

is not the person. Marion had always suffered so much so bravely but also so privately. Though I knew many of the intimate details of her story, looking back, I now realize that I never heard a word of it from her personally. Quite to the contrary, Marion was one of the most amusing scholars in the field. If you wouldn't laugh within five minutes of a reunion, she would tickle and hug you until you did. Usually after cooking an enormous and insanely delicious meal she would masterfully get to the point of your intellectual concerns and begin to systematize them in an experimental sort of way, with great insight and irony.

The intellect propelled the commitment but also vice versa. Had she been healthy, she would have had a research fellowship to return to post-unification east Berlin. I think it would have been a healing experience for her because Marion still meant so much to her friends and colleagues there. Little did we in Britain or the US know about that circle of scholars, among them Doris Kiliyas, one of the first European translators of Naquib Mahfouz and, of course, also Marion's best friend.

In an effort to find something which Marion published separately from her husband, I came upon her 1993 article "Liberation or Repression? Pan-Arab Nationalism and the Women's Movement in Iraq" (in *Iraq: Power and Society*, eds. Derek Hopwood et al. Ithaca, 1993, pp. 51-73). Depicting Pan-Arab Nationalism (in this case, Iraqi Baathism) as debased populism, something not even measuring up to the standards of fascism, Marion delivers a stunning expose of the regime. Leaving her discussion of the women's movement until well after the mid-point of the article, she depicts the *Rabita*, the first major Iraqi women's organization, as a "communist front organization [which] called for civil and political equality for women, and stressed the close relationship between social change and women's liberation" (p. 64). Under the Baath, the country's women were reorganized into the General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW), which "developed into a Party mouthpiece and became yet another framework of surveillance and oppression... itself an active participant in the subordination of women" (pp. 67, 73). The article ends abruptly as if Marion could not bring herself to write a conclusion to this lament.

As for Marion's life and work, I doubt that this will be the case. Not only does she leave many nearly finished papers but a wonderful husband, and committed sons and son's partner, in the field of Middle East Studies, who can and will edit them beautifully. She also leaves so many students and colleagues all over the world, people who have been deeply influenced by this unforgettable woman, the tragedies, the intellect, the commitment *and* the personality.

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Layla Murād died in December of 1995, leaving behind lively memories of a beautiful actress, a wonderful singer and a "really decent" woman, as an Arab-American friend put it. She was best known for her work in musical films during

the 1940s. They were lavish musicals with romantic stories—*Layla Bint al-Ṣaḥarā'*, *Layla Bint al-Madāris* and *Layla Bint al-Rif*. She worked with accomplished performers including Yūsuf Wahabī, Muḥammad Fawzī, Najīb al-Rihānī, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb and Anwar Wajdī, to whom she was married for a time. Films such as *Qalbī Dalīlī* exemplified the extravagant, *isti'rādī* film style of the time.

Layla was born to a Jewish family of Moroccan extraction. Her grandfather moved the family to Cairo in the late 19th century and settled there. Her father, Zākī Murād, became an accomplished singer and was one of the first performers to establish himself in the realm of commercial recording. His "Hātī lī ya'mma 'aṣfūrī" exemplifies the genre of recording popular in his day. It is a light-hearted, strophic *taqtūqa*, performed with vocal subtlety and accompanied by a small ensemble of creative instrumentalists.

Layla and her siblings Malak, Samīḥa and Munīr all became musicians. Layla began her career in the music halls of Cairo in about 1927, appearing at the famous Sāla Badī'a owned and operated by Badī'a Maṣābnī. She made recordings of songs by well-known composers—Dāwud Ḥuṣnī, who also acted as mentor and vocal coach, and his younger colleague Muḥammad al-Qaṣabjī. By 1932, she could command sufficient attention to fill the Ramsīs Theater in downtown Cairo for what was apparently her first solo concert. A reviewer noted her "moving voice" and "beautiful appearance" and wrote that the audience gave her many curtain calls (Rūz al-Yūsuf No. 223, May 23, 1932, p. 30). Although she is ultimately best-known for her large repertory of light-hearted film songs, in the mid-1930s she also gave concerts of *waṣalāt*, suites of vocal and instrumental pieces and improvisations that were viewed as classical and virtuosic. A concert in 1935, for instance, featured a *waṣla* in the mode ṣābā that concluded with a *dawr* by the famous composer of the 19th century, Muḥammad 'Uthmān (*Al-Mūsīqa* No. 8, September 8, 1935, pp. 37-38).

In the world of musical film, she was an immediate success appearing for the first time opposite Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb in *Yahya 'l-Ḥubb*. Although she was given only two songs to sing, she attracted considerable attention for her charismatic performance and for the delicate lightness of her vocal manipulations. She developed a distinctive presence on screen, yet she was still a good ensemble player, giving space for such strong performers as al-Rihānī and Ismā'īl Yās. She appeared in 28 films and dominated the medium during the 1930s and 1940s. She focused her efforts on film and rarely gave solo concerts.

Although she and her family converted to Islam in 1946, her Jewish identity never left her. She was viewed by some as a kind of fifth-columnist and endured a variety of accusations of partisanship for Israel during the 1940s and 1950s. Some said her religious background was responsible for her retirement from performance in the late 1950s. Much later, in the 1990s and even in the press after her death, the question of her "real" affinity arose, apparently prompting her sons to assure the public in print that she was buried in a Muslim cemetery, not a Jewish one (*Al-Kawākib* No. 2314, January 5, 1995).

For decades she declined to appear in public and gave only rare interviews

over the telephone. She wanted, she said, her audience to remember her as she was. Many of us will do that for years to come. "If you want to hear Layla Murād," recording engineer Sayyid al-Maṣrī told me, "watch her films. You will see the context, the environment of the songs and you will understand what they are about." What follows is a partial list:

Representative Films: *Yaḥya 'l-Ḥubb* (1938), *Layla Bint al-Rif* (1941), *Layla Bint al-Madāris* (1941), *Shuhadā' al-Gharām* (1944), *Layla Bint al-Fuqarā'* (1945), *Qalbī Dalīlī* (1947), *'Anbar* (1948), *Ghazal al-Banāt* (1949), *Ward al-Gharām* (1951), *Layla Bint al-Akābir* (1953).

Compact Discs: *Layla Murād*, volumes 1-2 (Sawt al-Fann CD GSTP 530-531). *Layla Murād* (Baidaphon CD CXG 615). *Cafés Chantants du Caire* [featuring Zākī Murād among others] Les Artistes Arabes Associés 099.

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Communications & Corrections

To the Editor:

In his review of my book, *Picturing Casablanca, Portraits of Power in a Modern City*, David Mednicoff indicated that I write about the "wide range of moving pictures competing for the attention of today's urban arabs" (*MESA Bulletin*, 29: 175, December 1995; my emphasis). A sizeable minority of Casablangans present themselves as Berbers. A small Jewish community also resides there. Images available Cairo or Damascus differ from those that flow through Casablanca, in spite of common media forms and an increase in satellite communications. The reviewer's reaction shows that my efforts to propose alternatives to reductionist ideas of culture and politics have not been entirely understood. My apparent lack of rhetorical skill does not annul the importance of the argument.

Following this line of thought, the reviewer suggests that by studying the reception of French elections in Morocco and, as he fails to note, simultaneously in France) the book is insufficiently focused on "Moroccan" experience. I should also point out that *even when* elections were held (in 1992, after my research was completed) political practices like tracts, televised debates and opinion polls linked discourse and practice to a general notion of how elections ought to be conducted. International "observation" and pressures contributed to the "success"