

The Egyptian Film Industry: Labour, Technology, Mediation

Abstract

This talk is about my upcoming monograph, provisionally entitled *The Egyptian Film Industry: Labor, Technology, Mediation* (AUC Press 2020). This is the first ethnographic study of the Egyptian film industry, examining its labour dynamics, production process, and recent transition to digital cinema. The book fills an important hole in film studies scholarship by giving voice to the creatives and technicians working in the largest and most influential media industry in the Arab world. The Egyptian Film Industry makes two core arguments. First, going against the grain of theoretical interest in “risk”, “uncertainty”, and “hope” in anthropology, I argue that these notions are too imprecise to explain how media producers engage with the future of their activity. I propose that this future is better described as being imponderable: its outcome is known and expected by media producers, but all the courses of action leading onto it are neither knowable nor expected. Thus, media producers try to mediate this imponderability based on various assumptions and using various technological devices. Second, I argue that anthropologists have not been attentive enough to the everyday use of technological devices in creative processes. My book will redress the situation by providing a thorough description of the use of technological devices in Egyptian filmmaking and by endorsing a materialist approach to artistic creation.