far from celebratory, however, as indicated by Omar’s sudden tears while on a drunken night out with his friend Mo. The rather somber tone here hints at a broader unhappiness with his situation, and his predicament indicates a masculinity in crisis due to wider societal transformations.²⁵ The young generation of men that Omar represents seem fundamentally unsure of their place and are effectively infantilized by society, hence the importance placed on his discovery of an unknown woman’s recordings on the tape cassette player he borrows from Mo. The fascination he quickly develops for this woman, who becomes known as Selma, signals a yearning for an emotional life and a private space beyond the family home, highlighting the lack of such personal relationships in the diegesis. That he ultimately does not show up at their appointed rendezvous at the film’s end reinforces this absence, though a subsequent voice-over assuring us that he will call her again augurs hope that Omar can conquer his indecision and achieve happiness. Nevertheless, a sense

24 David MacDougall, *Transcultural Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 245.

25 Andrea Khalil, “The Myth of Masculinity in the Films of Merzak Allouache,” *Journal of North African Studies* 12, no. 3 (2007): 329–345.

of ambiguity remains, as rather than projecting into the future, the film instead ends as it began. By returning to its opening setting, showing Omar seated on his bed and putting on his shoes to go to work, the film suggests that he may remain trapped in the same cycle, without any change on the horizon. As Allouache's affectionate portrait of life in Algiers ends, this enigma remains.

By contrast, the confidence with which Allouache portrays life within the Algerian capital is indisputable. His early engagement with the politics of language and of representation in the decade following French decolonization reveals several key contours of transculturality in the city, while equally emphasizing their attendant effects upon city dwellers. Though the portrait provided of Algiers asserts distinct local specificities, the city is nevertheless characterized as inherently hybrid, multilingual, and post-colonial—perhaps even transcultural par excellence.

***Bab el-Oued City* (1994)**

Moving now to the early 1990s and a second defining film in Allouache's career, *Bab el-Oued City* (1994) captures the spirit of another era in Algiers. The film is set mainly in the spring of 1989, and centers its action in the historically working-class and largely residential area of Bab el-Oued. The choice of time-period here is particularly significant since it allows the film to explore the tensions of the notorious repression that followed the October 1988 riots. As such, the film points forward to the black decade, which—as stated previously—would have devastating consequences in the city and across Algeria. Those working in the media and cultural sectors were singled out as targets of attack, so that any successful filming in the city during this period seemed improbable. *Bab el-Oued City* would consequently become one of the best-known depictions of life in Algiers during this conflict. Although aspects of the film's style and approach hark back to Allouache's debut work, a series of changes enable the film to explore a greater plurality of experiences in the Algerian capital, and as such provide a representative portrait of Algerian society as the black decade loomed. By bookending the film with opening and closing scenes set three years after the main events—both before and after the violence and terror of the 1990s had commenced—the film serves as a warning of the violence to come as well as an expression of grief over its occurrence. As will become clear through its acute focus on Algiers and Algerian society, even greater space is made in this film to explore transculturality in the city via history, memory, and exile.

The opening scene shows Yamina, a young woman, alone inside a darkened room. As she writes a letter to her lover Boualem, it is revealed that he has been absent for three years. Jumping back in time to spring 1989, the film then explains the reasons for his departure. The subsequent scene immediately introduces Boualem himself as he commits an act of frustration

that triggers a wave of action throughout the film. Unable to sleep one morning due to the noise emanating from a loudspeaker outside his home, he rushes onto his building's rooftop to remove it. The loudspeaker is used by the local imam to broadcast to residents and so its theft immediately attracts the ire of Saïd, Yamina's overtly pious and supposedly devout brother. Saïd vows to find the person responsible and reconnect the loudspeaker, and his mission forms a main thread of the film's plot. The dramatic force of this situation is accentuated by the fact that these men represent parallel opposites: whereas Boualem, who works night shifts at a local bakery, is humble and easy-going, Saïd styles himself as a religious and moral authority, and his behavior gestures towards aspects of the militant Islamism that would become so prevalent in the following decade. The range of the wider cast of characters represents the different backgrounds and perspectives within Algerian society during this period, and the community they form can thereby stand for the nation more broadly.

In terms of representations of the urban geography of Algiers, there are readily apparent similarities to *Omar Gatlato*. Once again, the focus remains resolutely on the local buildings and streets where residents live, and several scenes take place within the realms of work and home. The use of on-location shooting within the wider city similarly adds a documentary quality to several scenes. While there is again a general absence of key landmarks, it is noticeable that colonial French architecture can easily be glimpsed in contrast: namely, la Grande Poste (the main post office) and the Catholic basilica of Notre-Dame d'Afrique. Moreover, Allouache pointedly explores further transcultural links to this colonial past via a series of amusing scenes showing a French couple visiting Algiers. While escorting his blind elderly aunt—a former *pied-noir* (colonial settler) in French Algeria—around the city, Monsieur Paulo describes to her how it looks today. The disjuncture between Monsieur Paulo's enthusiastic descriptions and what is revealed by the camera invites humor, and his insistence that the city remains just as it once was suggests that his memories of the past actively obscure his vision in the present. The inclusion of such elements chimes with the recurrent use of blindness as a metaphor for *pied-noir* experience and memory,²⁶ which in its nostalgia for the colonial era has idealized life in French Algeria, thereby eliding the many legal, political, and socio-economic privileges that entrenched the division between colonial settlers, who benefited from French citizenship, and the many indigenous Algerians who, as colonial subjects, did not. By pointedly including these elements in the film in such a lighthearted way, Allouache deftly gestures towards the important transcultural and diasporic links that continue to unite

26 Amy L. Hubbell, *Remembering French Algeria: Pieds-Noirs, Identity, and Exile* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 171.

people from both sides of the Mediterranean. The French characters may be a source of ridicule, but their presence in post-colonial Algiers is essentially unproblematic, and the welcome that locals extend to them suggests an accommodation of the colonial past that emphasizes hospitality over hostility.

Given the time in which the film is set, such comedic moments are duly juxtaposed with a growing sense of menace. This is implied via repeated cuts away from the main action to short, mysterious scenes where two anonymous men drive a dark BMW through Algiers. The use of somewhat foreboding extra-diegetic music and a lack of explanation as to these figures' identity and purpose imply that sinister forces are at work within the city, thereby evocatively gesturing towards the fear and uncertainty that gripped much of society during this period. The enigma of these men is further heightened by their repeated meetings with Saïd, to whom they issue a gun with the message that instructions will follow, although the details of these instructions are never divulged. Given that Saïd and his acolytes are a source of much belligerence throughout the film, these men's selection of him for this undisclosed mission seems particularly apt as Saïd attempts to assert control over the local population. Ultimately, however, Saïd himself falls prey to the escalating violence: he is later found dead, his body having remained undiscovered for six months. The inclusion of this narrative thread therefore anticipates "the hazy character of the war's events and participants,"²⁷ which proved fertile ground for the many conspiracy theories that circulated throughout the conflict. Given the prevalence of such conspiracies throughout Algerian society and amongst Algerian diasporas abroad, these aspects of the film may well have enjoyed a particularly strong resonance. Indeed, by depicting such events, the film itself arguably becomes complicit in such conspiracy theories, a transcultural phenomenon that as a "vernacular communicative practice ... traces out a transnational space of politics that allows Algerians around the globe to participate in the discursive enactment (and potential resolution) of the civil war."²⁸ The presence of such elements in the film therefore provides, by extension, a powerful reminder of how the conflict's repercussions stretched far beyond Algeria's borders.

As the film's end draws near, several departures from Bab el-Oued create a sense of exodus from the city as a widespread descent into conflict beckons. The local imam's decision to leave the area bodes particularly ill. Having become weary following his fruitless efforts to promote peace, he warns local residents that their fate lies in their own hands and that the future will be determined by their choices. Eager to escape the growing climate of fear, Boualem also

27 Paul A. Silverstein, "An Excess of Truth: Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and the Algerian Civil War," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2002): 653.

28 Silverstein, "An Excess of Truth," 666.

departs for France by ship, thus mirroring the journey made by many Algerians seeking refuge during the 1990s and underlining the important route of exile and escape that such Mediterranean crossings offered during this period. The circumstances surrounding Boualem's absence, as mourned by Yamina at the beginning of the film, are therefore finally revealed. Accordingly, the closing scene returns the viewer's attention to her, again shown alone inside her home waiting for Boualem to return. It now becomes clear that the letters she has been writing to him remain unsent because she neither knows where he lives nor if he will ever return. With any future reunion improbable, the uncertainty and isolation connoted by Yamina's solitude become symbolic of the wider crisis within the city and country at this time, as violent conflict raged and the prospects of resolution remained distinctly dim.

Ultimately, the vision of transculturality offered by *Bab el-Oued City* is double-edged. On the one hand, Algiers is presented as a locus of nostalgia for former colonial settlers—a group who, by fleeing during French decolonization to the continent from which so many of their ancestors hailed, became “doubly diasporic.”²⁹ On the other hand, it is France, Algeria's former colonial ruler, that is positioned as a safe haven for Algerian migrants and exiles (although, since the tales of those who travel are not heard, the precise nature of the welcome they might receive there remains unclear). This crisscrossing of the maritime space that separates and unites both countries emphasizes the continued importance of post-colonial links between them three decades after Algerian independence. Furthermore, “representations of the Mediterranean Sea regularly recur when the links between France and Algeria are probed, and so much so that the Mediterranean arguably functions as a supplement itself to both countries.”³⁰ Here the Mediterranean, viewed from different sides of its shores, is both bridge to the past and buffer from the present.

***Bab el Web* (2005)**

Writing in the mid-2000s, Roy Armes argued that after Allouache moved to Paris he “never recovered the level of his best early work and has become, in effect, a French filmmaker.”³¹ This led Armes to describe the next film to be discussed, Allouache's French-language comedy *Bab el Web* (2005),³² as “very much an outsider's view of *Bab el-Oued* twenty-eight years after *Omar*

29 Andrea L. Smith, “Introduction: Europe's Invisible Migrants,” in *Europe's Invisible Migrants*, ed. Andrea L. Smith (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 24.

30 Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle, *Contesting Views: The Visual Economy of France and Algeria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 143.

31 Armes, *African Filmmaking*, 98.

32 *Bab el Web*, directed by Merzak Allouache (London: Maïa Films, 2005).

Gatlato.”³³ The inference here is that it was precisely Allouache’s exilic or diasporic relationship with Algeria during this period that was to blame for this difference—the geographical distance that separated Allouache from Algeria blurred his vision of Algiers. His base in Paris and his receipt of French funding raises questions about his target audience. Although the film also received Algerian funding, was it aimed at audiences in Algeria? Even though the two male leads—played by French actors of Algerian heritage, Samy Nacéry and Faudel—may well have been familiar to many Algerians, the vision Allouache projects of Algiers in the early 2000s markedly differs from how the city appears in *Omar Gatlato* and *Bab el-Oued City*.

Directly relevant here is the placement of *Bab el Web* in the wider context of Allouache’s filmography. The film that immediately preceded *Bab el Web* was the popular comedy *Chouchou* (2003). This film was a huge success in France, undoubtedly won Allouache new audiences, and built anticipation for his subsequent film. By again deploying the genre of popular comedy to explore ethnic and social differences between contrasting groups, *Bab el Web* clearly sought to capitalize on its predecessor’s success and reattract French audiences. Elements of the plot seem actively designed to facilitate this attention, since post-colonial links between the two countries are foregrounded via interactions between different characters.

The film begins by revealing the source of its title: Bab el Web is the name of a twenty-four-hour cyber-café in Algiers where Bouzid, a young man who lives in Bab el-Oued, chats online with other internet users. One of his contacts in France, a woman named Laurence, informs him that she plans to visit Algiers, and Bouzid hopes romance might blossom between them. During her stay, however, it is his brother Kamel to whom Laurence is attracted, and they subsequently begin a relationship. Laurence eventually reveals her ulterior motive for visiting Algiers: she is trying to track down her estranged father. With the help of the brothers, she discovers that her father is none other than Hadj-Patte Folle, a local crime lord. Later, as her father is poised to attack Kamel in retaliation for financial losses incurred after the latter refused to lose an illegal fight featuring his prized ram, Japonais, Kamel is only spared due to Laurence’s intervention. After she departs for home, the film closes with the brothers excitedly planning a trip to France, at Laurence’s invitation. As this plot summary might suggest, although humor has always been a key feature of Allouache’s oeuvre, this film is notably different in tone to the two earlier works discussed above. Whereas Allouache’s films previously explored topical concerns within Bab el-Oued and Algiers more broadly—resulting in portraits of the city that could also be seen as metonymic commentaries on the state of the nation—references to such concerns are here conspicuously

33 Armes, *African Filmmaking*, 98.

brief in comparison. Comedy is instead the dominant mode, whether via the frequent repartee between the fraternal double act or the farcical situations into which the brothers stumble. The language of the dialogue also creates a stark difference, as the main language used is French rather than Arabic.

Seen in light of Allouache's filmography, the film may seem driven primarily by commercial concerns. It certainly has a less obviously political tone than many of his other films. This might be attributed to his use of popular comedy, which, in spite of its subversive potential to disrupt social conventions,³⁴ often ultimately provides a consensual vision and ensures audiences leave more reassured than unsettled. As a comparatively minor work within Allouache's oeuvre, it would be tempting to dismiss the film as an innocuous, throwaway comedy. Given that the film was clearly designed to appeal to French audiences, however, the question of how Allouache pictures the city for the French seems apposite, for what vision of Algiers does he articulate here? While some brief references are made to manifest difficulties in the area—the destruction of several buildings due to recent flooding, regular cuts in water and power supply—the emphasis upon crime and illegality essentially presents the city as a space of delinquency, echoing the colonial stereotypes that conveniently positioned Algeria as France's Other. *Bab el Web* is not alone in this presentation. As the black decade neared its end and during its aftermath, other French co-productions—such as Mehdi Charef's *La Fille de Keltoum* (Keltoum's daughter) (2002)³⁵ and Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche's *Bled Number One* (Back home) (2006)³⁶—also risked conjuring up such associations. By depicting contemporary Algeria as profoundly dystopic and barbaric, they cohered with dominant modes of understanding encountered in Western media, which throughout the conflict and beyond positioned Algeria's population as socially regressive. Allouache seems a world away from the confident and assertive vision of Algerian identity that he so vividly demonstrated in *Omar Gatlato*. His comedy appears designed more to pander to transcolonial stereotypes that picture the city as a lawless and unruly space, implicitly reaffirming hierarchies of power that conveniently position Europe and the West as culturally and socially superior.

Despite this shift in representation, the rare instances in *Bab el Web* that depart from its wider narrative are the most intriguing and insightful. One example is a brief conversation between Laurence and Bouzid in which Bouzid confides in her, telling her how his childhood in Lyon ended abruptly a decade earlier when his father announced that their family must relocate to Algeria and hid their passports to prevent them returning to France. Although only

34 Waldron, "From Critique to Compliance," 36.

35 *La Fille de Keltoum*, directed by Mehdi Charef (Paris: CinéTévé, 2002).

36 *Bled Number One*, directed by Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche (Paris: Sarrazink Productions, 2006).

momentarily evoked, a glimpse is given here of the emotional distress caused by this sudden rupture, offering an explanation for Bouzid's desire to use the internet to connect with people in France specifically. Given Laurence's use of the same technology to explore her own heritage, themes of exile and separation clearly unite them. The chance to probe this angle of her life further is not taken, however, as Laurence's father ultimately proves to be an irredeemable figure with whom no prospective reconciliation or meaningful dialogue can occur. This seems redolent of the film's wider reluctance to penetrate the more substantive issues that it raises, which consequently limits its ability to comment further on post-colonial Franco-Algerian relations or how they might be transculturally mediated by the Internet.

The film's acknowledgement of the various diasporas shared between contemporary France and Algeria nevertheless illustrates the profound links between these countries. Indeed, writing over thirty years after French decolonization and Algerian independence, Étienne Balibar noted that the imbrication between the two spaces remained so profound that he questioned the merits of seeing them as separate.³⁷ Instead, Balibar suggests they might function more as a *frontière-monde*: a "thick and complex contact zone that itself also functions as a frontier."³⁸ The subsequent proliferation of digital technologies—the advent of which is glimpsed in the film—may well have strengthened such arguments. The realities of migration, mobility, and border controls between the countries nonetheless remain, and, tellingly, it is Laurence, not Bouzid, who is able to return to France definitively. Allouache's subsequent return to filming in Algiers as the fiftieth anniversary of Algerian independence approached would, by contrast, signal a renewed emphasis on his incisive exploration of life in the Algerian capital. As will become clear below, Allouache's sustained focus throughout the last decade on pressing societal problems within Algiers and beyond suggests that *Bab el Web* will remain an outlier.

***Normal!* (2012)**

Filmed in Algiers during July 2009 and August 2011, the opening sequence of *Normal!* (2012) heralds a contrasting tone and approach.³⁹ This film opens with a series of carefully composed shots to establish the city's urban landscape, accompanied only by ambient sound without music or dialogue, thereby immediately signaling a markedly different aesthetic than that of the previous

37 Étienne Balibar, *Droit de cité: culture et politique en démocratie* (Paris: L'Aube, 1998), 81.

38 Welch and McGonagle, *Contesting Views*, 142.

39 *Normal!*, directed by Merzak Allouache (Algiers: Baya Films, 2012).

films. This difference is confirmed by the range of filmmaking techniques deployed in subsequent scenes. The combination of on location shooting, naturalistic lighting, and handheld camerawork evokes a documentary style that lends a raw and immersive quality to the film. These techniques generate a sense of immediacy that accords with the film's focus upon contemporary politics. *Normal!* is set during the time of the Tunisian Revolution, which would inspire a wave of protests later collectively labeled as the Arab Spring. A second sequence transports the audience to life inside an apartment where a young man watches online videos of street protests while a woman writes the words "Algeria democratic and free" in red spray paint upon a white banner. The loud sound of a helicopter outside, a sound that repeatedly muffles and drowns out dialogue throughout the film, connotes surveillance and menace. Mentions later made to roadblocks and checkpoints, as well as further demonstrations and protests, suggest that Algiers now traverses a period of unrest, if not upheaval.

It is eventually revealed that the young couple in the apartment are Fouzi, a filmmaker, and his wife Amina. Amina wrote the script for a film Fouzi directed two years earlier to coincide with the city's hosting of the second Pan-African Festival, a festival celebrating the transcultural links that unite countries across Africa. Commenting on the images they see online and the climate of discontent, the couple's initial discussion introduces a key question of the film: during such times of social protest, what should the function of cinema be? The film's subsequent use of *mise-en-abîme*, alongside other references to filmmaking, will certainly provide many opportunities for reflection on this question. The central plot revolves around Fouzi's desire to shoot footage during upcoming protests, which he hopes will help complete his unfinished film. In an early scene, he breaks the fourth wall by introducing himself to the camera and explaining the context behind his film project. His premise is as follows: Having learned that his friend Nabil, an actor, had been refused funding by the Algerian Ministry of Culture for his play entitled *Normal!*, Fouzi is unable to understand why the script had been rejected, given that its contents seemed neither subversive nor anti-government. Fouzi resolves to make a film with Nabil and his fellow actors during a fifteen-day shoot in Algiers in order to dramatize their experience and explore the theme of censorship.

Two years later, in order to persuade the actors to reunite for further filming, Fouzi invites the cast to his home to watch a rough cut of several sequences. Allouache's repeated cuts between the watching cast and various sequences from Fouzi's film provide a film within the film. Such reflexivity is enhanced by several instances of intertextuality. The scenes in Fouzi's film of performers during the parade for the 2009 Pan-African Festival, for example, invoke the cinematic immortalization of the inaugural 1969 Pan-African

Festival four decades earlier in William Klein's *Festival panafricain d'Alger* (The Pan-African festival of Algiers) (1969).⁴⁰ This creates further transcultural links via history and memory, even if the Africanity of Algiers and Algeria more widely—notably evoked in Tariq Teguia's *Inland* (2009)⁴¹—remains unexplored. Drawing from his own oeuvre, Allouache again casts Mabrouk Aït Amara as Mabrouk, a choice that automatically recalls the character of the same name that Aït Amara played in *Bab el-Oued City*. Although separated by three-and-a-half decades, reminders of Allouache's debut feature-length film can also be detected, such as the shared theme of representation and the use of repeated direct address to the camera. Additionally, a degree of mirroring between various persons and characters is at work here. Within Allouache's plot, the playwright Nabil acts in Fouzi's film as Rachid, a fictionalized version of Fouzi himself. The director Fouzi seems at times to be a symbolic representation of Allouache and provides a mouthpiece for what are likely Allouache's own viewpoints. A key example of this is when Fouzi is criticized by his cast, who argue that his film should have been completed and released two years earlier, as its political and cultural relevance has now been superseded by subsequent events. Fouzi defends his film by insisting that "*n'importe quel film a le droit d'exister*" ("any film has the right to exist"). Later, Fouzi tries to convince Nabil to shoot new scenes with him because he wants to better capture "*le rythme d'Alger*" ("the rhythm of Algiers") and admits that, in adding Lamia's kidnap and assassination to the plot, he strayed too far from how he should have represented the city he loves—it could well be assumed that Allouache intended this scene as a note to self.

By devoting so many scenes to the actors watching and discussing Fouzi's rough cut, Allouache creates space within his film for a meta-commentary on the problems faced in contemporary Algiers, and as the film proceeds, an increasing amount of screen time is dedicated to debates between Fouzi, Amina, and the rest of the cast. Although the interior space in which they watch the screening gradually becomes the main point of action, the intriguing comments made by one of the actresses about the appearance of Algiers on screen draws attention to how Fouzi's film also represents the city. Struck by the squalor and hopelessness amongst the young people featured in the film, she pointedly queries the wisdom of spending huge sums of money to host the second Pan-African Festival when Algerian society has other, more urgent priorities. The implication of her comment is that the celebration of transcultural links across Africa should not be at the expense of the basic needs of the local population. Indeed, given the hope and optimism for Algeria's future associated with the

40 *Festival panafricain d'Alger*, directed by William Klein (Algiers: Office National pour le Commerce et l'Industrie Cinématographique, 1969).

41 *Inland*, directed by Tariq Teguia (Algiers: Neffa Films, 2009).

inaugural festival,⁴² any comparisons drawn between life in the city then and now might also prove unfavorable. Arguably, the disparities between the spirit of the time depicted in Klein's film and realities of life forty years later—another important example of transcultural memory—only further underline the present-day democratic deficit that inspired so many Algerians to join the street protests. The use of editing to incorporate and replay scenes of the second Pan-African Festival is therefore highly pointed. At such a time of great social and political protest across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, this footage harks back to the “important historical moment of transnational solidarity” constituted by the inaugural festival,⁴³ celebrating as it did the end of colonial rule across many African states. The inference here is therefore that civil society in Algeria must take its lead from fellow countries in the region and push for change in order to secure political transformation.

A key strength of the film is its emphasis on dialogue, and several engaging scenes both within and without Fouzi's film feature prolonged conversations. The actors' often rapid exchange of views and interjections lend a dynamic quality to their words, with the occasional suggestion that some lines may be improvised or unscripted. A particularly compelling example is provided towards the end of the film, as the cast engages in a lengthy and heated debate about contemporary societal problems. They express various opinions on the state of democracy in Algeria, the number of street protests, and the ongoing state of emergency. They are shown debating these social and political issues with infectious passion, the sincerity of which is all too patent. This scene chimes with the analysis of this period advanced by John Entelis, who argued that such protests stemmed from “an increasingly animated civil society no longer willing to be placated by either rhetorical promises or short-term economic rewards as condition for political compliance.”⁴⁴

Released as the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of Algerian independence from France approached, the film ultimately presents Algiers and Algerian society at a crossroads. This is epitomized in its final scenes, where once again Fouzi is shown at home watching online videos of street protests. This time, however, it becomes clear that this is an event in which he and Amina have themselves participated. Whereas he is content not to protest further, Amina insists that she would take to the streets again. In essence, this is the kernel of the film in its entirety: When faced with such circumstances, what purpose can such protests serve? Do individuals each have a responsibility to participate, and what role can cinema play in this? At the close of Allouache's

42 Evans and Phillips, *Algeria*, 97–98.

43 Corbin Treacy, “Reframing Race in the Maghreb,” *French Cultural Studies* 29, no. 1 (2018): 20.

44 John P. Entelis, “Algeria: Democracy Denied, and Revived?,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 4 (2011): 675–676.

most political film to date, the society he depicts stands poised between stasis and action. The incessant restlessness generated by the use of editing, the oscillation between metalevels, and the parallels drawn beyond the diegesis position cinema as a vital, productive force that can help instigate change by posing such questions to audiences. Furthermore, the travel of ideas within the diegesis and beyond into the circulation of the film and the movement on screen provides a metaphor for transculturality itself. Arguably, it is the combination of filmic form and the highly charged atmosphere depicted in Algiers on screen that creates the film's vibrancy and dynamism.

Les Terrasses (2015)

Finally, this article turns to a fifth film set in contemporary Algiers. *Les Terrasses* (2015), in Allouache's own idiosyncratic way, forms an ode to the city by incorporating five different areas: Notre-Dame d'Afrique, Bab el-Oued, the Casbah, central Algiers, and Belcourt. As its name indicates, *Les Terrasses* centers on a series of roof terraces found throughout the city. This choice of title and setting immediately signals the continued importance of rooftop spaces within the built-up environment of Algiers.⁴⁵ Given that such buildings were constructed in the city's medina and social spaces under Ottoman rule, the film obliquely invites the audience to consider the remnants of the Ottoman era's architectural and socio-cultural legacy. Each roof terrace is individually introduced via discrete sequences offering different snapshots of life, from the banal to the highly disturbing. Allouache instills an enigmatic atmosphere by not providing any initial context nor introducing the various characters when they are first glimpsed. Ostensibly set during a single day, the film is split into five main segments, divided by the five daily Islamic calls to prayer. Although the drama largely takes place upon various roof terraces, and therefore within relatively enclosed spaces, this elevated position allows Allouache to film the topography of the city from above. The film is further punctuated by numerous extra-long shots showing the surrounding urban and maritime landscape.

The focus nevertheless remains upon the figures that interact within these individual spaces. Given that the editing continually shuttles between these characters, it may initially be assumed that their storylines will be woven together within an overarching narrative. No such device proves forthcoming, however, and the action seen in these five different spaces remains unlinked. All that unites these stories is the city in which they are found, and each forms a distinctive part of Allouache's societal mosaic of Algiers. Although historic façades of buildings can frequently be glimpsed in the distance and a large

45 Kahina Amal Djar, "Locating Architecture, Post-Colonialism and Culture: Contextualisation in Algiers," *The Journal of Architecture* 14, no. 2 (2009): 178.

new development provides a setting near the Notre-Dame d’Afrique basilica, Allouache largely turns his cameras away from visuals of grandeur or wealth. Instead, three of the five terraces are comprised of shacks inhabited by people living on the periphery of society, whose predicaments become clearer as the film progresses. The encouraged condemnation of the conditions these people endure is augmented by the use of decor and composition, which vividly convey the materiality of these spaces—from rough-hewn edges of broken concrete walls to rust on makeshift corrugated iron roofs.

Other features of the characterization and dialogue allude to a wide array of problems faced by the city’s population, including corruption, domestic abuse, drug addiction, mental health problems, and misogyny. The legacy of the war of independence and the black decade are explicitly evoked via the characters Uncle Larbi and Aïcha, both of whom seem profoundly damaged by their experiences. Uncle Larbi effectively conveys this legacy with his voice alone, as he cannot leave the low hutch-like dwelling in which his relatives keep him shackled, and the camera never penetrates beyond his secured door. No explanation for his confinement is given aside from vague references to his illness. What is clear, however, is the mental anguish he suffers due to the war of independence. He repeatedly recounts tales of the war to young Layla, all of which end prematurely in explosions of anger and distress. Recalling Mohamed Chouikh’s *Youcef* (1993),⁴⁶ Uncle Larbi seems emotionally and mentally locked in the past and condemned to replay it compulsively in the present, and as a consequence his family insists on his concealment. It is clear from Aïcha’s first appearance that she is similarly troubled. Ill at ease, distant, and uncommunicative, she is equally trapped within her own world, and only later are the events that might explain her demeanor recounted. She was kidnapped by terrorists in the 1990s and raped during her captivity. Although she managed to escape, her resultant pregnancy led her parents to eject her from their family home in Oran, and she traveled to Algiers with her son to seek shelter with her aunt. The respective fates and existential crises of Uncle Larbi and Aïcha provide metaphorical reflections on life within post-colonial Algeria itself, the weight of history and memory within these characters’ lives provoking a perpetual trauma that time cannot abate. By choosing to feature characters indelibly marked by their experiences of these conflicts, Allouache traces further transcultural links between these periods of Algerian history, drawing clear parallels between the enduring legacies each have bequeathed.

The considerable size of the cast of *Les Terrasses* also merits comment, for the number of characters grants the film a choral quality, which furthers the impression that it forms a collective portrait of city life. No fewer than forty

46 *Youcef*, directed by Mohamed Chouikh (Algiers: Entreprise Nationale de Production Audiovisuelle, 1993).

individual roles are listed in the credits, and the attendant spectrum of lives they depict emphasizes the population's diversity, particularly of age, social status, and religion. The range of roles played by women is most striking, however; of Allouache's wider oeuvre, this may be the film that contains the most insight into female experiences. In many ways, contemporary Algiers is depicted as a repressive space for women in which a highly patriarchal society polices female bodies. In this sense, the film points to the enduring legacies of the targeted violence endured by women throughout the black decade and the culture of surveillance and restriction that the Family Code of 1984 wrote into law.⁴⁷ Whether the series of plot developments and twists—including suicide and multiple murders—are needed as the film reaches its denouement, however, remains a moot point. The use of such sensationalist elements risks creating a spectacle for foreign audiences. This “ethnographic voyeurism,”⁴⁸ in Darren Waldron's terms, chimes with the dystopian visions of contemporary Algerian society seen in other post-2000 films such as Tariq Teguia's *Rome plutôt que vous* (Rome rather than you) (2006),⁴⁹ as well as the abovementioned *La Fille de Keltoum* and *Bled Number One*. The vision of the city produced by this film is certainly bleak, and the foreboding menace is only strengthened by the fact that all of this violence occurs within a single day.

Conclusion

Algiers has clearly provided a significant source of inspiration for Allouache throughout his career. His filmography has played a crucial role in constructing and articulating cinematic visions of the city, and his collective oeuvre provides an important commentary on contemporary Algerian society. Surveying these five films set in Algiers, it becomes apparent that there are continuities despite the distance in time and era that separates them. Most importantly, there is a recurrent emphasis upon lived experience within the Algerian capital and the exploration of the challenges of everyday life for its inhabitants. Comedy also forms a hallmark that provides light relief in contrast to darker moments. *Bab el Web* is clearly the exception that proves the rule, although it coheres with films from Allouache's canon set elsewhere, and it is significant that, since the late 2000s, he has largely neglected comedy in favor of a more dramatic and serious tone. In spite of the sizeable political and economic challenges he

47 Zahia Smail Salhi, “Algerian Women, Citizenship, and the ‘Family Code,’” *Gender and Development* 11, no. 3 (2003): 32–33; Ranjana Khanna, *Algeria Cuts: Women and Representation, 1830 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 13.

48 Darren Waldron, “Troubling Return: Femininity and Algeria in *La Fille de Keltoum*,” in *Open Roads, Closed Borders: The Contemporary French-Language Road Movie*, ed. Michael Gott and Thibaut Schilt (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), 74.

49 *Rome plutôt que vous*, directed by Tariq Teguia (Paris: Neffa Films, 2006).

has faced as a filmmaker due to his overt criticism of government power and policy in Algeria,⁵⁰ Allouache is now increasingly using the leverage acquired from his international visibility to articulate a multiplicity of narratives that explore pressing tensions and fissures throughout Algerian society.

As this article has demonstrated—whether via references to the Ottoman and French colonial era in architecture, engagement with colonial settler memory, the importance of post-colonial diasporas, or Algeria’s status within the MENA region—elements of transculturality permeate these films. While Allouache’s oeuvre certainly celebrates the distinctiveness and specificities of Algerian culture, his incorporation of such transcultural elements ensures that his vision illustrates how “no culture is a closed container and . . . cultures are always internally heterogeneous, to a larger or lesser extent.”⁵¹ Furthermore, by applying a broad and fluid definition of the transcultural to his oeuvre, this article has sought to demonstrate the value of such an approach for capturing many of the complexities that are offered by his composite portrait of Algiers. These five iterations of the Mediterranean port city cumulatively offer a powerful example of how, just as “nations and their borders are dynamically changing cultural formations,”⁵² so too is the city space.

50 Will Higbee, “Merzak Allouache: (Self-)Censorship, Social Critique, and the Limits of Political Engagement in Contemporary Algerian Cinema (Algeria),” in *Ten Arab Filmmakers: Political Dissent and Social Critique*, ed. Josef Gugler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 207–208.

51 Tea Sindbæk Andersen, Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, and Astrid Erll, “Introduction: On Transcultural Memory and Reception,” in *The Twentieth Century in European Memory: Transcultural Mediation and Reception*, ed. Tea Sindbæk Andersen and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 15.

52 Abu-Er-Rub et al. “Introduction,” xxvii.