

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

**Filmmaking for Raising Awareness: The Plight of the Kuwaiti (Stateless)
Bidoon**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2022

Haidar Alameir

University of Salford, Manchester
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*For **Hussain Ibn Ali**,
the shining light of guidance and the ark of salvation.*



Behind the scenes from ‘*Where Do I Go From Here?*’ (‘WDIGFH?’)

السلام عليكم.



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I thank my dear **mother** for her beloved support. Education and the pursuit of knowledge are highly valued by her. I dedicate my research to my mother. I love her dearly, now and forever.

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Abstract

This practice-based Ph.D. research investigates how drama filmmaking can be used as a tool to raise awareness on social matters, specifically the plight of the Kuwaiti (stateless) Bidoon. The originally scripted and produced 60-minute drama film, *Where Do I Go From Here?* ('WDIGFH?') is the first Ph.D. 60-minute drama film showcasing the plight of this stateless minority within the academic realm. This study utilises both theoretical and practical aspects of filmmaking. The theoretical aspect is concerned with building a literature and film review analysis, to investigate the Bidoon's dilemma and examine how film-techniques along with story design can be utilised to emotionally engage an audience. The practical aspect involves a qualitative ethnographic in-the-field visit to the Bidoon community in Sulabiya, Kuwait, to capture footage, observe, conduct interviews, and scout film locations to facilitate the practical outcome of this research. 'WDIGFH?' is original and visually unique, it combines Social Realism inspired by Ken Loach with animated sketches. Ken Loach's Social Realism was utilised as the framework for creating 'WDIGFH?' which combines elements of a documentary and drama, filmed in real locations, using non-professional actors, and highlighting real social problems within society. Uniting audio and visual platforms, 'WDIGFH?' acts as a visual book/resource which informs viewers about the Bidoon's plight in contemporary Kuwait. Merging animated sketches with live-action not only provided a solution to the challenges faced in the film's production but also assisted in achieving a brand-new visual storyline and approach to Social Realism filmmaking. Strategically playing on the difference between Bidoon and Kuwaitis was the context of the unfolding narrative of 'WDIGFH?', a conscious approach used with the aim of stimulating viewers' empathy forming a sympathetic response and raising awareness. This strategy proved to be successful and revealed features unique to the Kuwaiti context.

The research film *Where Do I Go From Here?* (Haidar Alameir, 2022)

is available to view at the following website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-k9q1vcr2k&t=522s>

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Chapter One



Introduction

Imagine being born invisible. You're alive but can't prove you exist. You want to learn, but no school will take you. You want to be useful but aren't allowed to work. When you're sick, the doctor ignores you. When you fall in love, they won't marry you. You don't have children for fear they will be invisible too. You're sure you are a human, but have no human rights. And when you die, there is no proof that you ever existed (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2014).

A sense of belonging to a nation-state is an aspect of identity that is often taken for granted since the dawn of modernity. Embodying a sense of belonging to a state has been linked by research to an array of socio-economic and political concepts and self-understandings of social identity (Anderson, 2006). However, statelessness is a phenomenon that affects the lives of millions of people around the world (UNHCR, 2011). Moreover, the idea of being *without* a state, in many countries, translates to a perceived void in one's social identity. This social stigma seems to be corroborated with stateless people facing a number of associated pitfalls. For instance, having no legal identity often means a stateless person cannot access governmental services and partake in political affairs (UNHCR, 2017). One stateless community which engenders much of the above is the 'Bidoon'¹ community of Kuwait, a minority group that faces routine marginalisation and discrimination in all aspects of social, economic, and political life (Alnajjar, 2001). This context which is coloured by oppression and discrimination serves as the point of departure for my research regarding the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

This practice-based research project aims to facilitate the production of a 60-minute drama film that can be used as a tool to raise awareness and incite discussion on an important issue in society – the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. Although one might think that the sole obligation of a drama film (or any other type) is to strictly entertain its viewers, this project aligns itself with a tradition of filmmaking that goes beyond furnishing its audience with mere escapism and distraction. This film uses its platform as a means of educating and raising awareness of matters that concern society (Lay, 2002). British filmmaker Ken Loach, renowned for his approach of Social Realism to cinema, typifies this political commitment: often using his films

¹ Bidoon is an Arabic word which translates to 'without'. There are several alternative spellings for "Bidoon", such as "Bidun" and "Bedoon", and it is not always capitalised. I have chosen to use "Bidoon" throughout this study, as it is the spelling of the UK Home Office.

to disseminate political messages to his viewers, about social issues concerning the working-class, and their marginalisation in contemporary British society (Lay, 2002). In the same vein, my objective of shooting an original 60-minute drama film, titled *Where Do I Go From Here?* (*'WDIGFH?'*) and screening it to the broader Kuwaiti public aims at raise awareness about the plight of the Bidoon community in Kuwait. To pursue this objective, and ensure the film achieved its ulterior political aim, much thought was given to planning the preparation and production of my film, *'WDIGFH?'* – which I discuss in more detail below.

My interest in the subject of the Kuwaiti Bidoon surges from my concern that despite recent social progress and advancements in human welfare, there are still communities of people that are marginalised, taken advantage of, and erased. The Kuwaiti Bidoon community is one such example. On a more personal level, I experienced prejudice and racism during my childhood and adolescence. I do not claim that my experience is similar to those of the Bidoon, but I know that it is a platform that fuelled my sincere efforts throughout this project, and still does. My feelings of enthusiasm, passion, indignation, and at times bewilderment were all channelled towards this endeavour. One viewer's response after watching *'WDIGFH?'* the viewer stated that:

You should always take a stance for it no matter the case. It is not enough to reveal your stance only on some occasions. Their suffering is not a seasonal event, it is a daily suffering. Efforts must be made to defend the Bidoon. If you do not spend time researching what they go through, then they are not a priority, whatever you do (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

To me, the Kuwaiti Bidoon is a priority.

Difference; a personal account of an untold story

I grew up in England between the ages of three and fifteen. When I was five years old, my mother moved us to the North-western city of Lancaster, where she would pursue her higher education. It was in Lancaster that my experiences of racism and prejudice were most vivid. I still remember my first experience of being bullied. I was nine years old at the time, walking home from school, when I heard the word 'Paki' for the first time. It was shouted at me from across the road. I did not understand what it meant then, but after it was followed by a series of familiar swear words, I knew that *it* was bad. A few weeks later, my bullying in school started, and I began to hear that word more often. Those experiences were the worst moments

of my life and instilled in me a deep feeling that White people were superior to myself, a 'Paki'. During those difficult formative years, I found refuge and comfort in watching films. A world of possibilities and understanding was created for me, especially when the protagonist was facing a moral predicament. I was able to relate to such film-characters. On one of the occasions when my father – who was living in Kuwait at the time – visited us in Lancaster, he purchased a tape of the film *Mississippi Burning* (1988) by Alan Parker. The film, set in the Deep South of the United States, dealt with the topics of racism and racial inequality. I remember a scene that depicted a Black man drinking from a separate water fountain from White people. This film impacted my life as it was the first time that I saw racism addressed on screen. *Mississippi Burning* (1988) raised my awareness on issues of racism experienced in the United States and made me want to make films about oppressed people and cultures to raise awareness of their conditions.

Years later, we moved back to Kuwait. I was happy because I thought that my own mistreatment and bullying would be left behind. I was indeed wrong. After moving back to Kuwait, I attended a mixed British School. Two months into school, I was bullied by a group of Kuwaiti boys. They started swearing in Arabic. Perhaps my Northern accent triggered their anger. Although I did not fully understand what they said, I was upset and heart-broken to be a victim of bullying once again. Again, I took refuge in films. Films not only provided magical entertainment but also educated me on issues that other people faced as they were somewhat similar to what I was facing. Due to this, I decided to pursue an educational course in filmmaking. I completed my BA in film studies in 2007. I received a digital camera as a graduation gift and was determined to use the skills I had developed to create something that made a difference. In 2015, I pursued Higher Education to further my skills and understanding of the film space. I continued with this in my pursuit of my Ph.D. studies, and with it, the opening presented itself to make a film about the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

Had it not been for my friend, who took me for a drive to the outskirts of Kuwait City, I would have remained ignorant of the conditions of the Kuwaiti Bidoon, as many other Kuwaiti citizens are. That was my first encounter with the sight of hundreds of dilapidated metal shacks, unskillfully designed, and arranged in seemingly random lines. To me, they resembled metal storage containers. I was shocked to learn that those shacks were how many members of Bidoon community resided. My friend remarked jokingly: 'If I were you, I would not go there, they might kidnap you!' Saddened by my experience that day, I began my research on the

Bidoon people. I was eager to learn more about them and their status and condition in Kuwait. I sought to understand the historical roots behind the term. The prospect turned into reality when I initiated the work on my Ph.D. research. But there remained important issues that needed addressing differently and creatively. As a film student, I realised that there was an important untold story, a hidden face which had to be brought to light. This is when I decided to invest in producing a drama film to raise awareness concerning the Bidoon's plight. This is the primary objective that I wanted to fulfil with regards to a group of Kuwaiti people officially rendered stateless since 1961.

Research question and aim

To pursue my research, I propose one main question to guide me throughout this study. I ask:

- How can I produce a fictional film that raises awareness on an issue that is highly contentious, and one that has been widely shaped by decades of official/dominant narratives, as well as policies dictating the legal status of the Bidoon?

To help pursue this question, I pose these two sub-questions: The first and primary sub-question channels my efforts to look deeply into the technical aspects of producing a film on the Kuwaiti Bidoon and the unfolding narrative. The second sub-question examines how far a film such as '*WDIGFH?*' can raise the awareness of the viewers on the issues related to the Bidoon's lives.

1. How can I produce a film on the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon that emotionally engages viewers?
2. How is viewers' awareness heightened by viewing this film, '*WDIGFH?*'

In-depth evaluation and assessment of contemporary Kuwaiti society reveals that the Bidoon have been denied citizenship since 1959 in one of the world's wealthiest states (Kennedy, 2016). My aim is to shoot a drama film; a visual resource that can help raise awareness on, and document, the state of the Bidoon in Kuwait. Although my objective seems to be straightforward, it is pursued with the knowledge that the artefact produced, the film, is original and one of its kind on the subject of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. As such, a benchmark that I can fall

onto within this context does not exist. This makes my project more challenging and exciting. I embark on this project espousing a practice-based research approach within the realm of filmmaking.

Significance of making ‘*WDIGFH?*’ A road to inclusion through filmmaking

I agree with Goodman (2004) that films contribute largely to opening the minds of individuals, guiding their future thoughts, as well as actions, thereby changing the world as a whole. My efforts in making this film were enhanced/uplifted by its significance in discussing real-life matters, educating viewers on unfamiliar issues, and, perhaps even, inspiring future researchers to engage in new studies on issues of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. Filmmaking is not a simple task; a filmmaker must create sympathetic characters to involve the viewer and use the camera-shot to emotionally engage the audience. Without a background in film theory, a filmmaker may lack the essentials required to connect an audience with the narrative (Crittenden, 1996). Drama films act as a tool for people to share cultural experiences of different kinds. People also learn from watching films about other cultures and are educated in various subjects related to the experiences and histories of others. This is exactly what I envisaged for this film. Considerable research was conducted and implemented into the screenplay of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ to make the viewers aware of the problems faced by the Bidoon people. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is of great benefit in raising awareness of the Kuwaiti public on the Bidoon’s plight. It is also of vast importance in creating an avenue and ascertaining the inclusion of concerned people and their issues in the process of filmmaking; something that was rarely done with regards to the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

The following section introduces my study and filmmaking as practice-based research and highlights the benefits of such a research approach. In the section, I describe the reasons for choosing practice-based research, the relationship between the varied elements of the thesis, the type of new knowledge this thesis creates, and the reasons why producing a film is decisive and crucial for the development of this knowledge.

Filmmaking as practice-based research

Candy (2006) defines practice-based research as an “original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice” (p. 1). The claims of originality and contribution to the existing knowledge in a doctoral thesis may be established through creative means in the form of exhibitions, performances, digital media,

music, and designs (p. 1). Bulley and Şahin (2021) support the definition provided by Candy (2006) and further state that the term “refers to research conducted within practice settings” (p. 24). Practice-based research is applicable in different fields such as filmmaking, medical or health sciences, creative arts, design, and education (Candy, 2006). According to Nanda and Wingler (2020) practice-based research “relies on agile and nimble methods to investigate, evaluate, and apply research in project work” (p.11). Therefore, in practice-based research, the researcher needs to be proactive in performing the tasks and responding to the evolving situations.

Furthermore, practice-based research requires the ability to evaluate appropriate methodologies, mainly because methods such as observations, space analytics, surveys, and literature reviews need to be executed in short periods of time (Nanda and Wingler, 2020). Moreover, practice-based research allows the use of interviews, and surveys, among others so that the relationship between the initial intent of the project or task and the eventual outcome can be identified and assessed. My interest to conduct an original investigation is based on a practice approach and setting utilising proactive methods to fulfil the aim of this research project, namely producing a drama film which raises awareness on the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

Filmmaking is part of a broader practice research paradigm, which is known as practice-based, practice-led, and creative practice research. Practice-led research “implies a prolonged engagement with a specific research question or a suite of interconnected questions” (Green, 2007, p. 9). On the other hand, creative practice research is described as the “means to develop new insights and understanding through deliberate inquiry” (Niedderer and Roworth-Stokes, 2007, p. 10). These approaches to filmmaking research fall under the broader practice research paradigm. I follow and use the term practice-based research throughout my thesis.

In recent years, practice-based research has been used extensively in the filmmaking industry across the world. Ruby (2005) asserts that practice-based research is highly applicable within the field of filmmaking and thus, it is used in ethnographic films so that detailed information concerning human activities can be identified and presented. This method of research is largely used by anthropologists for filming different types of people such as criminals, victims, police, tourists, priests, sailors, peasants, and villagers (McDougall, 2019; Møhl, 2011).

Films are produced as research outputs such as documentaries, fictions, and in hybrid forms. Researchers using filmmaking as a primary research method prove that it is a successful method for “production practices, techniques, modes and genres used in cinema, television and online” (Kerrigan and Callaghan, 2016, p. 1). At the same time, films enable researchers to use a diverse range of texts, sounds, images, creative gestures, intuitive work, and conscious work synchronic to the editing and filming moments (Berkeley, Wood and Glisovic, 2016). Although films can be documentary, fiction, or drama, filmmakers can portray the story in the form of an essay by using pictures and images and this allows the transfer of knowledge through the film to the audiences. Different technical tools of filmmaking create possibilities for filmmakers to expand the documentation of texts, visuals, and images within practice-based research. This creative display enables viewers to understand the work and interpret it (Sourdis and Lucas, 2019).

Furthermore, films are an effective pedagogical tool that allow filmmakers to provide knowledge about different concepts as well as theories, for example, in a documentary style while facilitating the use of text and commentary (Champoux, 2004). Such documentaries add extensive real or factual knowledge educating people and raising their awareness. Within the academic setting, Tobin and Anderson (2012) found that a practice-based Ph.D. in filmmaking involves extensive research, which is valid for this particular study. Screenwriting doctoral students, for example, can develop an effective screenplay applying extensive practice-based research. For me, and for this particular research study, practice-based research was crucial, and enabled me to often reflect on my process and the effectiveness of my methods, thereby guiding me to new insights.

Advantages of filmmaking for practice-based research

There are varied advantages of practice-based research within the realm of filmmaking. A report from the Filmmaking Research Network (2018) states that practice-based research leads to enhanced transparency in filmmaking and distinguishes individual work from industry practices. Further, it better supports the creation of the film’s narrative. Above all, “film genres, such as documentary, lend themselves to practice methodologies where lived experiences can be filmed, to foreground truth and authenticity” (Filmmaking Research Network, 2018, p. 7). Through the making of the creative artefact, different forms of research can be performed. For instance, a cinematographer and the screenwriter might collaborate to conduct research

concerning their collaborative practices while filmmaking (Filmmaking Research Network, 2018). Anyanwu (2018) also states that practice-based research enables the improvement of audio and visual elements as well as graphics. This is highly beneficial, as it creates scope for young talent to further improve their skills in filmmaking. Others assert that practice-based research is extremely beneficial for documentary films; it enables the entire filmmaking procedure to be in an interview-like approach (Champoux, 2004).

Academic researchers adopting practice-based approach produce knowledge highly significant to filmmakers. Practice-based research is noted to produce new creative screen work and guidelines for engaging in creative work rather than traditional one (Kerrigan, Verdon and Aquilia, 2018). It also leads to improved analysis and expression of the situation, thus having more impact on people (Sandercock and Attali, 2010). Filmmaking practice-based research is effective in social research positively influencing community engagement and capturing the aesthetic attribute of the situation, which in turn, enables attracting the audience (Kerrigan, Verdon and Aquilia, 2018). Further, and according to Gough-Brady (2020), it connects theoretical knowledge of the work with practice and experience. Hence, allowing the assessment of appropriate body language, facial expression, and intonation, which can be used creatively by the characters to positively influence the audience, and make the film successful. Sounds and images, can also be used creatively to better express ideas. Thus, it largely enhances communication between filmmakers and the audience (Gough-Brady, 2020).

‘WDIGFH?’ as practice-based research

This research aims to raise people’s awareness on the Kuwaiti Bidoon’s plight through filmmaking which documents the experiences of the Bidoon people. By informing people about the existing inequality and exclusion of the Bidoon as well as political issues, and social structure in Kuwait, the hearts and minds of people can be reached. I hope that my film does reach and act as an influential tool influencing future change. Searching extensively on the Kuwaiti Bidoon subject, I can say that this practice-based research and product is the first to be produced at a Ph.D. level and as a 60-minute drama film about the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. I therefore envisage that this drama film, in a creative manner, presents the Bidoon’s plight in an audiovisual format. In fact, the film acts as a *visual book* which stands on its own (Goodman, 2004). It stresses the importance of social identity for the protagonist, Hamood, who is born in Kuwait, shares its culture, but is not considered to be a Kuwaiti citizen. This

visual book shows how statelessness annuls the family structure. It also reflects on the unsympathetic Kuwaiti public, viewing the Bidoon as outsiders who forge their documentation to gain social benefit and who protest to obtain Kuwaiti nationality. '*WDIGFH?*' portrays the Bidoon context, employing filmmaking techniques, to tell a fictional narrative about the Bidoon's plight in contemporary Kuwait. Thus, facts pertaining to Bidoon are delivered emotionally through filmmaking techniques. This drama film is an ethnographic study of a community in Kuwait mixing both fictional drama and real observational footage which adds a sense of realism.

Moreover, Social Realism filmmaking was selected as the appropriate genre for '*WDIGFH?*' The concept of Social Realism, when used in filmmaking, mostly constitutes the ideas of British filmmaker Ken Loach. Although the images screened in films might not be the full reality, they can be regarded as authentic images, which assist in communicating the message of the film to the viewers. Social Realism and the limitations faced in the filmmaking process will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

Practice-based research is the best and most suitable choice to fulfil my goal. As this thesis unfolds, it will become apparent that the entire data collection outcome of this research served the story narrative as well as the visual and sound aspects and techniques of the film. This thesis creates a new type of specialised knowledge through visuals and artwork. The artworks, visuals, and texts presented in my film relay a specialised knowledge - theoretical, practical, and factual of the Bidoon community in Kuwait. For example, viewers acquire knowledge about the social inequality faced by the Bidoon community in Kuwait and the history behind it. They also learn about their exclusion from the wider community. Viewers also obtain general knowledge, such as facts about people's daily lives, experiences of struggle, pride, joy and perseverance. By portraying these humane attributes, '*WDIGFH?*'s objective to raise awareness of the Kuwaiti Bidoon experience is (hoped to be) achieved. The political system in Kuwait and historical facts are also portrayed utilising filmmaking and practice-based approaches to research. It is also hoped that critical knowledge is developed by applying creativity, to create an impact that has the potential to instigate societal change. Seeing the whole artefact metaphorically, or even parts of it as metaphors, enables such creation - to think beyond places, people, and relationships; beyond what meets the eyes. Creating awareness is a worthwhile endeavour that could lead to change (McDougall, 2019).

In relation to the above point and most importantly, this practice-based research offers/attains two major contributions that I consider to be new knowledge that I am honoured to be adding to existing body of knowledge within the filmmaking realm. The first is employing/appropriating Ken Loach's Social Realism style of/approach to filmmaking, a Western British cinema movement, within the context of (non-Western) Kuwait to attend to a highly sensitive area which concerns the Kuwaiti (stateless) Bidoon. The second contribution is how I creatively merged animation with live-action, thus, created and started a new and original hybrid, an innovative avenue, something that has never been witnessed in Loach's Social Realism films, and could be pursued further in filmmaking. This will be revealed as the discussion unfolds.

To reiterate so far, this piece of research is a novel and genuine attempt, within the academic realm. It is intended that this film stands on its own as a visual book on the Kuwaiti Bidoon, by means of merging visual art, texts, and images (Kerrigan and Callaghan, 2016a; Alqadi, 2015). Employing an ethnographic approach to data collection based on practice-based research techniques a 60-minute drama film is produced that enriches existing academic work on the Kuwaiti Bidoon. This film visualises the life of the Bidoon community, seeks to raise awareness and helps the viewer to better understand the essence of their lived experience. Thus, it is not difficult to deduce that producing a film through a practice-based method is decisive to enhance awareness; aware individuals are able to better deal with their situations/lives.

The role of each Chapter

I have organised this thesis in five key Chapters. This Chapter, constitutes my personal story and reasoning behind the making of my film, '*WDIGFH?*' Further, it elaborates on the importance of practice-based research, defines the research question and objective and the concepts of nationality, citizenship and statelessness, significant to this research, and ends with my personal stance towards the Kuwaiti Bidoon. Chapter Two: A Research Approach to Experience, follows with the methodology and examines the methods used in conducting this research. The justification for the usage of qualitative design and inductive strategy along with ethnographic research, and Social Realism approaches are presented. Therefore, Chapter Two furnished the methodological grounds needed to understand the ethos of this research project and its buildup. Then I move on to Chapter Three: A Slice of Life, where a review of the Kuwaiti Bidoon population, their history and lives are discussed. It also offers an in-depth

assessment of films of a similar genre and investigates the related techniques used for making ‘*WDIGFH?*’ to emotionally engage the viewers concerning the Bidoon’s plight. In Chapter Four: ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Disseminated, I examine the screening results of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ This Chapter further explains the limitations faced while conducting the data collection, mostly during the pandemic of COVID-19. I conclude with Chapter Five: Conclusion, providing an integrated and comprehensive summary of the collected, evaluated, and interpreted results, thereby addressing the research question, and assessing to what extent respective objective has been accomplished. I turn now to briefly discuss the terms that will assist in understanding the discussion on Kuwaiti Bidoon’s history, struggle, and claims.

Nationality, citizenship, and statelessness; important terms

It is important to understand the terms nationality, citizenship and statelessness since they are all related to the Bidoon’s case and important within the thesis. The Bidoon residing in Kuwait are Arabs, speak the Arabic language, were born and have lived in Kuwait, thus share Kuwait’s culture and social identity. However, since the Bidoon lack nationality and citizenship documents, they are therefore stateless. Nationality, on one hand, refers to the status of an individual being a part of a particular nation. On the other hand, the term ‘citizenship’ signifies not only the position of a citizen but also the status of residing within a particular country (UNHCR, 2005). Therefore, nationality is a term that is often used to describe a person’s ethnicity, while citizenship is a legal term. Citizenship is needed to access governmental services (Assal, 2011). In this respect, and in relation to the condition of statelessness of the Bidoon in the Kuwaiti context, a stateless person is an individual that is not recognised as a citizen under the laws of any country (UNHCR, 2011).

Nationality

The term nationality, a derivative of the word ‘nation’, has a subtler meaning in comparison to the concept of citizenship. It is a key concept in political science which entertains the corresponding ideology of nationalism. To understand the concept of nationality, it is important to relate it to the concept of ‘Nation’. Guibernau (1996) defines the term nation as “a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself” (p.47). Similarly, Smith (1991) underscores the concept as a human population sharing a culture, a history, an economy, legal rights, a territory, and obligations for

its people. This concept of nation is used in both academic and non-academic vocabulary even though it does not have a single definition. Here, 'Nationality' refers to the legal bond shared between an individual and a state. Thus, leading to the emergence of both the rights, as well as the duties of the concerned individual and the state as well. This legal bond is commonly known as 'citizenship'. In most of the writing on 'nationality' and 'citizenship', Van Waas (2014) explains, the terms are used mutually. In Kuwait, people who lack a nationality document (or *jinsiya* - Arabic translation) have no legal bond to the State and are referred to as the Bidoon (without *jinsiya*). Therefore, they are labelled as illegal citizens and are denied citizenship rights such as political, economic, and social claims.

Citizenship

Citizenship, in its modern form, can only exist in a corresponding state (Heater, 2004). It is the foremost legal relationship shared between an individual and a state, which is certified by an appropriate document, for example, a passport. The term 'state' encapsulates concepts of citizenship and civil rights, where 'citizenship' can be defined as a legal bond between an individual and a state. Citizenship grants a person rights, duties, and privileges (Abowitz and Harnish 2006). Without citizenship, "a person cannot register to vote in the country in which he/she is living, cannot apply for a travel document, [and] cannot register to marry" (UNHCR, 2005, p. 6). Citizenship is belonging to a certain state. Being a legal member of a state provides a citizen with "a sense of national identity and belonging to a group that shares the same norms and values" (Jaghai, 2017, p. 8). Without citizenship, the Bidoon face difficulty acquiring documentation needed for their daily essentials and thus face difficulty accessing governmental services and cannot participate in legislative and social affairs.

Statelessness

According to the UNHCR (2011), stateless people "are among the most vulnerable in the world... [they] are often at increased risk of discrimination, abuse, detention or expulsion... they may not be able to own property, open a bank account, get married legally... poverty becomes an integral part of a stateless life" (p. 25). The lack of citizenship, or statelessness, is defined in article [1] of the 1954 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It also explains the term 'stateless person' as "a person who is *not* considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law" (UNHCR, 1954, p. 6). Statelessness bears concrete negative implications: individuals are denied access to the rights envisioned by specific citizenship. In the 1985 court case of *Perez versus Brownell*, citizenship is defined as a "man's basic right, for

it is nothing less than the right to have rights. Remove this priceless possession and there remains a stateless person, disgraced and degraded in the eyes of his countrymen” (Cornell Law School, 1992). Statelessness has a detrimental impact, not only on the individuals but also on their families, as well as their communities. The absence of nationality can create severe obstructions to people’s enjoyment and accessibility to a wider range of services and other rights. This contributes largely to the effective management of the ideas of poverty and marginalisation, thereby leading to forced displacement (Nonnenmacher and Cholewinski, 2014, p. 247).

Further, there are varied factors, which can be considered as the major causes of statelessness, such as discrimination, conflicts, gaps in the laws of nationality, territory transfer, development of new nations, absence of birth registrations, and denationalisation. Discrimination, in this case, is normally found to be on the grounds of language, race, gender, religion, and ethnicity. Moreover, the legal conflicts or existing gaps in the nationality laws not only contribute to excluding people from the overall proceedings but also in leaving them stateless. For example, “a country may not grant nationality based on birth alone but based on descentance from a national” (UNHCR, 2020, para 5). Defining the term statelessness is important to this research as it portrays the struggles of the Bidoon people living in Kuwaiti society. Since the Bidoon are stateless, they lack legal identification, and are denied documentation needed for daily activities and have no political rights. More importantly, since Kuwait operates on the *jus sanguinis* policy of naturalisation, Kuwaiti nationality is only transferred from the Kuwaiti father onto his offspring. Since Bidoon do not descend from legally identified Kuwaiti fathers, they cannot obtain the Kuwaiti nationality, thus lack citizenship rights. As such ‘Bidoon,’ as a condition and way of life, is inherited.

My personal position on the Bidoon’s plight

I convey my personal position towards the Kuwaiti Bidoon enlightened by my fieldwork and data collection and interviews with Bidoon and Kuwaitis and the readings I immersed myself in for this research. Accordingly, to simplify and evaluate the legal status of the Bidoon here, I allow myself to use the different groups of the Bidoon to state my opinion. To elucidate these nuances, I have illustrated the five different categories of Bidoon in the below graph, which (again) mainly draws on my own process of primary and secondary data collection.

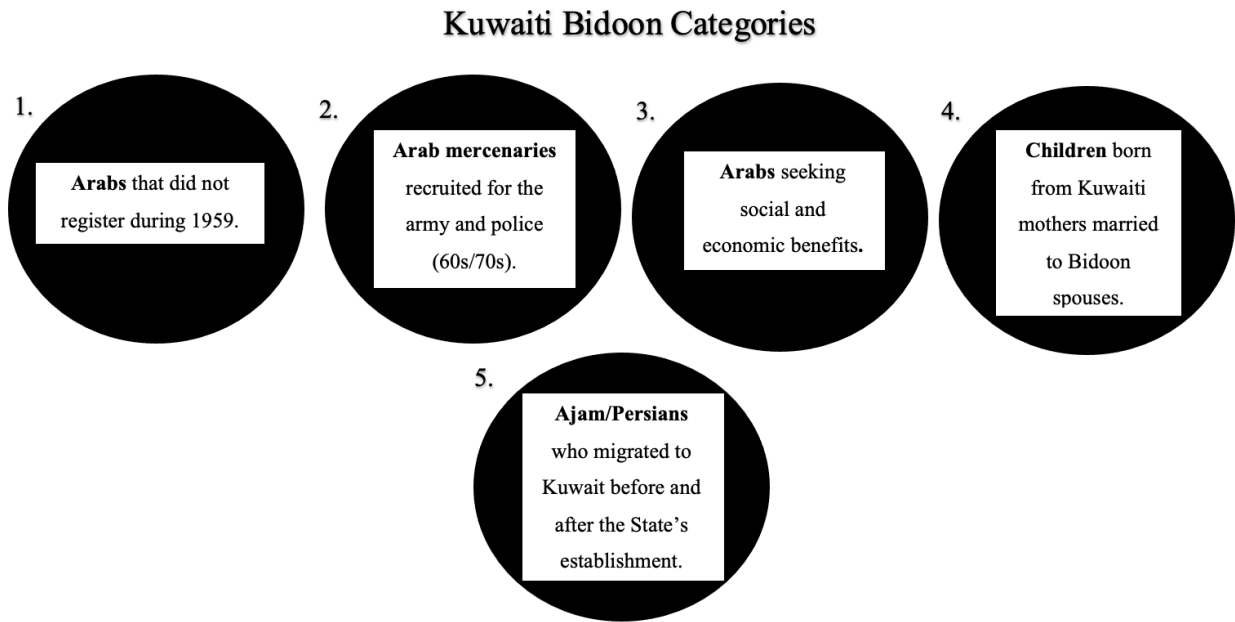


Figure 1: A visual illustration of the categories of the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

The first discernible group of Bidoon (illustrated in part 1 of the diagram) denote the Arabs that chose not to/neglected to register as national citizens during the establishment of the newfound Kuwaiti State in 1959. Had this group of people partaken in this administrative process, this sub-category of Bidoon would not have existed. As such, my stance on this particular group is that they should immediately be incorporated into the fabric of Kuwaiti society and regarded as naturalised citizens (Shiblak, 2009).

The existence of a second discernible group of stateless Bidoon can be traced through history to the actions of the Kuwaiti government during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. In an effort to build the State's security forces, the government invited many Arabs to join the military and to take up residence in Kuwait, with a promise of eventually acquiring national citizenship. Despite having displayed such loyalty to the State, and having served in its military, the promise of citizenship was ultimately never granted by the Kuwaiti government (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2000). Thus, my stance on this particular group is that they, too, should be immediately naturalised and repaid for their services to the State.

Group three signifies a more complex sub-category of Bidoon, comprising Arabs that were once nationals of neighbouring countries to Kuwait. To appraise this group's claim to nationality, some further historical exposition and contextualisation is required. This group can

trace their presence in Kuwait back to the 1960s/70s, when they flocked to Kuwait from neighbouring areas due to the State's flourishing economy and free governmental services. Thus, this particular group arrived in Kuwait to benefit from the ameliorated services offered there (Eldemerdash, 2015). Yet many of these Arabs were not stateless, and actively severed their connection to their home-countries by destroying documentation and simply claiming to be Bidoon in the hopes of being naturalised by the State of Kuwait and benefitting from its social and economic privileges. This particular sub-category's presence was made known to me through my in-field data collection. Specifically, their presence was introduced by participants in ethnographic interviews with members of the Bidoon community and Kuwaiti citizens, both of which mentioned the presence of a group of Arabs who purport to have been present in Kuwait during the 1959 registration process, and to have not registered as Kuwaiti nationals (akin to the verifiable claims of group 1). Regrettably, the presence of this group of spurious Bidoon has provided the Kuwaiti government with ammunition to paint the entire Bidoon community in a negative light, and to represent them as opportunists, merely trying to leach off the State's social and economic privileges. As such, they provide a basis for much of the marginalising stereotypes and negative sentiment that beset the Bidoon community today.

Before offering my personal evaluation of this particular sub-category, I would like to remark on the broader context of Kuwaiti nationality and citizenship. It must be noted that there are cases of Kuwaiti nationals who have obtained their nationality through systemic bribery (Gulf News, 2021). Moreover, this broader context was revealed to me through ethnographic exposure to sources (who have chosen to remain anonymous) in the Kuwaiti community. More anecdotally, a friend of mine informed me that his colleague at work, who was a Kuwaiti national, had been stripped of his Kuwaiti nationality, due to the fact that his grandfather (who was originally Syrian) illegally obtained his Kuwaiti nationality through the falsification of documents and bribery. In this sense, it is quite possible that many contemporary Bidoon's claims to nationality are predicated on falsified information provided by their parents or grandparents (and they may not be aware that their parents were originally migrants from neighbouring countries). Moreover, the children of these Arab migrants are forced to suffer as a result, having been born in Kuwait and identifying with Kuwaiti culture. The above factors make it difficult to provide an evaluation on this specific sub-category of Bidoon. Ultimately, my stance on this group of Arabs is that they should *not* be awarded Kuwaiti nationality as they have wrongly claimed to be Bidoon, when they are in fact nationals of neighbouring Arab countries. However, I do recommend that the children of these Arab migrants be given full

citizenship rights and access to governmental services (medical, education, health and employment)—on the provision that they were born on Kuwaiti soil and they do not maintain legal ties to their grandparents' country of origin. This will allow them to live their lives without obstacles and be regarded as equal citizens in the legal context of Kuwait.

The fourth group of Bidoon denotes the children of Kuwaiti mothers who are married to Bidoon individuals. Regrettably, Kuwaiti mothers cannot bestow their Kuwaiti nationality onto their children, due to the gender discrimination enshrined in national law (Kuwait Nationality Law (KNL), 1959). As such, and by a law preventing women from passing their nationality to their children, the State is effectively adding to and legitimising the creation of stateless people, for reasons that are archaic and rooted in gender-based discrimination. I believe that men and women should be treated as equals under the law. Therefore, I believe the Kuwaiti nationality should be passed on by both genders. In my opinion, this group of stateless people should not even exist in the first place. Thus, my stance on this group is that they too should be immediately naturalised.

The fifth group of Bidoon belongs to the Ajam (Persians) who migrated to Kuwait pre- and post-the State's establishment in 1961 (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1995). I have two stances for this particular group. First, the Ajam who migrated prior the State's establishment should be immediately naturalised. Second, the children of Ajam who migrated after the State's establishment should be granted full citizenship rights and access to governmental services (medical, education, health and employment) - with the same provisions mentioned in group three.

The above discussion also foregrounds a key point that warrants a mention: the longer it takes to resolve the Bidoon's plight, the more the Bidoon population will increase and the more it will inevitably suffer. Had the Kuwaiti government taken the initiative to resolve the issues in the 1960s to 2000s, it is highly likely that the Bidoon's plight would have been resolved. The simplicity of the problem's resolution is perhaps best captured by a succinct quote obtained from an interview with a member of the Bidoon during my field visit to Sulabiya, who stated that 'I don't even want Kuwaiti nationality, all I want is a [Kuwaiti] civil identification card. Then I can live my life without obstacles and harassment' (2018, Bidoon interviewee E). His testimony captures the unfortunate reality of statelessness and the effects it has on the human condition.

Although I started explaining my position towards the Bidoon by referring to five main categories, and although this was carried out for simplification and legal evaluation of their status, I do believe that every and each Bidoon has the right to be given the chance to argue their case and defend their position before any official action is taken.

To summarise and to stress, the objective of my Ph.D. research was to shoot an original fictional drama film about the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. The Film then could be used as a visual book/resource to help raise awareness informing viewers about the Kuwaiti Bidoon. With regards to the previous point, it is important to stress that the total number of viewers who visited '*WDIGFH?*' YouTube films' page was 3,791 during data collection. And a good number of those (569) viewers, completed the online questionnaire or parts of it (as discussed in Chapter four). My study offers a number of aspects that lead to specialised knowledge, to begin with, my in-the-field investigation provides comprehensive material on the methods I utilised during my ethnographic data collection. In addition, my research analysis details how I merged ethnographic with Social Realism filmmaking, and how I utilised Ken Loach's techniques to add authenticity to my film. To reiterate, this Ph.D. study is about raising awareness of the Kuwaiti Bidoon's plight, and the way I have pursued this investigation is through triggering viewers' emotions. Hence, the scope of this Ph.D. research does not examine the types of emotions conjured. I want to engage my viewers, assimilating a 'Loachian' [Ken Loach] approach to spark their emotions, through my film's narrative and thus inform them of the Bidoon's social/political life.

Chapter Two



Methodology: A Research Approach to Experience

This study makes use of a qualitative research design and approach with the aim of attaining a realistic view on the Kuwaiti Bidoon, that ultimately facilitates the production of a drama film reflecting their lived realities and experiences. By performing a qualitative study, which includes a complementary practical research outcome, it is hoped that the main question of the research is fully addressed. And as a result, the academic realm will be enriched with a visual outcome focusing on the issues related to Bidoons' lives. I will mainly use an ethnographic approach to research within a Social Realism theoretical framework to filmmaking. I proceed first to give an overall view of qualitative research. I then discuss what ethnographic research is and how it is conducted in the field of filmmaking. I present an in-depth examination of Ken Loach's Social Realism and how it was appropriated to fit my project of making '*WDIGFH?*'

Scholars note that irrespective of where the research is conducted, a scientific or art environment, subjective bias can always be portrayed as a threat to objective outcomes (Galdas, 2017). They have also pointed that within a qualitative research context "researchers bring to each study their experiences, ideas, prejudices and personal philosophies, which if accounted for in advance of the study, enhance the transparency of possible research bias" (Smith and Noble, 2014, p. 100). Hence, a qualitative research approach allows me the benefit of investing my personal experiences and views on one hand, while focusing on the lived experiences of the subjects (Bidoon people).

In qualitative research, the methods applied make use of non-numerical data, such as text, video footage and photographs or audio recordings which are generally collected on-the-field using field notes, diaries, and interviews (Schensul and LeCompte, 2013). This type of research design emphasises the use of a multimethod strategy, while researchers work on obtaining in-depth inference of the social reality of individuals as well as groups of people. Qualitative data is also collected in the forms of texts and words, the techniques of sound recordings, photographs, and videos. The gathered data is effectively assessed and interpreted by means of, for example, thematic analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and content analysis (Schensul and LeCompte, 2013). Although qualitative studies are accused of possessing a higher range of bias, Galdas (2017) argues that the unique value of qualitative research is that

it enhances objective and opinion-free neutrality, and even serves as a tool for enhancing the impact measurement through the evidence, as well as through a proper decision-making preview.

Qualitative research design includes interviews and ethnographic approaches for exploring experiences, motivations, beliefs and/or views of the individuals on the specific aspects of the study. To maintain effective implementation of the qualitative research design, it is indeed important to bring about a considerable reduction in the idea of subjectivity, which further necessitates the employment of an academically rigorous approach. In comparison to qualitative research that might at times be considered less objective, quantitative research simplifies the reality by overlooking variables that might prove to be crucial for deriving the results and drawing inferences (Mulhall, 2003). In light of the aim of this research, and in order to reflect a candid view on the experiences and the lives of the Kuwaiti Bidoon, their motivations, aspirations, dreams, insights, and their feelings, it was vital to approach them in their subjectivity and living contexts (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2020). Experiences are complex, real, and felt. In this respect, they cannot be pursued in an objective cause and effect manner. To overlook the complexity and context of experience is to deny the Bidoon the telling of an authentic story.

As for this current work of shooting and producing the film '*WDIGFH?*', the idea of Realism and truthfulness was paramount (which will be discussed in detail further on). Conducting interviews and establishing relationships with the Bidoon community was vital in revealing the personal stories of the Bidoon and Kuwaiti citizens. To fulfil the portrayal of a 'true' visual representation of the Bidoon lives, the discussions and the unveiled experiences were rooted in the screenplay development as I explain below.

Ethnographic research

For conducting this qualitative research effectively, ethnography is considered the most feasible strategy to approach the Kuwaiti Bidoon. The term 'ethnography' denotes research and description which paints 'a portrait of a people' (Genzuk, 2003) through written description drawn from observation. Given this, ethnographic research aims to collate information on peoples' cultures, "customs, beliefs, and behaviour – based on information collected through fieldwork" (Genzuk, 2003, p.1). Although ethnographic research is considered to emerge

through anthropological research (Jones, 2010), the term ethnography has come to denote all research which relies on the researcher as the instrument of data collection. Ethnography also relies on the systematic observation of social practice in uncontrived social contexts with the aim of establishing qualitative insights on the nature, dynamism, and contour of the subject group's socio-cultural systems (Brewer, 2000). It is this latter understanding which best speaks to how I incorporated ethnographic research into my filmmaking practice.

As a method of research, ethnography is performed 'in the field' and requires the researchers to immerse themselves into the focus community's life (Genzuek, 2003). It is described as an explorative and immersive research process documented through the fieldwork. This absorption is seen as a doorway to an internalised understanding of the subject community (Sharma and Sarkar, 2019). Thus, ethnography is underpinned by the perspective that "human behaviour and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and their lives are highly variable and locally specific" (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999, p. 2). It is thus a domain that is conceptualised as an "approach to learning about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings" (p. 1). Having established what ethnography means, the following section addresses how it is incorporated in a filmmaking context.

Ethnographic filmmaking

The documentary and descriptive remit of ethnographic research relies on the representation of experiential data drawn from the researcher's own exposure to a culture, predominantly based on field notes made during the observation of and/or immersion in a society (Mulhall, 2003). It should come as no surprise, then, that many early ethnographers enhance the documentary aspect of their research by drawing on new technologies that can document their observation more objectively - most notably with the use of video-recording devices (Vannini, 2015; Ginsburg, 1999). The vivid, "visually-appealing and seductive nature of video-based data" helps research in sustaining and "conveying a strong sense of direct experience with the phenomena studied". More broadly, Vannini (2015) asserts that "film can play an instrumental role in the advancement of an academic discipline", in this instance, ethnography, by "adding to existing substantive knowledge and theory" (p. 394).

Outside the academic applications and realm, however, ethnographic research is often employed by filmmakers in the course of their pre-production preparation or as a medium for

communicating their findings to a lay audience. For example, filmmaker and academic Winnie Lambrecht has combined filmmaking and ethnographic field research. She documented the heritage, culture, and folk-art practices of local cultural groups under the auspices of the Rhode Island Arts Council program based in eastern U.S.A. In her efforts of documentation, Lambrecht used film as a medium to communicate information about community culture to the public (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010a). In view of this, filming allows ethnographers to furnish their broadened audiences with “an enhanced perception of the social realities depicted in ethnographic films” (Suhr and Willerslev, 2012, p.283) and can be employed by researchers/filmmakers to scrutinise human experiences and (inter)actions.

In this context then, the camera acts as an extension of the researcher recording their fieldwork. Whilst less subjective, it must be conceded that “the camera and what it records is influenced by the researcher” (Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), 2021, p.12), and as such should be interpreted as “socially constructed artefacts – constructed by the researcher as he or she deemed fit” (IGNOU, 2021, p. 12). Ethnographic films, therefore, can and have been used to highlight issues relating to the lives of marginalised or oppressed members of society, that are otherwise neglected by mainstream media (Douglas and Carless, 2020). As my discussion unfolds, it will become clearer how ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is an exemplar of a documentary-drama style approach to filming.

Social Realism; a framework for filmmaking

In the process of my preparation to my filmmaking project, I reviewed a total of twenty films. I was particularly drawn to two drama films, *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and *I, Daniel Blake* (2016). Both films are directed by Ken Loach and epitomise the director’s approach to Social Realist Cinema. More significantly, I was drawn to the films from a narrative and visual point of view: what I was watching seemed ‘real’, insofar as they mapped onto my perception of reality. So stark was the impression left, that I kept asking myself how exactly did Ken Loach accomplish this? Both films feature banal representations of working-class characters - mothers, fathers, workers, widowers - beset by socio-economic problems, which seem to continually plague those on the fringe of society: unemployment, sickness, hardship, and poverty. As such, I was engrossed by their ability to reflect (and not distort) the social milieu of the margins of British society. Both films were shot in real-world locations and naturalistic environments. Both also utilised a documentary-drama style approach to filming: shot in real

environments, utilising natural lighting, combined with fictional characters and storyline. Thus, establishing authenticity which creates empathy amongst viewers and conveys the film's message. These aspects of Loach's filmmaking, and the impact they left on me as a viewer, spoke to the desired sense of realism and impact that I wanted my film, '*WDIGFH?*', to have on its audience. Conveniently, Loach's use of real-world locations (which eliminated the need for studio space), was also appealing to me, as I was working with a low production budget. Thus, my intention was to engage my audience's emotion in terms of the film's narrative, whilst ensuring its visual dimensions spoke to the reality of social grievances of the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

The term Social Realism denotes an approach to filmmaking that reflects the contours of social reality and pays specific attention to stories of marginalised or working-class people in society (Williams, 1977). Sklar (2002) notes that Social Realist films habitually focus on "families coping with social issues such as unemployment or oppressive state bureaucracies, as well as private concerns" (p. 495). The paradigm's focus (on tales of the oppressed or marginalised) is complemented by a candid style of cinematography which is often described as "'gritty', 'raw' and offering a 'slice of life'" to its audience (Taylor, 2006, p. 10). This aim of producing realistic representations is adopted in Social Realist films regularly through a documentary-style approach. In this style, the filmmaker aims to turn their camera on social scenarios that are reflective of reality by simply placing the camera in front of the subject, without relying on ornate production techniques or elaborate framing (Buckland, 2010). This realist slant has an emphasis on independent, low-budget film productions and often sets itself against mainstream productions. It is also characterised by the use of non-professional or little-known actors, who are, perhaps, better placed to propagate message about the social world than well-known actors (Lay, 2002).

With this understanding of Social Realism, I can further unpick *what* it was about Loach's two films, *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and *I, Daniel Blake* (2016), that spoke to my own ambitions as a filmmaker. Firstly, and with regards to the narrative, although both films were works of fiction, they were predicated on storylines that are realistic. Secondly, and with regards to the visual-style, Loach captures his scenes through camerawork that accentuates his scenes' rawness. The fusion of both of these aspects deceives "the viewer into believing they are actually watching a documentary rather than a fictional drama" (Shail, 2007, pp. 137 and 138). Thus, capturing intimate moments of the subjects as the scene unravels. As Leigh (2002, p. 60)

notes, Loach simply lets “the people in front of the camera tell the story so that the camera [acts as] a sympathetic observer.”

I turn now to focus on Loach’s Social Realism and further explore the interrelated notions of ‘narrative’ and ‘visual-style’.

In a broad sense, the narrative of a film denotes the ordering of events into a discernible story. Within this ordering, however, films must address core features like ‘character design’, the ‘obstacles faced’ by these characters, as well as the ‘journey travelled’ by its protagonists (Lothe, 2000). Combined, these aspects organise a film’s archetypal three-act-structure of set-up, climax, and resolution (Arnold and Eddy, 2007). Importantly, Loach’s films feel real because his realisation of the above components maintains a footing in reality: his characters live in realistic settings and perform realistic activities. Their conflicts emanate from real social problems and difficulties. Loach’s characters’ problems often worsen as the film progresses toward its climax. Thus, by ensuring the narrative components of his films remain true to the social world, Loach achieves a basis from which his audience’s emotions can be targeted.

Scholars have also noted the capacity for Loach’s narratives to broach contemporary social issues which people face in their daily lives, thus positioning their significance beyond the concerns of the film itself, acting as a form of social commentary. For instance, Lay (2002) argues that Loach’s films are often used to disseminate political messages to their viewers regarding important social issues that the working-class people experience. As such, beyond mirroring society, Loach’s films’ narratives are made with an evaluative, transformative intent that is “often reformist, educative or socially purposive in some way” (Lay, 2002, p. 24). In this light, Loach’s “choice of issues and the prevalence of certain themes is bound up with a mission or a message” (Lay 2002, p. 24). Loach himself elaborated on this political dimension of his filmography, stating that Social Realist films:

Are not made for people who are politically sophisticated, but for ordinary working people... we want to move our audience to new conclusions and insights about society and their lives to make films which are clear and true and correspond to the experience of the audience. We enjoy people and find it easiest to make films about working-class characters and their problems (Loach, Garnett and Quart, 1980, p. 28).

A similar observation is made by Forrest (2013) who notes that, for Loach, “narrative acts as a facilitating framework for the multitude of social and political messages he wishes to convey” (p. 101). Thus, the ulterior purpose of Social Realist film is to provide a political platform for “personal expression for the filmmaker, who should be committed to illuminating the problems of contemporary life” (Cook, 2004, p. 387). To that end, in Social Realist Cinema, the socio-political problems that face the marginalised or deprived classes of society are attained through banal plausible, accessible narratives of ordinary characters and their daily lives, which “encourage the empathetic engagement of the viewer” (Blaney, 2007, p. 119).

With respect to the visual and stylistic dimensions of Loach’s approach to Social Realist Cinema, scholars have noted that it is best conceptualised as a hybrid of both ‘documentary’ and ‘drama’ filmmaking, leading some to denote his work as a “documentary-drama” (Forrest, 2013, p.82). Loach necessarily maintains a visual style that holds a “commitment to framing the lives of the ‘real’, within their ‘real’ environment” (Forrest 2013, p16). He elaborates his habitual use of families in his films stressing that families are the centre of drama where learning occurs and “raw material for drama” is generated (Ryan and Porton 1998, p. 24). To broach these familial contexts, Loach’s filmmaking does not seek to frame family interactions from an explicit perspective, but rather it aims to let action unfold in a free and un-orchestrated way. Thus, allowing the camera to record the action, as opposed to dictating how it should play out. Loach is “interested in putting people in front of a camera and capturing their behaviour and the rhythm of their dialect” when portraying reality (Loach, Garnett and Quart, 1980, p. 29). In essence, Loach provides his viewers with a ‘slice of life’ aiming for an interaction between his visual style and narrative contexts to engage his viewers emotions (Blaney, 2007). Scholars and professionals alike have echoed this sentiment noting that “Loach and his collaborators employ realist techniques to ensure that the film seems to offer us direct access to its dramatic world” (Lay, 2002, p. 64). Indeed, British actor Ricky Tomlinson, who worked with Loach, stated that “you forget you’re in a movie all together” (Film Four, 2012, Webcast).

Loach has also elaborated on his own perception of the differences between his Social Realist Cinema and more mainstream commercial films, noting that “our films use a certain amount of improvisation to help characters reveal themselves” (Loach, Garnett and Quart 1980, p. 29). In terms of production, this often entailed keeping actors in the dark and not releasing the screenplay to them until the last minute, impelling the actors to rely on their natural responses to negotiate the litany of issues facing their characters. Indeed, more broadly, Loach’s films

have broached *inter alia* issues of corruption, drug addiction, and domestic violence along with alcoholism, and relationship problems. Importantly, though, Loach's stories "never make the central characters wholly responsible for their problems but explore to which extent the social-economic circumstances they live in can be made responsible for their plight" (Langhof, 2002, p. 24).

The above provides the basis for my own experiences of shooting '*WDIGFH?*' mirroring the tenets of Loach's approach to Social Realism, I ensured that all of the above-mentioned factors were incorporated into my style of filmmaking, including: the setting, the plot, camera movements, actors (mostly non-professional ones), the resemblance of real-world *social milieu* and social scenarios (in this instance, the Bidoon community and their residences) and the use of naturally scripted dialogues. This was vital as the main focus of my research is producing an empathetic film that truthfully mirrors the Bidoon's plight thus help raises awareness to their condition. Therefore, the fusion between all of these discrete choices in production were integral to imbuing '*WDIGFH?*' with a sense of realism and engaging my viewers on the plane of their emotive reactions to everyday occurrences of marginalised members of society.

In summary then, and mirroring the words of Forrest (2013):

The dual emphasis on politics and social realities has led to the development of Loach's distinctive formal and aesthetic signature that has come to serve as the paradigm for British Social Realism. This demands location shooting; static or purely reactive camera placement; a rejection of stars, and a dialogical style that appears improvised in its naturalism. All are pervasive features within Loach's canon (p. 81) and approach to filmmaking.

I now turn to discuss the main methods I used to collect data on the Bidoon community, and how such methods assisted and served the pre-production of my film, '*WDIGFH?*'

Merging ethnographic filmmaking and Loach's Social Realism: a quest for originality and authenticity

In this section, I discuss how I merged ethnographic filmmaking with Loach's Social Realism approach to film production. And how I utilised this merging as an advantage to inform my viewers about the Bidoon's plight in contemporary Kuwait. Although the different sections of this Chapter do allude to this merging, and many examples are discussed in this Chapter, this

section focuses on the unity that leads to ‘real’ emotional impact which seeks to avoid manipulating the audience into a particular response through visually portraying the truthfulness of the human experience (this is examined further in detail as the discussion progresses). By stating that I stress that Loach’s Social Realism and ethnographic filmmaking are the two tenets of my methodological approach. Hence viewers’ (triggered) emotion is an end result of pursuing this unity of approach (as I explain in this section and throughout the thesis). I start by briefly reminding the reader about ethnographic filmmaking, and Ken Loach’s Social Realism Art of filmmaking which is used as the main visual style of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ I also explore how the two were merged and how I benefited from combining ethnographic with Social Realism filmmaking to portray authenticity in my film. Finally, I investigate how my in-the-field data were utilised to create fictional characters/design and story narrative to portray, as authentically as possible, the Bidoon’s plight in contemporary Kuwait - it is this commitment to truthful representation which, I intend, will trigger a sympathetic response from viewers.

As I explained previously, ethnographic filmmaking is part of qualitative research. This approach is considered to stem from anthropology, which is the study of social life, cultures and communities (Jones, 2010). Ethnographic filmmaking is used as a data collection method to record audio/video data from subjects/environments thus help aid a study (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). In practice, it requires the immersion of a researcher into a community in order to collect data concerning subjects and environments or to study a root of a phenomenon. The data, which is gathered by using equipment such as audio/video recorders (Vannini, 2015), is analysed to conclude the findings (Brewer, 2000). For example, Felix-Louis Régnault, known to be the first person to shoot an ethnographic film, recorded a Wolof woman (from the West African ethnic groups) making clay pots. His film demonstrated, in detail, how the woman used her hands to craft and shape the clay into pottery. Régnault, fascinated by the woman’s technique, claimed that he was the first to note such a method and published his experiment and findings in December 1895 (Brigard, 1995). Hence, ethnographic filmmaking involves the use of observational documentary to capture and study footage of subjects/environments. The intention of observational documentary in ethnographic filmmaking is the “desire to observe the physical behavior of men[/people] and animals” (MacDougall, 1995, p. 117). The researcher is no longer a detached observer but a participant observer who is believed to have access to people’s thoughts, behaviour and aspirations (Asch and Asch, 1995).

(Loach's) Social Realism films, on the other hand, tell fictional stories primarily of the working-class people to raise awareness around important social issues (Sklar, 2002). Social Realism "is a direct descendant of documentary" (Forrest, 2013, p. 15). Thus, Social Realism films combine both an element of documentary and fictional drama. Although ethnographic and Social Realism filmmaking have different purposes, they both share similar characteristics, such as an element of documentary filmmaking. I used these similar components, as a gateway to harmoniously merge ethnographic and Social Realism approaches together and form a hybrid that was used in portraying authenticity in '*WDIGFH?*' For instance, one of the key elements of ethnographic filmmaking, is that it allows a researcher to travel on location, utilise natural lighting and make use of camera equipment to record observational documentary footage of people in their natural environment, the material captured displays elements of real life (Taylor, 2006). Likewise, in Social Realism filmmaking, a filmmaker also travels to location and utilises camera equipment to record his subjects in real environments, thus adding a level of truthfulness and authenticity to his story narrative (Forrest, 2013). In pursuing my ethnographic and Social Realism investigation, I deduced the following aesthetics at the core: traveling to location, setting up camera equipment and utilising natural lighting to record subjects. These are used in both approaches to visually portray the truthfulness of the human experience. Consequently, I was able to transition fluidly from one film genre to another. This is what worked for me and from there I moved on to create/shoot my film, '*WDIGFH?*'

In practice and during my in-the-field data collection with the Bidoon's community in Sulabiya, I used my camera and tripod equipment setup to record footage of their neighbourhood. The recorded material, whether external or internal, portrays images of their natural environment. I then seeded these ethnographic video images into the visual narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' adding a sense of truthfulness and realism. I wanted a level of authenticity that my viewers could connect to and see another side of Kuwait, where people live in shadows. Ken Loach correctly argues that "understanding is what Art is about, that's what good Art is, it enables you to understand the human experience, the aim in making a film is always to tell a story about people's real experience that has a significance beyond their simple story" (Double Down News, 2019, Webcast).

Furthermore, I selected my film locations and utilised Ken Loach's tactics on set to dramatically enhance scenes prior to shooting. These tactics of Loach, that I learned, were utilised in order to add a sense of realism to my footage and thus aid in triggering an emotional

response from my viewers. It is when viewers understand the experiences portrayed to be “real” that the stakes are high because they understand that this really happened to people and therefore, they tend to engage more fully emotionally (Lay, 2002). There is always an element of subjectivity in what we deem “significant enough to record” (Asch and Asch 1995, p. 336). In that vein, Loach states that when “you make a film, you do reflect the world, whether you want to or not, you do reflect it... because the people who make it are born now and their preoccupations will be reflected into their work” (British Academy of Film and Television Arts, 2016, Webcast). To the untrained eye capturing images is straight forward, a simple *click* of a button and the camera starts to record; this is not the case, especially for me - my material is not randomly selected. I always want my images to reach out to my audience and emotionally engage them - as if they are speaking to them.

Prior to film production, I investigate the production set, especially when filming on location. I then select specific areas within this location that I believe will leave a profound impact on my viewers and grip their attention. I then begin to carefully design the footage that I want to record. My shot-list is not random, it too is strategically planned to faithfully combine the actor’s performance with the selected décor. To ensure this, I always make sure that I have a wide shot that captures the entire set, then I focus on my close-ups to capture detail. My tactics are vividly demonstrated during a shooting day in Sulabiya, Kuwait, where I had to record interior footage of a Bidoon man’s house to seed with my film’s visual narrative. The guests’ reception room, in the Bidoon’s house, was recently renovated and furnished with items bought from the Friday secondhand market, as was explained by the man. In fact, the décor in the Bidoon man’s living room reminded me of my childhood house early in the 1990s. The room had an indigo carpet, paintings hung on the wall, a large TV set with a PlayStation 4 console. In my assessment, the room was too lavish to be recorded. Therefore, I asked the man to show me other areas of the house that were untouched. I was then directed to his children’s bedroom. When I entered the space, I felt claustrophobic, and it was hard to breathe, since there were no windows. The bedroom was dim and packed with things, worn-down cabinets bloated with objects, deteriorating bunkbeds and torn bedsheets. The room felt like a storage area and not a place for children to sleep. This room was chosen with permission to be recorded; it provided suitable visual aesthetics needed to emotionally engage my viewers. The dim lighting and the natural décor alluded to the Bidoon’s social and economic status. I setup my camera in a wide frame and recorded the room. The footage I captured was in wide and not in close up because

I wanted my viewers to see the entirety of the room, I felt that this frame created more of a visual impact and thus emotionally engage my viewers.

Another example, that is illustrative of Ken Loach's tactics utilisation prior to filming scenes in '*WDIGFH?*', is the abandoned school scene where the forger and Hamood (Bidoon protagonist) violently interact. Prior to shooting, I secretly instructed the actor playing the forger to be extra rough during his performance. During the act, the forger spits near Hamood's head, as a form of disrespect. This act was not scripted; based upon my guidance the forger behaved this way, and as a result, created more impact to the scene. In relation, Robert Carlyle (actor), who worked with Loach, stated that "I got a very late call to come in [on set], and I didn't know again what the scene was going to be, and all Ken [Loach] said was you've got to bang the door and then 'that's it.'..." (Into Film Shorts, 2011, Webcast). From there the actor's unscripted reaction was recorded.

In essence, Loach's Social Realism films carry messages in order to raise awareness regarding important issues within society (Sklar, 2002). To accomplish this, as previously discussed, Loach devises strategic methods such as: filming in natural locations, utilising natural lighting and working with non-professional or little-known actors (Lay, 2002). Furthermore, during the filming process Loach purposely keeps his actors in the dark, the intent is to acquire a realistic performance during a take. Loach's films are not meant to deceive or manipulate the viewers, on the contrary, his stories articulate real-life social problems within society (Forrest, 2013), and so does '*WDIGFH?*' Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966) is an example. It led to the homelessness charity Shelter being launched a few days after it was broadcast (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2020, Webcast). *Cathy Come Home* (1966) awakened the public consciousness in a new way. Ricky Tomlinson, who worked with Loach, states "everything he's done, without exception, has had a message... everything he does is meaningful" (Film Four, 2012, Webcast).

When designing and filming '*WDIGFH?*' I tried the best I could to stay true to the spirit of Social Realism. Like Loach, I too filmed in natural locations, selected professional and amateur actors, utilised a documentary style visual film approach, and most importantly, my film is intended to inform viewers about the Bidoon's plight in contemporary Kuwait. However, unlike Loach, my topic is sensitive within the Kuwaiti context, therefore, I faced different limitations which I discuss in more detail below in this Chapter. I had an ethical obligation to

protect my cast and myself by for example not discussing certain aspects of the Bidoon crisis, as it may trigger a negative response from the authorities. The limitations I faced all had an effect on the design of my film, from both the productive and narrative point of view (this is discussed in detail later on). Although I faced certain restrictions this did not alter other creative attributes that I implemented to help generate (emotional) impact in ‘*WDIGFH?*’s narrative.

To create the sense of authenticity for my viewers, I seeded my on-the-field interview data into the development of my fictional character design; again, this is discussed in detail below. Interviewee testimony is a valid method to obtain richness in data, especially first-hand sources. I interviewed actual Kuwaiti and Bidoon participants that live in contemporary Kuwait. Their testimony was vital in the creation of my fictional characters and to add a sense of authenticity (see Lucas’, 2017, discussion on his documentary *Hiroshima Bound* (2015) on the aftermath of the Hiroshima bomb (1945) survivors for further insight). In ‘*WDIGFH?*’ my characters and story narrative were not randomly designed, nor were they intended to manipulate film viewers. They were based upon actual responses from my interviewee data collection (Kuwaiti and Bidoon alike). For example, there are two Kuwaiti characters in my film, Waleed and Dalal, and each of these fictional characters was each designed differently. Waleed was intended to be aggressive, because his character design was based upon cruel comments of a Kuwaiti anonymous interviewee. Dalal was designed to be sympathetic, because her character design was based upon compassionate statements mentioned by a Kuwaiti anonymous interviewee. In a nutshell, the interview data was seeded into the design of my characters and also aided the development of my story narrative.

Like Loach, I wanted to trigger my viewers’ emotions without manipulating their views and opinions when watching my film. It is through pursuing people’s realities and experiences that viewers’ manipulation is minimised, and possibly eliminated. I believe I am accurate to say that the research methods I pursued to collect data on the Bidoons for this thesis supported authenticity and truthfulness. With regards to this, in *Ae Fond Kiss* (2003), which revolves around a love story between an Irish catholic woman and a Muslim Pakistani man, and to ensure authenticity Loach’s research led him to base “pivotal aspects of the narrative on interviews with Muslims in Glasgow before writing the script.” (Chick, 2020, p. 114; also see Seino, 2010 for an insightful analysis).

Furthermore, there are a number of studies which focus on and take an oppositional stance with regards to film audience and manipulation (for example, Barker, 2012; Bratich, 2005; Livingstone, 2013). In fact, these studies stress that members of film spectators are not mere empty vessels to be filled and manipulated. These studies also emphasise that audience manipulation through films is debatable. Film audiences “are diverse and informed, able to respond critically to the mass media as well as to other sources of talk in their everyday lives. Moreover, the members of the audience are ever more experienced, critical and sophisticated in their reception of the media as they become increasingly familiar with its forms and production processes” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994, p. 70). Film audiences always share different views and opinions. To this point and after the release of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), the film received a mixture of responses. Some viewers, including high-ranking Vatican officials “praised the film and insisted it was theologically accurate and not anti-Semitic” (Brown, Keeler and Lindvall, 2007, p. 93). While others criticised the film, stating it contained a sheer unnecessary amount of violence (Brown, Keeler and Lindvall, 2007). Members of audiences are visible and are recognised for their agency now more than any other time (Corbett and Wessels, 2017).

The audience of ‘*WDIGFH?*’, both Kuwaitis, Bidoons and other nationalities are active participants and have agency. They had a choice to watch my film and comment and interact with other participants/viewers online (see Chapter 4). In Chapter 4, as you will see, not all my film viewers had positive remarks, some had negative comments, for example regarding my film’s narrative, and how Waleed, the Kuwaiti father, was portrayed. Nonetheless, my audience appear active, have insights and understand the film and the issues involved. My responsibility as a filmmaker, pursuing Loach’s Social Realism to produce an ethnographic account of the Bidoons plight in Kuwait, is to show truthfulness and in doing so perhaps change some of the negative Kuwaiti perception of the Bidoon’s world. As Lay (2002) said: “[films have] a social purpose and a role to play for the betterment of society rather than just as mere entertainment” (Chapter 3, para 3). I wanted to give voice to the Bidoon community, and by merging ethnographic film making with Loach’s Social Realism I was able to maintain originality and authenticity. To end this section, I reiterate Loach’s statement that “reflecting the world we know can make beautiful cinema, because it can celebrate who we are, it can laugh with us, it can cry with us, it can learn about our deepest feelings and what it is to be human” (Sky News, 2019, Webcast).

Ethnographic methods and the practice-based research approach to the Bidoon

I want to affirm, before embarking on discussing this section and the choice of methods I implemented, that I alone conducted my on-the-field data collection (with the assistance of a guide) and I alone shot my film '*WDIGFH?*' (in the period of February - March 2019). While filming, I did not have a production team to assist me. This made my task difficult, because not only did I have to rely totally on myself to set everything up, but I also had to produce, film, direct and pack the equipment away when the day's shoot was concluded. However, I had a friend assisting me on various shooting days by holding the sound-boom. Everything else was performed by me, the researcher.

For this work, and the project of producing a film on the Bidoon, I incorporated ethnographic observation into my practice-based research design. Observations helped me as a researcher/filmmaker to ascertain a more in-depth appreciation of the beliefs and practices of the Bidoon community, which was highly beneficial for the production of my film '*WDIGFH?*' The direct exposure to the Bidoon community - their household practices and daily lives - provided the basis for a concrete understanding of their culture and lifestyle, and was vital to accurately reproduce these in my drama film. My immersion into the community then, permitted an understanding of the nuances of Bidoon experiences and lived realities that would not have been replicable from purely academic research on the community (Hammersley, 2002). As such, the process of ethnographic observation was key to ensuring that the specific characteristics of the Bidoon community were properly reconstructed in my filmmaking practice, and reflected the commitment of Social Realism in mirroring the Bidoon in the most truthful way.

Next, I move on to address how I used ethnographic methods, mainly; observations and interviews to acquire insight into the Bidoon lives.

Following MacLeod (2016), I interpreted the goal of ethnographic research as providing "a detailed description of everyday life" (p. 142). Toward this end, "the researcher's eyes and ears are the primary modes for data collection" which were utilised in "systematic observation in the "field" by interviewing and carefully recording what they see, hear, and observe people doing" (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010, p.20). Accordingly, I arranged a field-visit for a period

of four months – from May 2018 to August 2018. I visited the Bidoon community approximately three times a month. Each visit lasted 3 to 4 hours. I also employed video and photographic equipment during my visits as means of on-the-field data collection. I set two broad objectives that could assist in my immersion into the community and my subsequent utilisation of field-based data: first, and most important, I had to secure a *guide* that had access to the Bidoon community. Second, whilst in the field, I had to record *video footage*, take *photographs*, *observe* the Bidoon and conduct *semi-structured interviews* to garner enough qualitative insight that could be drawn on in the production of my film. Schensul and LeCompte (2013) explain that ethnographers ought to use probing interview questions as a means of deciphering the social and cultural life they are observing.

I deemed securing a guide as a necessary pre-requisite as it provided me with direct, unfettered, and informed access to the Bidoon community in which all *four* methods (observation, interviews, video recording, and photographic shooting) of data collection could be performed. Indeed, scholars regularly cite the importance of availing of local/onsite researchers or organisations that can assist you in making first contact with the observed community (Schensul and LeCompte, 2013). Observation is mostly of two types, overt and covert. The overt observation implies that the subject(s) is/are aware of the observer and the situation of being observed, while the covert one depicts that both the observer and the time of observation is concealed. For this research, I had preferred to include only overt observations so that the ethical guidelines could be adequately complied with, and a trustworthy relationship could be established with the respondents. My method of observation relied on traveling by car and on foot, in and around, the Bidoon community. This allowed me to study the subjects in their natural environment (Fife, 2005). The benefits of the observation aided the development of my screenplay. Moreover, observing and capturing footage of the Bidoon environment was seeded into the narrative to add a sense of ‘realism’ and aid the visuals of ‘*WDIGFH?*’

Through family connections and network, I was able to secure an appropriate guide. Fortunately, not only did the guide provide me exclusive access to the Bidoon community, but he was also a member of the Bidoon community. I met the guide several times to discuss my research. He proved to be indispensable and provided me with answers to my many questions regarding the Bidoon’s social life. The guide was particularly valuable for someone like myself, who is not a member of the Bidoon community, and had limited previous encounters with them. He helped in showing me around ‘Sulabiya’ and ensuring my reason for being there

was made known to the community while I was filming and photographing. Additionally, the use of a guide permitted me to become involved with members of the Bidoon community and to build a relationship based on trust which is vital between the researcher and the participants (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Further, relying on his insider knowledge ensured I did not violate cultural customs and social norms. We, through this journey, became friends, and he was interested in the development of my film, '*WDIGFH?*'

The journey

Upon arriving in the Bidoon environment, one is immediately struck by the visual disparity between it, and the Kuwaiti residential areas. Despite existing in close proximity to each other, they embody very different characteristics. In stark contrast to the vibrant hustle-and-bustle of the Kuwaiti areas, the Bidoon's community, felt like a ghost-town. Abandoned cars littered the area, crystallised in time as dusty wrecks. The poverty of the area is discernible with the lack of maintenance of its residences, the large puddles of stagnant water and sizeable potholes, and the litter in the roads left to rot and disintegrate in the sun's heat. This lack of infrastructure means that, at times, it is almost impossible to drive through the area. The environs of the Bidoon community in Sulabiya felt overcrowded and compressed; something that did not mirror the majority of other districts populated by Kuwaiti citizens, which feature well-spaced housing that allowed privacy and space to breathe.

The exposure to the poverty-stricken suburb of Sulabiya left a deep impact on me. It is then that I was adamant to reflect the true character of the suburb in the visual narrative of my film. Thus, the incorporation of Social Realist cinematic techniques greatly assisted me in remaining true to the reality of this environment. Moreover, to ensure that my film '*WDIGFH?*'s visuals spoke to the reality of the Bidoon environment's social milieu, I recorded actual footage of the residential area and seeded this footage into my film. Through a creative meshing of actual footage of Sulabiya and orchestrated scenes captured in the production process, I ensured that '*WDIGFH?*' provided its audience with an *authentic* and *realistic* slice-of-life of the abject poverty and hardship faced by the Bidoon on a daily basis. In this sense, my intent was to mirror the impact and shock of onlookers upon first entering the suburb, and to reproduce this to the eyes of the film's audience. This strong emotive reaction I was aiming for could assist in raising awareness of the Bidoon's marginalised status. I also formed interview questions

which probe into certain aspects of the Bidoon's socioeconomic life. This proved to be very significant in collecting invaluable data for the development of my film and its narrative.

My interviews with some members of the Bidoon community were facilitated by my guide who approached the Bidoon members and arranged the interviews. A total of 21 interviews were conducted. Eleven interviews were with Bidoon participants and the rest (10 interviews) were with Kuwaiti citizen participants. Participants were interviewed during the years 2018 – 2019. All the Bidoon interviews were facilitated with the assistance of my guide. The guide did not interfere with the interview process, but was in the vicinity, in case I needed assistance in translating what was said, especially as some interviewees spoke with a hard Bedouin accent. On the other hand, all the Kuwaiti citizens' interviews were facilitated through family connections and my personal network. As a result, I conducted interviews with both Bedouin and Hadar Kuwaiti citizens, both of older and younger generations, both sexes, of different districts of residence, and of different sectors of employment (i.e., Ministry of Health, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Education and so on). This was done to ensure that the data collection came from different backgrounds and varied in political and social stances regarding the Bidoon's plight.

The use of interviews as a means of primary data collection assisted me greatly in developing a working relationship and rapport with the Bidoon community, and also in retrieving in-depth qualitative information about their lives, culture, and social enterprises. Some areas that are not discussed in academic literature, particularly Bidoon's emotions and feelings in experiencing the difficulties of their lives, I had access to as well. Moreover, it provided me with direct access to the real-world social scenarios of the Bidoon community that could be emulated through the filmmaking process. Thus, as a means of data-collection, interviews proved important in extracting insights that could be engineered toward producing accurate and believable characters, stories, and settings in my film which would, in turn, enhance the appeal of its political message. In this light, the semi-structured interviews I conducted furnished me with new perspectives and understandings of how people from both sides of the divide (Kuwaitis and Bidoon) think, and what attitudes they hold towards aspects of their lives as Bidoon, and as Kuwaitis looking at the Bidoon. More specifically, the interviews offered a means of insight into the perceptions and attitudes of the Bidoon, which ultimately served to perpetuate their daily lives (Harvey-Jordan and Long, 2001). Finally, the use of interviews proved invaluable in deciphering the Bidoon's aspirations beyond their marginalised status: for

instance, many interviewees disclosed their intentions to migrate either to Canada or the UK, to claim asylum and ultimately receive citizenship.

Below I elaborate on the questions that were utilised in the semi-structured interviews for both Kuwaiti and Bidoon participants. Importantly, these questions were only loosely adhered to, allowing participants the opportunity to elaborate as they saw fit, and the interviewer to ask follow-up, probing questions where it was deemed appropriate. The outcome of the interviewee data collection seeded the development of the screenplay and the Bidoon characters in ‘*WDIGFH?*’ portraying protagonist Hamood’s social, economic, and political life.

Bidoon interviewee questions

- How helpful is the Central System in assisting Bidoon?
- How difficult is it for you as a Bidoon to have access to government services, such as Health, Education, and documentation?
- Have there been any improvements in the Bidoon’s plight?
- In your opinion, what does the future hold for the Bidoon, in particular their children?

Kuwaiti citizen interviewee questions

- Do you think the Bidoon should be naturalised?
- In your opinion, what does the future hold for the Bidoon?
- Do you consider the Bidoon part of Kuwaiti society?
- Do you think the Bidoon affect Kuwait’s economy and stability?

In the following section, I provide an overview of two sets of data drawn from interviews conducted with the Bidoon and Kuwaiti citizens. The first set displays a down-sample of interview data taken from Bidoon interviewee participants; whereas the second displays a down-sample of Kuwaiti citizen interviewee participants. In addition to presenting this data, I elaborate on how both data sets aided in the development of the characters and the storyline of my film, ‘*WDIGFH?*’

Sample Bidoon interviewee responses

- My grandfathers and my family are Bedouin. They moved from one place to the other searching for water and food for their animals and sheep that they owned. They found themselves in Kuwait... but they were ignorant

and did not understand the civil city... as such they did not register for the Kuwaiti nationality (2018, Bidoon interviewee E).

This response from the Bidoon interviewee seemingly corroborates Shiblak's (2009) analysis. According to Shiblak, some Bidoon's statelessness derives from their nomadic Bedouin ancestors, who once freely roamed through the Arabian desert, and did not understand the importance of national registration. Thus, they did not register in the States in which they resided when the opportunity presented itself (such as in Kuwait in 1959). This information was extrapolated into the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*', being most evident in Hamood's bedroom scene, in which he discloses key information about his family's history and why he is classed as a Bidoon: 'my great-grandfather lived in the desert. He did not understand the civil life and walked away. As a result, I ended up a Bidoon!'

- There are restrictions on my rights as a human being... I cannot travel, and I cannot get a birth certificate for my daughter. My sons do not have identification cards... there is no future for my children; only suicide or death (2018, Bidoon interviewee B).

The sentiments expressed by interviewee B in the above excerpt, map onto the findings of the analysis of Alnajjar (2001) who examined the human rights violations faced by the Bidoon community in the 1980s. Insights from both were ultimately synthesised to devise a narrative and Bidoon character capable of eliciting sympathetic emotions from the audience in Kuwait. In particular, I wanted to ensure that Hamood mirrored the emotions of the above interviewee to speak to the emotions which are common to all people with families, irrespective of culture and social background. Hamood's portrayal of these emotions informed the content of many scenes of '*WDIGFH?*', for instance, in the desert scene where he speaks to a camel about the oppression he faces in his daily life.

- The future for Bidoon is worsening if the Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents keeps taking charge and controlling our lives. I think the government will prolong the situation, the harassment and oppression will continue (2018, Bidoon interviewee C).

In discussing the structural violence faced by the Bidoon, Beaugrand (2011) explains that the community frequently faces administrative violence and has to overcome extreme obstacles to renew/obtain documentation that is vital for employment and other day-to-day legal activities. This insight was evident in many respondents' interview data, where the disclosed information

reflects the harsh rules they have to face. This insight was replicated in the scenes where Hamood is refused medical care after being violently attacked by the Forger and when he is refused employment at a restaurant.

- Sometimes I think of migration outside Kuwait, but unfortunately because of the harassment to leave, many Bidoon like myself have deterred the idea of leaving. The reality inside Kuwait is bitter and depressing. The Bidoon live in a large prison and even inside this prison we have restricted movement and action. We are deprived of freedom of expression (2019, Bidoon interviewee H).

As noted by Shultziner and Tétreault (2012), the Bidoon exist in a form of ‘legal limbo’: economically and socially marginalised and plagued by a constant threat of deportation. This marginalisation is evident in the perspective communicated by interviewee H who denotes his status as ‘depressing’, and who also expressed a desire to leave Kuwait to seek asylum abroad. These themes of migration and oppression were mirrored in *‘WDIGFH?’*’s narrative, wherein Hamood attempts to buy a forged passport and leave Kuwait under false pretenses. The notion of being stuck in a legal limbo is also represented in the sea-side scene, where Hamood responds to his lover Dalal’s comforting statement that ‘someday things will change’ with the retort that it was ‘easy for [her] to say...Nothing has changed for’ him. Moreover, the background context of migration is mirrored in the film’s living room scene where Fahad and Salemah (Hamood’s parents) watch a news-report wherein the reporter exclaims that ‘experts who have carefully examined the Bidoon’s conditions have noted that statelessness is one of the main reasons behind irregular migration.’

Sample Kuwaiti citizen interview responses

- I have a solution for resolving the Bidoons’ plight, they should all be thrown out the country (2018, Kuwaiti citizen interviewee I).

As evidenced in the above reply, the Kuwaiti interviewee expressed little to no empathy for the Bidoon’s current stateless status. Indeed, conveying this resentment and bitterness in *‘WDIGFH?’* became an important means of developing its political message. As such, it was seeded into several scenes throughout the film: for instance, in the restaurant scene, a Kuwaiti man who was seen eating lunch is approached by a begging Bidoon mother with her child. Annoyed, the Kuwaiti man violently pushes them away. Similarly, animosity is reflected through the development of Waleed’s character (Dalal’s father), who acts as an exemplar of

the prejudiced hate expressed toward the Bidoon community. For instance, in the breakfast scene, when reading a newspaper report on a Bidoon protest, Waleed angrily exclaims that ‘they should all go back to where they came from!’

- The Bidoon community are a part of the Kuwaiti community. We speak the same language and share the same culture (2018, Kuwaiti citizen interviewee D).

In contrast, interviewee D demonstrated some empathy toward the Bidoon people, outlining that they are not alien to broader Kuwaiti culture and society. As such, they demonstrated a certain level of sympathy and compassion, which would be vital to reflect in ‘*WDIGFH?*’ to elicit a meaningful impact in relation to raising awareness of the plight of the Bidoon in Kuwaiti society. In terms of its realisation in the film, the character of Dalal served as the main means through which empathy and humanity were conveyed through the screenplay, as she not only assists Hamood to flee, as his lover, but also routinely comforts and consoles him.

- Not a chance, I would not let my daughter marry a Bidoon (2018, Kuwaiti Citizen Interviewee E).

The above excerpt from the interview with participant E engenders a strong sentiment: that the Bidoon and Kuwaiti people are incompatible. Therefore, this data (and the idea it conveys) were important to incorporate into ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Again, Waleed’s character provided a means of integrating this into the narrative of the film: bound by a perceived notion of paternal duty, he demonstrates a keen hostility towards his daughter’s love for Hamood and aims to create friction and obstacles that will prevent their relationship from flourishing. This mirrors the broader structural violence endured by the Bidoon in their systematic marginalisation from Kuwait, and it was integral to the film’s ulterior political aim of raising awareness. The more friction and oppression endured by a character, the more likely the audience are to become emotionally invested in the story’s narrative and to engage with the film’s message (James, 2009). Such friction, for instance, is conveyed in the montage sequence of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ after Waleed finds out that his daughter is seeing Hamood. Outraged by this revelation, he cries out: ‘Fahad’s son? That Bidoon bum!... Enough is enough stay away from that bum or else.’

- Not all Bidoon are stateless, they are nationals of other countries (2018, Kuwaiti citizen Interviewee H).

Interviewee H argued that the majority of Bidoon are not stateless but are in fact nationals from neighbouring Arab countries. The participant's comments therefore resonate with the Kuwaiti government's perception of the Bidoon people as deceptive nationals of other Arab countries whose aim is to leach off the Kuwaiti State for social and economic benefits. This negativity is represented in '*WDIGFH?*' where Fahad and Salemah (Hamood's parents) are drinking tea while an aggressive radio debate plays out in the background of the scene. One participant in the debate reflects what the Kuwaiti interviewee H expressed above (and the broader Kuwaiti government) by claiming that the 'Bidoon must plead their case at court ... Go to court and file a case! Tell them that the Ministry of Interior concluded that I'm of Iraqi or Syrian nationality, and this is not true.'

In brief, the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork proved useful in gaining insight to specific aspects of the Bidoon's personal and social lives and influential in shaping the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*'

Furthermore, when I visited the Bidoon community during the period of four-months (May 2018 – August 2018), I recorded external video footage of the Bidoon's environment and numerous 'fly-on-the-wall' shots of the social milieu of the Bidoon community. In addition, I also recorded internal video footage inside a Bidoon's house. This video footage has "special qualities that... unlock some features of social life" Woermann (2018, p. 468), which cannot be replicated from other sources of data-collection methods. Much of the video footage I recorded was seeded into my film, with some being employed as establishing shots (to set up the protagonist Hamood's residence) and in montage sequences. To compliment this footage, I also frequently took external and internal photographs to document the Bidoon's environment. Indeed, these photos, provided "a degree of tangible detail, a sense of being there" (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998, p. 102) which was useful when it came to reproducing the Bidoons' environment and surroundings. Photographic data was drawn on to inform the process of set design and to ensure that the *mis-en-scene* of my film is a replication of reality.

To summarise, my in-the-field observation and immersion into the Bidoon community of Kuwait greatly assisted me in the development of my film, '*WDIGFH?*', particularly in the context of a Social Realist Cinema. This was essential to answering my research question as the purpose of my ethnographic research was to mirror the Bidoon's plight thus produce an empathetic film that passionately engages viewers. Moreover, the qualitative insights garnered

through systematic observation and interviews aided in the development of narrative components of the film, which reflected the reality of Bidoon socio-cultural life. Authentic replication of a Bidoon lifestyle was of the utmost importance to emotionally engage my audience by using my protagonist, Hamood, as a model for the wider social deprivation and poverty faced by the Bidoon community of Kuwait. Finally, Baumann, Lhaki and Burke (2020) argue that ethnographers can use films not only as documentary data, but also as a means of highlighting injustices and problems face by marginalised communities. I hope for ‘*WDIGFH?*’ to do that. In essence, I simultaneously fulfilled the role of a Social Realist director and ethnographic researcher by observing and extracting data from the Bidoon community, while striving to accurately reflect and highlight the plight of the marginalised community through my filming.

I turn next to analysing photographic data taken during my ethnographic field trip in the Sulabiya Bidoon community.

Examples of photographs taken during on-the-field ethnographic data collection

A great deal of attention was paid to the choice of appropriate locations. The latter played a pivotal role for adequate data and adhering to the original Social Realist style. In order to ensure that ‘*WDIGFH?*’ portrayed authenticity, the Bidoon community in Sulabiya (located on the outskirts of Kuwait City) was visited on numerous occasions with the support of the guide, and photographs of the residential area were taken (see Figure 2 below). My guide stated that I had the freedom to record any external photographic images I needed, housing units and community objects. However, footage inside a Bidoon residence would require further permission from the house owner.



Figure 2: Wide Camera-Shot of Rumaihiya (Left); Wide Camera-Shot of Sulabiya (The Barbed Wire Erected for Road Construction) (Right).

For shooting '*WDIGFH?*', I had to conduct in-depth research on the Bidoon community, both the internal and the external environment, for which the naturalistic observation was carried out. Figure 3 (below - left image) is an overview of the housing unit's location in Rumaithiya, (a residential area occupied by Kuwaitis), where houses are located on both sides of the main road. However, the image to the right illustrates the houses, in Sulabiya, where the Bidoon reside; an integration of small metal shack structures with old extended units housing large families. This image is depicted in my film. Considering both the images of Figure 3 as visual guidance, the locations have been sourced for the film production. Therefore, the scenes shot for '*WDIGFH?*' mostly resembled the real wide camera shots illustrated below:



Figure 3: Wide Camera-Shot of Rumaithiya' Housing Structure (Left); Wide Camera-Shot of Sulabiya (Different Designs of Bidoons' Residence) (Right).

Furthermore, in '*WDIGFH?*', Fahad is a Bidoon working for Waleed, a Kuwaiti citizen. He sold the produce that Waleed grew on his private farm. Figure 4 below depicts how this overt observation has been presented in the film '*WDIGFH?*' The setting of these scenes was based on Loach's style by "using location shooting", which helped in maintaining authenticity as well as managing the budget simultaneously (Loach, Garnett and Quart, 1980, p. 26). Figure 4 below portrays the poverty and financial struggle of the Bidoon. The image on the right is the real-life scenario that was recorded of two residents of the Bidoon community selling fruits on the main road to earn their living. It was photographed as a part of the overt observation and interviews conducted among the Bidoon community. This was, in turn, seeded into the narrative of the screenplay of '*WDIGFH?*' The image on the left depicts the character of Fahad selling fruit and vegetables on the main road.



Figure 4: Fahad Walks to a Car to Make a Sale (Left); The Bidoon Arranging their Produces in Front of the Main Road (Right).

The various photographs below, figure 5 were taken during my on-the-field trip to the Bidoon community in Sulabiya. To add a sense of ‘realism’, this footage was seeded into the narrative of my film, *‘WDIGFH?’* It is depicted in the scene where Hamood shows Dalal his poverty-stricken neighbourhood (see figure 6 below).



Figure 5: Exterior of the Bidoon Housing in Sulabiya Region.



Figure 6: Hamood and Dalal in Bidoon neighbourhood.

While spending time with the Bidoon, I keenly observed their living conditions. Figure 7 below illustrates interior images of a Bidoon house. The footage aided in set design and finding similar looking sets for film locations in ‘*WDIGFH?*’



Figure 7: Interior of a Bidoon Residence in the Sulabiya Region.

Figure 8 below is a collage of photographs recorded from the interior areas of a beach house located in the Khiran district. These images are used as guidelines for assembling the Kuwaiti locations prior to shooting the film ‘*WDIGFH?*’



Figure 8: Interior of the Beach House of a Kuwaiti citizen.

This discussion will now be on the different aspects and experiences I faced during the film production process and how these experiences were used creatively in the production of *‘WDIGFH?’*

Finding economical methods of production

Shooting a 60-minute drama film with a low budget is not a simple task. It is a task filled with challenges, but the reward is worthwhile. I had to find the most economical way to approach the tasks. A whole production crew was not feasible; rather the shooting was carried out by me alone. Furthermore, shooting in easily accessible natural settings was a strategic choice. Accordingly, the open desert and the residential areas were immediate choices. I also filmed some scenes in my own residence. I followed Cleve’s (1994) advice in this regard that is “the screenplay should limit the story to scenes in the location that is either available or will be easily available and that can be found locally without much expense” (p. 58). This way, I economised in terms of rent, re-shoot expenses when required, storing equipment safely overnight, and recharging equipment batteries. These are all costly matters especially regarding reshooting which entails the availability of actors (Brown, 2016). Therefore, when making *‘WDIGFH?’* I mostly concentrated on completing every shot at one go between the timespan of setting up a shoot and wrapping up from a particular location.

Unquestionably, making use of real locations in ‘*WDIGFH?*’ provided authenticity and eliminated set design, which thus enabled focusing directly on filming and coordinating the cast (Goodridge and Grieso, 2012). Initially, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was to be shot inside an actual Bidoon housing unit located in Sulabiya at the outskirts of Kuwait City so that the most authentic setting could be secured. However, it was difficult for the families residing there. Accordingly, I took pictures of their houses both inside and outside and subsequently used them to find a house that looked similar. I successfully located a house in which a family of a Kuwaiti woman married to a non-Kuwaiti man resided. I will refer to this house here as the ‘Kuwaiti house’ for simplification. Figure 9 depicts the similarity between the bedroom set of the Bidoon residence to a storage room in the Kuwaiti household, used as a bedroom site in my film.



Figure 9: Interior of a Bidoon Bedroom in Sulabiya (Left); Interior of a Kuwaiti storeroom (Similar to Hamood's Bedroom in *WDIGFH?*) (Right).

The budget I worked with

My total budget used to produce ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was roughly 750 Kuwaiti Dinars (KD) (this converts to around 1,800 British pounds sterling). Before shooting ‘*WDIGFH?*’, I contacted several production teams (via Instagram) to hire camera equipment and a team to assist me during film-production. However, the prices of every contact were extremely high and I could not afford them. On average, and based on my results, the average daily cost to hire camera equipment along with crew members costs between 150 – 500 KD (this converts to between 350 pounds – 1300 pounds sterling). Furthermore, the average cost to hire unknown actors daily was 50 KD (which translates to 120 pounds sterling). As I did not have the funds to facilitate all these costs, I contacted family members to assist me in production. For example, one family member allowed me to borrow his camera and equipment. Another provided props that I used in film production. A friend volunteered to assist on various shoots holding the sound boom on several shooting days. However, the entire bulk of the film's production was

executed by me, the researcher. I scheduled production, contacted the cast, supplied the food, drove to and back from the set, set-up the equipment up, filmed, directed, and edited my entire film. However, after editing was complete, '*WDIGFH?*' required four vital additions to elevate the screening experience and also complete film production. These were, music, sound design, sketches and colour grading. My entire budget was financed on these four elements: music and sound design were needed to engage the viewer into the film's unfolding narrative emotionally. Sketches were needed to complete the film, as without colour grading, the film would have lacked visual impact.

Human limitations of the filmmaking process

The process of film production began in early February 2019. Within the first three days of shooting, everything seemed to be going as planned, with the completion of shooting numerous scenes. But the cast did not anticipate the rigorous protocols and the demands of location shooting and the necessity of maintaining punctuality on the set. Regrettably, and on many occasions, the actors of my film were either late or absent at the shooting venue, perhaps because of their inexperience or lack of discipline. To make matters worse, some cast members who were unable to comply with the strict protocol and pressure imposed on them left. This led to a sudden fall in the number of available actors, especially during the overall process of production. In addition, others were unprepared; they did not read (their parts of) the screenplay and did not learn their lines appropriately. Consequently, much of valuable time was wasted in briefing them about the scene. Ultimately, all these resulted in the cancellation of the shooting of the scenes, thereby leaving the shooting schedule incomplete. And since I had limited time with the cast, I had to cut down the number of camera setups to shoot a particular scene. For example, in the scene where Waleed (Dalal's father) enters his daughter's room, he finds her missing and searches for clues of her whereabouts. That entire scene was filmed via a single camera setup. Cutting down the camera setups allowed me to work around the limited time I had with the cast. Unfortunately, some cast were no longer available before completing the scenes. There were still numerous scenes left in the screenplay that I did not shoot. These limitations opened up a door for creative solutions - the use of animation - that assisted me in addressing my research question.

Inclusion of animated sketches to overcome production limitations

To resolve the issue of the cast being no longer available, I had to think imaginatively by merging Hamood's craft as a sketch artist in the visuals of '*WDIGFH?*' Similarly, Steven Spielberg director of the film *Jaws* (1975) encountered difficulties with the animatronic shark during the production of the film. He, therefore, had to change his method of representing the killer shark. Thinking "outside the box, he decided to show the mechanical shark as infrequently as possible as the visual ellipsis created far greater menace and terror, as the shark is nowhere and everywhere" (Haskell, 2017, p. 61). The addition of animation to the storyline of '*WDIGFH?*' was technically beneficial, and it enhanced the production of the scenes as well as covered the following points: the addition of missing footage and a new storyline, elaborating on statelessness at a wider international scale, and more importantly, using the love story between Hamood and Dalal as a vehicle to involve in the political world of the Bidoon's plight.

With the inclusion of animated sketches as a tool for bridging the missing video footage in '*WDIGFH?*' the film production was adequately completed. The integration of animated drawings with live-action footage harmoniously complemented each other. This resulted in creating an eclectic hybridisation of Ken Loach's Social Realism style of filmmaking. Concisely, the process of merging animated sketches with live-action provided a solution to the challenges in the film's production and assisted in achieving a brand-new visual storyline and approach to Social Realist Cinema.

To assist with the new visual storyline, politically based drama films by other directors (which contained animation) were reviewed. Such as the TV drama series *Black Earth Rising* (2018) directed by Hugo Blick. This political drama series was about protagonist Kate Ashby, a victim of the Rwandan genocide. Ashby was rescued and raised in the United Kingdom by foster parents. The series combines live-action with short animated sequences narrated by the protagonist which reflects her past life traumatic events. In the church animated massacre scene, Ashby described the graphic murders she witnessed as a child. The narration by Ashby provided the audience with a summarised understanding of the peaceful pre-genocide lifestyle the Rwandan community were experiencing until the horrific murders occurred. Furthermore, the animated sequences in *Black Earth Rising* (2018) elevated the visuals of the storyline as the audience observed a re-enactment of Ashby's dramatic personal memories of her life. The animated sequences were displayed in black and white without dialogue. At the beginning of the sequence, the families were found to be busy working in their fields, which were

emphasised with light music and sounds of nature. Suddenly, the music darkened at a particular phase in the narrative, when a group of thugs approached the fields and people struggled for their lives seeking safety inside a church. The sound effects used in the sequence added a vital role in enhancing the dramatic images, especially the slashing of the machete. The animated massacre sequence/scene in *Black Earth Rising* (2018) emphasised the power that sound could contribute to enhancing and complimenting the visuals of the narratives. These approaches (to animation, sound and power) were implemented in the animated visuals of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ For example, in the third Bidoon protest scene, I combined the narration of the news reporter with dramatic music and added sound effects of the crowd chanting to enhance the visuals thus emotionally engage the viewer to the unfolding narrative. This approach relates to my research question, where I investigate how I can produce a film that emotionally engages the viewers.

The addition of animated sketches also helped me elaborate on statelessness on a broader scale, such as migration. In ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Hamood flees to the United Kingdom not just because he is afraid of being arrested due to his protest activities but because of his oppressive lifestyle. Prior to implementing animated sketches to the visual narrative, the initial storyline focused on the personal oppressive problems Hamood faced such as inability to access government services. But the addition of animated illustrations enabled me to use the love story between Hamood and Dalal as a mechanism to more deeply involve the Bidoon’s political realm in Kuwait. In the same vein, the addition of animated sketches enhanced the creation of protest scenes which transformed Hamood into a proactive individual fighting for his civil rights by demanding nationality from the Kuwaiti government. To visually translate this information to the audience, I seeded Hamood’s picture on the front page of a Kuwaiti newspaper that Waleed (Dalal’s father) was reading in the beginning of the film and in the breakfast scene. The picture was of Hamood holding a poster which read ‘stateless since 50 yrs!!! We demand citizenship’; standing behind Hamood were hundreds of Bidoon holding Kuwaiti flags.

Further, I made use of animated sketches to emphasise the Bidoons’ human rights violations, such as being denied medical care. In ‘*WDIGFH?*’ and after the attack on Hamood by the Forger, he was unable to seek medical care at a clinic. The clinic scene was represented by a sequence of animated sketches rather than live-action footage. This saved a great deal of paperwork required to access a clinic which might still be denied. Therefore, photographs of the décor inside a real clinic were taken to assemble the scene which consisted of a sequence of animated sketches.



Figure 10: Hamood being dragged away by authorities from the clinic's reception.

In addition, and as I have explained earlier, it was my intention to record real Bidoon individuals in their natural community. However, upon visiting the Bidoon community, most of the people residing there refused to be filmed. Therefore, I shot the scenes establishing footage of their territories, such as empty roads and housing projects. Yet, the recorded footage of the empty Bidoon community needed characters. Hence, sketched images were employed (such as a Bidoon man selling watermelon, see figure 11 below) and layered over the live-action footage. Filming inside a Kuwaiti citizen community was not an issue. However, it was difficult for me use of a particular camera setup (a tracking shot) because I did not have a production crew. Therefore, by using animated sketches, I re-created a Kuwaiti residential environment and animated the sequence precisely in the manner I wanted it to be filmed.



Figure 11: Sketched images of Hamood and a Bidoon man selling watermelon are layered over live-action footage inside a Bidoon community (Left); Kuwaiti residential environment created for tracking shot (Right).

In essence, the inclusion of the sketched animation into ‘*WDIGFH?*’s narrative enabled me to produce empathetic, engaging scenes. By this, I mean that there were scenes that required innumerable extras and a large crew for designing and setting in real life such as the ‘Bidoon protest’ scene. However, this was easily avoided by portraying the scene in a sequence of sketched images. For example, in Act Two, Hamood and his lover Dalal run past a protesting Bidoon gathering. Portraying the scene in animated sketches provided an easy alternative to my low budget because it was visualised in a single landscape sketch. Therefore, in practice, an anamorphic horizon was created to merge both the Kuwaiti citizen community on the left of the image and the Bidoon community on the right of the image. In post-production, a still graphic of Hamood and his lover Dalal was animated from the left side to the right side of the image this gave the illusion that the characters were running (from the Kuwaiti side to the Bidoon side of the image) (figure 12). In fact, by utilising animation, the impossible, for me, became possible (Selby, 2013).



Figure 12: Hamood and his lover Dalal run past a protesting Bidoon gathering. The Kuwaiti citizen community on the left of the frame and the Bidoon community on the right of the frame.

Ethical considerations

'WDIGFH?' broaches the very sensitive and ongoing political issue of the Bidoon's socio-legal status in Kuwaiti society. As such, and in terms of transparency, both the Kuwaiti citizens and the Bidoon community (as well as the cast involved in the production) had to be made aware of the research process, its aims and future applications. From an ethical perspective, obtaining informed consent from all of those involved in the production process was a necessary first step to the filming process. Ostensibly, Kuwait is a nation-state that is facilitative of research and critique. For instance, Article 36 of the 1962 Kuwait Constitution states, "freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed [...] every person shall have the right to express his opinion by speaking or writing or otherwise" (p. 7). However, my ethnographic immersion in Kuwaiti society taught me that many unwritten rules permeate and guide its social practice. Indeed, many of those I encountered communicated that freedom of speech was quite limited in Kuwait, and candid expressions of dissent or critique often resulted in individuals being stripped of their Kuwaiti nationality. For example, in 2014, the Kuwaiti government launched an "iron fist policy" in response to a continued protest by the Bidoon community and their Kuwaiti supporters (Amnesty International, 2015, p.4). This effectively lets those critical of the Kuwaiti government know that the State will invoke the country's nationality law to strip some critics of their citizenship, sending a stark warning to others the consequences of speaking out.

As my film *'WDIGFH?'* casts a sympathetic light on the Bidoon's plight, another pressing ethical concern that had to be borne in mind was the safety of myself, the research participants and the film's cast. In this regard, I consulted a solicitor for legal advice, who informed me that as the parameters of *'WDIGFH?'* did not encompass an overt critique of the State or its policies (or directly target members of the State itself), *'WDIGFH?'* should be permissible under Kuwaiti law. As such, it became necessary that my film did not transgress these boundaries to maintain its legality and ensure that its political message was effectively communicated to the viewers in Kuwait. As I set *'WDIGFH?'* in the 2011 timeline, part of my aim was to represent the Bidoon protests of that era. Yet including candid depictions of "clashes between police and bidun" during these protests (Shultziner and Tétreault, 2012, p. 284) could be perceived as dissent or criticism of the State, resulting in repercussions for those involved. I opted for the representation of a peaceful protest, where Bidoon people held Kuwaiti flags in a scene that was layered over by narration from a British news anchor. To ensure that all of these directorial choices fell within the parameters of Kuwaiti law, as a final ethical measure, I screened the completed film (*'WDIGFH?'*) to the above-mentioned solicitor to ensure that it was ethically

and legally viable and would not endanger the research participants, the cast members, or the researcher involved in the production.

Before the shooting of '*WDIGFH?*' I spent a considerable amount of time (two months) at a theatre training facility located in Khaitan district, Kuwait City. The presence at the theatre class helped establish a trustworthy relationship with the potential cast and myself, the filmmaker. This was important not only to choose the volunteering acting cast but also to form a bond with the participants based on honesty (Maccarone, 2010; Thomas, 2012). But the most important aspect was to inform the chosen cast of the nature of my project and what it involved in detail. It was also important that the cast understood "the study release forms and how their image and words might continue to be used and disseminate for years after the study is completed", as these recorded images (of my film) would be made available online (Walker and Boyer, 2018, p. 4). This is imperative from an ethical and moral viewpoint.

Some of '*WDIGFH?*'s film shoots were conducted inside the Bidoon community and provided an authentic illustration of their living conditions. Thus, before filming inside the Bidoon community, my guide was always present, accompanying me along with the day's shoot. This helped me grasp how the subjects in my film were to be portrayed and which scenes could be or could not be shot (Stradling, 2010). In addition, it contributed mainly to my understanding of the manner in which the dignity of the people, the sensitive aspect of their experience, life and time, can be portrayed sensitively.

During my on-the-field trip, I established an honest relationship with my guide and Bidoon people I interviewed. A faithful relationship with the participants can be created based on their time and issues considered for discussion (Thomas, 2012). Thus, a great deal of time had been spent within the Bidoon community of Kuwait just interacting with them. The bond I developed with my guide and interviewee respondents (Bidoon and Kuwaiti citizens) has truly aided the background designs of the fictional characters and the development of my screenplay in my film, '*WDIGFH?*' Furthermore, this trust-worthy relationship allowed me to record Bidoon subjects whom I agreed to provide complete anonymity. From an ethical standpoint, blurring the images of the respondents in the footage and photographs provided secrecy and further protected their identity once '*WDIGFH?*' was released to the general public. Filmmakers "have an ethical responsibility to prevent harm to their subjects if they are in a position to do so" (Maccarone, 2010, p. 192). Therefore, after recording the details of the Bidoon participants,

their faces were blurred to ensure their privacy and to safeguard their identities as well. Davis and Meretoja (2017) assert that filmmakers are always burdened with the problem of scrutiny of the ethics of their practices when dealing with histories and political documentaries.

Ethical approval was sought from and approved by the University of Salford (Appendix: Ethics Approval, p. 148). I continuously consulted with the Ethics department at the University of Salford to ensure the unbiased and suitability of my research and approach (Smith and Noble, 2014). In addition, I adhered to the norms highlighted in the specialised handbook of Social Research Association Ethical Guidelines (Social Research Association, 2003) on ethics and endeavours to maintain objectivity and ethical probity. Those guidelines comprised maintaining confidentiality (anonymity) of the participants' details, obtaining informed consent from them before involving them in the observation and interview process, and safeguarding the selected respondents from all sorts of harm, be it physical or mental, and of their interests as well.

Chapter Three



Literature and Film Review: A Slice of Life

This Chapter is divided into two sections. The first examines the Bidoon's case presented in chronological order, while the second offers a review analysis of sample films that discuss and further extricate film techniques that emotionally engage viewers and ultimately help raise their awareness. I also refer here to how these techniques were implemented in my film, *'WDIGFH?'*

The name of the story: Bidoon and a history of struggle and resistance

Walking this mile and diving into Kuwaiti Bidoons' scholarship and literature is not an easy task. It is one filled with emotional as well as intellectual perils. To start: the label 'Bidoon' is problematic in many aspects. It is an Arabic word that means 'without' a deprivation of things. However, it is used to mark, categorise, describe and identify hundreds, even thousands of people as a homogenous group distinguished before the analysis process. In doing so, a singular group is formed based on their similarities. For instance, their victimisation and oppression, while their collective history as actual material subjects are concealed. As a result, a "ghost population" (Beaugrand, 2011, p.228) or a "faceless or half-faced" (Kennedy, 2013, p. 77) representation is formed; an umbrella term masking a history of struggle and resistance of lived experiences and realities. In accordance, a discursive construct has been established reflecting a dominant narrative marking the 'Bidoon'. Knowing that Bidoon of Kuwait speak the Arabic language and the Kuwaiti dialect; they are Arabs, this matter is more bewildering. They share Kuwait's culture, religion, and history and view themselves as part of Kuwaiti society. In essence, "Bidoon, for the most part, could not be distinguished in their appearance from native Kuwaitis. Nor could they be distinguished by their clan names" (HRW, 1995, p. 10). So, what is the story, and what does most of the literature tell us?

Origins of Bidoon

An overview of Kuwait's early 1900s history reveals that two distinctive components constituted the Kuwaiti community: the Hadar, permanent Arab settlers who lived near the coastal area in Al-Kut (known now as Kuwait City), and the Bedouin (sometimes also called Badu), nomadic Arab tribes who roamed the desert moving their animals "for centuries... without checkpoints or border crossing" (Shiblak, 2009, p.37), but always returned to Kuwait. There are also Ajam (Persians) who migrated and settled in Al-Kut (with the Hadar)

pre- and post-the State's establishment in 1961 (HRW, 1995). These two communities lived within the larger community "of the Emirate, which unified all those groups in a coordinated, harmonious social, political and cultural system" (Alhajeri, 2014, p.17). When the nationality registration process in Kuwait commenced in 1959 under the authority and watchful eye of the British powers, it took place in the city. Thus, "citizenship was conferred first to the city dwellers and then to the pastoral tribes who lived further out" (Kennedy, 2013, p.75). According to Eldemerdash (2015), the post-war period (World War II) changed the entire perception of what constituted citizenship. The emergence of nation-states (post-World War II) altered the citizenship's designation, where the tribal and geographical origins were overlooked. The traditional identification of the people in the Gulf region was founded based on their tribe that occupied an area. For example, Al-Hasawi is a typical family in Kuwait that could be originally traced to Al-Hasa region, the eastern part of Saudi Arabia.

The concept of citizenship as a classificatory principle remained unfamiliar to how the local people perceived the social relationship in the region. In other words, most people in the area did not recognise the importance of citizenship, given that they had tribal and geographical ties to Kuwait. The failure to understand the importance of the need to register for citizenship and its impact on the social organisation significantly affected the nomad tribes who did not live in the city (Kennedy, 2013). However, there were also Hadar people who did not participate in the registration process. As a result, many people – both Bedouin and Hadar, though mainly Bedouin – did not register. These are the people known now as the Bidoon, a term used to lump together different people based on their sameness in lacking the Kuwaiti nationality, forming a coherent group of stateless individuals. Scholars elaborate on the reasons why the Bidoon failed to be part of the nationality registration. For example, Shiblak (2009) explains that this group of people was predominantly illiterate and therefore unable to read the registration forms. They were also suspicious of the "undesirable devices brought by men with blue eyes, who wore trousers and funny hats" (p.87). Therefore, for some, these were the primary reasons they chose not to register (Alhajeri, 2014). In this vein, Talal's case, a Kuwaiti Bidoon, is to the point. He explains:

I remember a time in my childhood when I was actually visiting my uncles and aunts, and they were [living] in tents... It was not a long time... When Kuwait became an independent country, the whole concept of citizenship was new to people. My grandfather [thought] 'I'm not sure I need this.' He just decided not to do it [and obtain his citizenship papers] (HRW, 2011).

1980s a witness to human rights crisis

Before Kuwait's independence in 1961, 'statelessness' did not exist, and "the issue of Bedoun did not constitute, in the beginnings, a problem for the population of Kuwait" (Alhajeri, 2014, p.17). Effectively, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Bidoon were treated as Kuwaiti citizens "except for political rights. They were not discriminated against in jobs and various social rights" (Alhajeri, 2014, p.18). Bidoon continued to have access to most of the benefits and privileges Kuwaitis possessed and were treated as Kuwaiti citizens until 1985. In the mid-1980s, the Bidoon faced multiple restrictions; they were denied education, driving license, and travel documents (Alnajjar, 2001). It has been since 1985 that the Kuwaiti government "began to deprive the Bidun of their places of employment, canceled their driving licenses, and blocking the possibility of their children attending schools" (Cohen and Keinan-Cohen, 2019, p. 111). The region was unstable due to the Iran and Iraq war (1980-88); in late 1985, "the government decided from that date that there would be no one called Bedoon, he would be either be a Kuwaiti or a non-Kuwaiti" (Alnajjar, 2001, p. 193). The drastic changes in the way the government treated citizens and non-citizens altered how the Bidoon were perceived and exposed the negative aspects of the exclusivity in the nature of the Kuwaiti social structure. As Beaugrand (2018) explains "evolution of the bidun issue illustrates the ebb and flow of the brief historical period that ran throughout the twentieth century and that was characterised by the territorialisation of citizenship" (chapter one, para 10).

After the discovery of oil, Kuwait's economy began to expand significantly, and Kuwait became "the largest oil producer in the Middle East, and fourth-largest in the world... it boasted the world's largest oil port, and the largest oil reserves" (Al-Nakib, 2016, p.13). Following the 1960s/70s oil boom, foreign workers were attracted to Kuwait for social and economic purposes (Eldemerdash, 2015). As a result, (in an interview) an ex-member of the Kuwaiti parliament explains, "the flourishing economy... attracted migration. People that fled the Iran – Iraq war (1980 - 1988) and people fleeing from Iraq saw Kuwait as a stable region, easy access, and had opportunities" (Alhurra, 2011). Consequently, the Kuwaiti population started to expand. The demand for Kuwaiti nationality also increased, putting "real pressure on a heterogeneous and stable population structure" (Alhajeri, 2014, p.21). Nevertheless, the government believed that the Bidoon had destroyed their papers, and "emigrated from neighboring [Arab] countries of Kuwait to benefit from the privileges and free public services given by the Kuwait government" (Abu Sulaib, 2021, p. 136). The Kuwaiti government

became more stringent in applying the laws. It increasingly stressed that Article 1 of the 1959 Kuwait Nationality Law states: “original Kuwaiti nationals are those persons who were settled in Kuwait prior to 1920” (para 1). Therefore, the Bidoon applying for the Kuwaiti nationality faced complex restrictions from a deliberately designed bureaucratic system (Beaugrand, 2011).

Religiopolitical dynamics

The religiopolitical dynamics of the Gulf region also played a pivotal part in influencing the conditions faced by Bidoon in the area. Although the level of impact that religion had on the issue of Bidoon may be a matter of debate among scholars, there is a consensus that religious battles between the Sunni and the Shiite have had a significant impact on the policies of the region. The change of government policies towards the Bidoon and the changing status to “illegal residents” is linked to the “religious resurgence, or rather the adaptation of religion-inspired activism to the modern state system.” And this “represents one of the major structural changes to have affected Gulf politics since the 1970s” (Beaugrand, 2018, chapter four, para 5). Shiite political Islam gained traction in Gulf politics following its success in the Iranian Islamic revolution. This religiopolitical movement found its way into the Kuwaiti social sphere. The Shiites in Kuwait organised a weekly meeting to discuss political issues such as equality amongst citizens, equality amongst genders, and equality of rights (Beaugrand, 2018). The Bidoon became a more significant matter in such discussions, while the gatherings created tension among the political elites. Coupled with the 1980 recession, which saw a deep fall in fuel prices, “traditional religious networks pushed the state towards more alignment in terms of border strengthening and population control” (Beaugrand, 2018, chapter four, para 4). The Bidoon became an easy political target because the deportation of foreign workers in Kuwait could have dire economic consequences. Bidoon, as a result, were reclassified as ‘illegal residents’ for the furtherance of the government plan that they were responsible for the economic plights of the country.

The situation worsened after the first Gulf War (1991) as Bidoon faced further human rights violations. For instance, a member of the Bidoon community stated that his 34-year-old daughter disappeared after the liberation of Kuwait (from the Iraqi occupation) and believed that the Kuwaiti security was involved in her abduction (HRW, 1991). Furthermore, Kuwaiti authorities deported hundreds of Bidoon after the Gulf War (1991) (HRW, 1991, pp.16 and 45). HRW (2000) adds, “restrictions increased in the aftermath of Kuwait’s 1990-1991 Iraqi

occupation. Bidun who fled to Iraq to escape the air war found themselves stranded there when Kuwait refused to re-enter all but a few” (p.3). The Bidoon, who were in Kuwait during the aftermath of the war (1991), faced further restrictions and violations, on a daily basis, such as: “denial of employment, freedom of movement, and the threat of arbitrary arrest and deportation” (HRW, 1995, p. 7). This seems to be a government plan to chase off the Bidoon to *their own country*, leaving only the Kuwaiti citizens to enjoy the social welfare system created for them. In fact, a common reason, why the Kuwaiti leadership remains adamant in not issuing nationality to Bidoon is that they are portrayed as outsiders trying to take advantage of the country’s economic prosperity and welfare system. The rulers of Kuwait had reduced the problems of Bidoon to an issue of struggle for welfare. Thus, Kuwaiti citizens developed a perceived feeling that Bidoon are outsiders depleting their country’s resources. The government has used this approach for years, and it seems to have played well in their objective of creating a divide that breeds animosity from Kuwaiti citizens toward the Bidoon (Beaugrand, 2011).

Following the discussion above, citizenship is primarily understood from an access to social services stance. Al-Nakib (2016) maintains that the categorical dichotomy under which an individual is classified as either Kuwaiti or a non-Kuwaiti is a critical criterion for citizenship. The country’s welfare system, which is funded mainly by the richness of natural oil in the country, demands that only Kuwaitis get to enjoy this welfare (Crystal, 1995). The new Nationality Law of 1959, which is the one in effect today, defines who should be considered Kuwaiti citizens. Although it is still possible to become a citizen of Kuwait through naturalisation, the number of naturalised Kuwaitis became more limited, particularly towards 1960. The leadership in Kuwait became more critical of the Bidoons’ claim to nationality who were and still are viewed as a direct threat to the distribution of resources.

Bidoon’s social status

Bidoon were regarded as Kuwaitis before 1986; however, due to an unstable region (1980-88 Iran/Iraq War), low oil prices, and a murder attempt on the Amir in 1985, Bidoon were seen as a possible security risk (Shultziner and Tétreault, 2012). The violations that the Bidoon faced during and after this period greatly affected their status. This is no wonder since, Alnajjar (2001) accentuates, “during political crises, human rights are usually the first victim” (p.188), and such was the case with the Bidoon community. To date, the situation has remained the same; not only do Bidoon have limited access to governmental services, they essentially “feel

powerless, normless, and isolated” (Abu Sulaib, 2021, p. 147). During my on-the-field data collection, the Bidoon I interviewed felt they had no sense of belonging in the country they were born and lived their entire lives. One of the Bidoon interviewees stated: ‘there are restrictions on my rights as a human being... I cannot travel, and I cannot get a birth certificate for my daughter. My sons do not have identification cards.’ He went on saying ‘there is no future for my children; only suicide or death’ (2018, Bidoon Interviewee B).

This policy of document dispossession, the Kuwaiti government is pursuing, Beaugrand (2011) refers to as ‘administrative abuse’. While the official plan is to force the Bidoon/illegal residents to reveal their *assumed* identities, “it is used to put pressure on claimants to citizenship so that they drop their claims” (p.234). Administrative violence affects the lives of the Bidoon by denying them documentation needed in daily social life, as expressed by the Bidoon I interviewed for this study. As a result, this vicious circle keeps rolling, affecting more lives. For instance, a birth certificate is vital as it is a form of legal identity and provides evidence that a child was born in the state’s territory. Therefore, it is an important document for citizenship and critical evidence in establishing nationality (De Cuba, 2016). It also contains information regarding one’s parents. Without a birth certificate, Bidoon children cannot enjoy “fundamental rights and freedoms; infringement of the right is usually seen as jeopardising access to, amongst others, education and health” (Stein, 2016, p. 616).

Contemporary Kuwaiti society

Kuwait is organised into a strict class hierarchy, which has a far-reaching impact on the position of Bidoon in Kuwait society. Ali (2006) argues that “in Kuwait, there are mainly two classes of citizens. First-class citizens have greater social status... those who immigrated before 1920 are first-class citizens, and those who immigrated between 1920 and 1948 are second-class citizens” (p.65). Although, first and second-class Kuwaiti citizens share equal opportunities, only first-class Kuwaiti citizens, those who migrated into Kuwait prior to 1920, may run for parliament. The decision of 1920, to determine whether an individual is a first-class citizen, is related to the impact of Jahra’s battle on the bond between town dwellers. In that vein, and according to Longva (1997) “the battle of Jahra in 1920 created a special bond between the town-dwellers who had taken part in it and invested them with an unshakable claim to membership of the Kuwaiti community” (p. 24). During this battle, the town dwellers spent two months preparing and fortifying the town against an impending attack from Ibn Saud (of Saudi Arabia), who unleashed his Ikhwaan troops to invade Kuwait. This event became an

essential part of the country's history, and it determined who had the right to political control over the country to the present day (Al-Nakib, 2016). Longva (1997) adds that this event “saw the birth of an explicit Kuwaiti ‘national’ awareness by creating a nucleus of hard-core citizenry encompassing those who had taken part in the events and their descendants” (p. 24). Furthermore, this event gave the town dweller some form of a legitimate claim as the owner of the protectors of the Kuwait territory.

Although the Bidoon share the Kuwaiti heritage, they occupy the lowest level of the social strata identified as “third-class citizens” (Ali, 2006, p.65) or the official label, as the Kuwaiti Government states, ‘illegal residents.’ Bidoon communities’ lack of political representation worsened their situation and made it more difficult to claim a position of favour. The parliament in Kuwait has the power to resolve political issues. The parliament can “vote a minister out of office (Article 101); express no-confidence in a minister, including the prime minister (Article 102); reject laws proposed by the executive branch (Article 66), and draft and pass independent laws and regulations” (Kuwait Constitution, 1962, p. 11 and 17). Whether the parliament serves the needs of the people is a matter of contention. There has been a constant demand for the democratisation of the position of prime minister, indicating a potent context for improving representation. However, the position in the parliament remains reserved for those who fall under the category of first-class citizens. Lacking political participation in the policies that affect them makes the Bidoon live an inferior life in Kuwait. To this point, a Bidoon interviewee explained that ‘the future [of Bidoon] is determined by strict and harsh rules we have nothing to do with. We lose motivation to be creative, and certainly, this will lead to future problems’ (2018, Bidoon interviewee D). Much of the attempts to liberate the Bidoon originate from international organisations and state and non-state actors. These efforts have always met futile outcomes.

Comoros economic citizenship

To alleviate the Bidoon’s plight, the Kuwaiti government has provided them with an opportunity to acquire the Comoros *economic* citizenship (Vlieks, Ballin and Vela, 2017). On the official Comoros citizenship website, the term ‘economic citizenship’ is defined as “the process where an investment is made by donation [once approved] the government will provide you with citizenship and then a passport... the Comoros program offers one of the cheapest citizenships to buy” (Multitravel Consultants, 2020, para 4). This is perceived as a solution the Kuwaiti officials proposed to solve the Bidoon’s plight. Vlieks, Ballin and Vela (2017) explain

“Comoros, a small and economically underdeveloped State, has agreed to this solution; it will provide Bidoon with Comorian nationality and all rights attached to this nationality” (pp. 159 and 160). In return, the Kuwaiti authority will offer indefinite residency permits to those Bidoon who accept the offer.

Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, stated that “the relationship between Kuwait and Comoros is clear: ‘it’s a wealthy country paying off a poor country to offload its citizenship obligations’” (Vice News, 2014, para 13). However, if the Bidoon accept the Comoros Island economic citizenship, they will no longer be eligible to apply for the Kuwaiti nationality. They will also be at risk of deportation from Kuwait. The fact is that stateless people are difficult for countries to get rid of as their lack of legal documentation protects them from deportation (Zedner, 2016). The discriminative and oppressive lifestyle within contemporary Kuwait forced some Bidoon to migrate elsewhere, such as the United Kingdom hoping to claim asylum (Nonnenmacher and Cholewinski, 2014), leaving behind a home country that rejected them.

The Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents

To resolve the Bidoon crisis in Kuwait, the government set up “‘The Central System to Resolve Illegal Residents’ Status... [this body] holds exclusive authority to determine all matters touching upon nationality or official documentation for Bidun” (HRW, 2011, p.18). The Central System has accepted that around 34,000 Bidoon have the right to obtain Kuwaiti nationality. Regrettably, no measures have been taken to resolve the matter (Abu Sulaib, 2021; Mansoor, 2021; Cohen and Keinan-Cohen, 2019). Interestingly, this was confirmed during a lecture I attended, titled ‘The Bidoon Case and Solutions’, during November 2019. One of the Kuwaiti speakers said, ‘I had a conversation with a minister, and he mentioned ‘we have 35,000 Bidoon that deserve nationality.’ Also, during the same lecture, an active parliamentarian stated: ‘in 2017, I presented a document to the parliament; this document provided a framework for Bidoon to access government services such as education, employment, and healthcare. However, until this day, this document has remained ignored and undiscussed’. This shows that there is little (official) appetite for change. Thus, the Bidoon community remains deprived of human rights and has become, by and large, a marginalised and ostracised community. Discrimination, exclusion, persecution are three words used to describe the everyday life of the world’s stateless minorities (UNHCR, 2017, p.2).

Post-2011 Arab rising

Since the 2011 Arab Uprising and Bidoon's political protests, the struggle of the Bidoon community in Kuwait has garnered significant attention around the world. Both national and international academics and humanitarian actors have written many articles, reports on human rights violations, and overviews of the problem of statelessness (UNHCR, 2011). Likewise, both in Kuwait and abroad, the media has heeded the issue, showing the living conditions of the stateless Bidoon community. Nevertheless, because the Kuwaiti regime has painted Bidoon as opportunistic foreign nationals "who came from other neighbouring [Arab] countries in order to work in the Kuwaiti petroleum industry" and take advantage of the provisions of the welfare state (Cohen and Keinan-Cohen, 2019, p. 112), only a handful of Bidoon acquired citizenship, while the overriding majority struggles. And for those few Bidoon, according to Al-Anezi (a Kuwaiti sociologist), in an interview with HRW (1995), "the [1959 Kuwaiti Nationality] Law used to say that if a person was in Kuwait before 1945, he could be Kuwaiti by naturalization. But that was not honored. Instead, citizenship was granted by bribes, connections and sometimes at random" (p. 61).

Thus, bigotry towards the Bidoon community continues to occur. On 25 June 2020, an attempted suicide by a young Bidoon student ignited an outcry in the state. Activists took to online social media platforms to report the matter, mirroring the death of George Floyd in the United States. Online users "posted the hashtag 'Bidoon Lives Matter'" and "reacted angrily towards the Kuwaiti authorities, who they said tried to 'cover up' their oppression of the Bidoon by claiming that the student had underlying mental health issues" (Middle East Monitor, 2020, para 4). However, Kuwaiti parliamentarian Mohammed Hayef Al-Mutairi argued that the government's refusal to grant the Bidoon their civil rights has resulted in "unprecedented catastrophic conditions' with people living below the poverty line and increasing cases of psychological and physical illness" (The New Arab, 2020, para 18).

To make matters worse, the strict Kuwaiti nationality laws stress that citizenship is confirmed solely by the male's bloodline. Thus, this policy of granting citizenship is highly restrictive and deprives a "Kuwaiti woman of the opportunity to transfer citizenship to her children" (Maktabi, 2017, p. 438), revealing a discriminatory reality against Kuwaiti women. Kuwaiti Bidoon "were born and educated in Kuwait and are connected by marriage with many Kuwaiti families" (Abu Sulaib, 2021, p. 135). But in Kuwait, Albarazi and Waas (2014) argue, "children of stateless fathers inherit this statelessness and related problems, even if their

mothers enjoy nationality” (p. 49). Bidoon children of Kuwaiti mothers may be granted citizenship in the father’s absence. Article 3 and 5.2 of the 1959 Kuwaiti Nationality Law states that a child “born in, or outside Kuwait to a Kuwaiti mother whose father is unknown, or whose kinship to his father has not been legally established... may be granted Kuwaiti nationality by decree” (KNL, 1959, para 5). In reality, the breakup of families is an outcome for some, while the elusive hope of being granted nationality is farfetched. A Kuwaiti woman (married to a Bidoon) explains:

I was married in 1983, before the catastrophe [Iraqi invasion]. There was no difference in treatment then [between Bidoon and Kuwaitis]... then all the troubles started, and I started to think, what have I done? My children are suffering; my house and my family are suffering... all because I married a Bidoon (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2013, p.21).

The issue of statelessness in Kuwait represents a complicated problem with a deep-rooted historical origin. The plight of the Bidoon is a severe humanitarian crisis. The historical relationship between the Bidoon and the geographical area occupied by the nation-state of Kuwait and the ethnic origin of this community shows that they are not different from the other people occupying the region. The leadership in Kuwait has introduced stringent nationality laws; these decrees have led to the emergence of a stateless ghost population that has, ever since, been deprived the access to social services and has also been subjected to various forms of human rights violation. The government of Kuwait has shown little to no commitment in terms of policy implementation to resolve these issues thus far. In this sense, filmmaking can be a possible new hope to open up conversations and create a positive impact regarding the Kuwaiti Bidoon’s plight.

The making of *Where Do I Go From Here?* (‘WDIGFH?’)

I began creating characters and developing a storyline for my film once reviewing the literature on the Bidoon’s plight and conducting the interviews during my visit to the Sulabiya Bidoon community concluded. The literature review assisted in the construction of ‘WDIGFH?’s screenplay because it provided historical and contemporary insight into the Bidoon matter. While the interviews aided the development of characters when interviewees shared their personal stories. The story of ‘WDIGFH?’ was designed to be an action/drama educating and entertaining the viewers. ‘WDIGFH?’s storyline followed protagonist Hamood, an oppressed Bidoon who fled Kuwait to claim asylum in the United Kingdom. This storyline was designed

to create sympathy, thus, emotionally engaging the viewers with Hamood's journey. 'WDIGFH?'s story portrayed real-life incidents and matters that Bidoon people faced, such as animosity, Bidoon protests, denied access to governmental services, torn families and asylum seeking abroad. These are important issues that some Bidoon people continue to face in contemporary Kuwaiti society. Furthermore, these matters are vital to include in 'WDIGFH?'s story to inform about and create a sentimental involvement with the viewers. My aim is to get the viewers absorbed in the reality of the Bidoon.

Typically, the production of a film unfolds in three stages: *pre-production*, *production* and *post-production* (Honthaner, 2010). The production phase entails the filming of the screenplay and the post-production entails editing of the footage captured during production. However, the success of both of these phases relies on key decisions made by the filmmaker in the pre-production phase; the first step to all filmmaking. In the pre-production phase, the filmmaker undertakes research, finalises the screenplay, casts the actors, sources suitable shooting locations, and assembles a capable production team. All of these decisions are contingent on the availability of funding and resources. Unfortunately, my resources were limited therefore I resolved to tackle all the above-mentioned tasks solely on my own.

The development of the screenplay is central to the filmmaking process, a drama film *cannot* be made without a screenplay. Accordingly, I will proceed to unpack how my screenplay evolved. Key to writing a good screenplay (and, in turn, producing a worthy film highlighting the Bidoon community) is the development of a protagonist, who is beset by an engaging objective, and who exists in a world filled with obstacles that evoke the viewer's emotion (James, 2009). Yet, to *morally* and *justly* portray themes and topics of importance in a screenplay, a substantive amount of research is required (Miller and Miller, 1998). In this regard, I decided to draw from both primary and secondary research to further understand the Kuwaiti Bidoon, relying on literature reviews and on-site data collection from a field visit to Sulabiya, Kuwait, which houses the vast majority of Bidoon people.

In reviewing the literature on the Bidoon community, I became conversant with the academic discussion of their status, their history of marginalisation, and their exigent concerns in contemporary Kuwait. However, reading about a people's history of subjugation to human rights violations and their continued plight can only furnish the researcher with an academic perspective, which is limited in its application to filmmaking. As such, I felt like more was

required: I needed to meet these marginalised people, hear their personal stories, immerse myself in their living conditions and understand their personal problems by engaging with them as fellow humans. To achieve this, I arranged a data collection field trip to Sulabiya, which allowed me to immerse myself in the Bidoon community and corroborate or challenge the insights drawn from my literature review through my own experience. This immersive process furnished me with a wealth of primary visual and qualitative data; and allowed me to ascertain answers to unanswered questions I had after the secondary literature review. Both the primary and secondary data collection phases assisted me immensely in the development of my fictional screenplay, entitled '*WDIGFH?*' Both sources supported me in the designing of an original character and an engaging screenplay that could serve as a means of highlighting the Bidoon's plight to the broader public in Kuwait. The next task was to choose an appropriate narrative capable of conveying a socio-political message.

The ultimate selection of which story to pursue was decided upon through one important aspect: the budget (Wiese, 1998). The limitations of my student budget meant that the narrative I developed had to be feasibly producible whilst also justly representing the grievances of the Bidoon. I found myself asking: 'which story do I tell?'. The ethnographic data collection provided me with plenty of options. For instance, I could develop a story in the context of late-1950s Kuwait, which focuses on an Arab family that did not register with the Kuwaiti government during the citizen-registration process in that era (Shiblak, 2009). Alternatively, I could have centred my story around a Bidoon family and their hardship during the mid-1980s when the community faced severe human rights violations (Alnajjar, 2001). Likewise, the Gulf War (1991) could have provided the basis for my story. However, all of these seemed to demand a budget and production cost that was beyond my means. In relation, producing a film which explored the deep understanding of Bidoon social identity, and relied heavily on intricate dialogue, was also infeasible since the actors I worked with were non-professionals. My production and low-budget constraints guided my decision to invest in a Social Realism film and produce an action-based drama with little to no conversation. I chose to rely on communicating a message through movement and body language which proved to be the most viable approach. This approach spoke to the abilities of the non-professional actors I worked with, making it easier to communicate my ideas to them, and ensuring that they get translated successfully on-screen, without the need for extensive monologue or dialogue.

The story that I eventually decided to devise focuses on a victimised Bidoon named Hamood who falls in love with Dalal, a Kuwaiti citizen. Hamood's objective is to flee Kuwait and claim asylum in the United Kingdom. The development of the story contained minimal dialogue and was communicated through an action-based drama narrative. Mirroring this simplicity of the narrative, I made sure the shooting locations I relied on were easy to access and did not require extra permission for shooting. Ultimately, the circumstances worked to my benefit in developing a story that reflected the socioeconomic and political realities of the Bidoon, and also simplified the production process to a manageable level (however, I *did* face some limitations, which are reviewed in the previous Chapter).

Having secured my screenplay, my next task was to select a visual style in order to shoot my film. After an extensive review and analysis of films, I settled on the Social Realist Cinema inspired by Ken Loach (see Chapter Two). Loach's approach to Social Realism was selected because his films looked and felt *real*. Loach's films synthesised the visuals of both a documentary with drama. Moreover, Loach filmed in actual locations, worked with non-professional actors, utilised natural lighting and, perhaps most importantly, told stories about important issues in society (Lay, 2002).

Thus, this Ph.D. study explores the role films play in raising awareness. In particular, I wanted to investigate how films/filmmaking can help raise awareness on the subject of stateless people, specifically the Bidoon of Kuwait. Toward this end, as mentioned above, I drew on both primary and secondary data to inform the development of my film and its narrative. Part of this entailed reviewing selected Middle Eastern and Western films which were renowned for communicating socio-political messages in different contexts, paying specific attention to their use of film techniques (visual and audio) and their impact on raising awareness. Both of these aspects were ultimately reflected (with a personal twist) in my film, '*WDIGFH?*' Moreover, the review of films guided me in the selection of my film's visual style, Social Realist Cinema, which combines the visuals of both a documentary and drama. To produce my film, as mentioned above, I organised field-visits to the Bidoon community and captured pictures, established networks, and scouted potential film locations. These networks greatly assisted in achieving the practical outcomes of this practice-based research, specifically a 60-minute originally scripted drama film, set in contemporary Kuwait. '*WDIGFH?*' explores the contrast between a Bidoon family's plights and a Kuwaiti citizen's privileged life. Upon its completion,

‘*WDIGFH?*’ was screened using social media (YouTube) to raise awareness of the Bidoon’s social conditions (which will be further discussed in Chapter Four).

I move on to discuss some key films that I analysed to understand how stories and film-techniques can be used to emotionally engage viewers. This was vital as the techniques investigated were incorporated into the production of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ In return, will be used as a tool to raise awareness on the Bidoon’s plight.

Analysis of key films

My aim for analysing a selection of films is to extricate elements that are used in filmmaking to passionately engage and arouse empathy among viewers, this investigation relates to my first sub-research question. In essence, I am exploring how films can emotionally connect with the spectator. To fulfil that and at the same time to make my analysis more focused, I examine two different aspects of films that are related to my objective. First, I focus on the story with attention paid to the varied important components, such as character design, story-narrative, rising-action, and three-act-structure. These factors specifically relate to creating an intriguing character and placing the character in an environment of struggle and conflict to capture the audience’s interest in the story. Second, I examine the film’s *mise-en-scene* and study the visuals, as well as the sound techniques that the directors employed to trigger adhesion to a cause. These are important cinematic logistics such as camera movement, lighting, the pace of editing and sound-effects that were utilised to attract viewers’ attention to the story for an emotional impact in order to raise their awareness.

As part of my research process, using the search engine at Salford University library, I compiled a list of both Middle Eastern and Western films, which were only used to raise awareness on important issues in society. To ensure that the selected list of films was specifically used to raise awareness, the key words used in the search were *raising awareness*, *political films*, *film festivals*, *Middle Eastern*, *Ken Loach* and *Social Realism*. The search list contained a total of seventy-six films. The films varied from feature-length, short fictional dramas and documentary films, which consisted of both big and low-budget films that, in turn, won awards at festivals. The number of films on the list was narrowed down to twenty films for several reasons. First, some of the films focused on the same topic. For example, eight films related to the Syrian civil war crisis (2011). Therefore, out of these films, I selected *For Sama* (directors: Al-Kateab and Watts, 2019), as it won awards in film festivals and it was shot

handheld. Analysing a film shot handheld was helpful since I worked with a low budget. The second reason is related to the techniques used to engage the viewer such as the close-up frame and use of music which came up multiple times, and thus becoming repetitive. Thirdly, the majority of the films featured central characters that faced oppression and conflict throughout the narrative. Fourthly, some of the films were not available to view online and were removed from my list. Furthermore, I concluded the film review analysis at twenty films because the data was becoming repetitive, that is, the utilisation of similar filmmaking techniques was apparent. In essence then, after an extensive search and review, a total of twenty films were selected: twelve Middle Eastern films and eight of a Western background.

Although my film ‘*WDIGFH?*’, is based on a political storyline, I examined films that raised awareness from all genres. This was important because the screening contributed to investigating film-techniques and storyline analysis used by the directors to evoke spectators’ emotions. It also assisted in attaining two outcomes. One, it allowed me to select a particular style to shoot my film ‘*WDIGFH?*’ As discussed, I selected a style inspired by Ken Loach’s Social Realism, which utilises a documentary-drama approach that added a sense of realism. For example, this would involve filming in natural environments, using sunlight rather than artificial light and capturing realistic performances. It allowed me to achieve impressive results despite working with a low budget. However, my Social Realism film later developed into a hybrid of moving images combined with sketched animation (see Chapter Two for detail). Furthermore, the vast selection of films I had examined provided insight into the structure of the story’s ‘rising-action’; the analysis of the characters and the conflict faced from beginning to end. A story’s ‘rising-action’ is divided into three-parts: setup, confrontation, and resolution - these terms will be discussed below.

The two tables below display the list of the selected *key* films:

Middle Eastern Films			
Title		Director	Year
1	<i>A Girl in the River</i>	Obaid-Chinoy	2015
2	<i>A Separation</i>	Farhadi	2011

3	<i>Asmaa</i>	Salama	2011
4	<i>Between Two Seas</i>	Tolba	2019
5	<i>Beyond the Sky</i>	Shalabi	2013
6	<i>For Sama</i>	Al-Kateab and Watts	2019
7	<i>God Grew Tired of Us</i>	Quinn and Walker	2006
8	<i>Ka3bool</i>	Al-Mutairi	2013
9	<i>Leur Nuit</i>	Faqir	2013
10	<i>Omeleto</i>	Zafrani	2021
11	<i>Secret Slaves of the Middle East</i>	Damsgaard and Klovborg	2016
12	<i>Wadjda</i>	Al-Mansour	2012

Table 1: Exhibits a list of the Middle Eastern films analysed for this study.

Western Films			
	Title	Director	Year
13	<i>Bambi</i>	Hand	1942
14	<i>Cathy Come Home</i>	Loach	1966
15	<i>I Daniel Blake</i>	Loach	2016
16	<i>Philadelphia</i>	Demme	1993
17	<i>Schindler's List</i>	Spielberg	1993
18	<i>The Terminal</i>	Spielberg	2004
19	<i>Trevor</i>	Rajski	1994
20	<i>Wonder</i>	Chbosky	2017

Table 2: Displays a list of the Western films analysed for this study.

All key films had been thoroughly screened. While viewing, I flagged and examined important scenes that, in my assessment, emotionally gripped the spectator. Scenes that contained violence, sadness, oppression, and suspense were mainly focused on. In addition, other scenes within the narrative, such as the impact, inciting incident, turn-over, climax, and resolution, were investigated. This analysis proved to be vital for knowing *how* and *why* the scenes passionately grip the viewer and grasp the viewer's attention to the unfolding narrative. I analysed each film separately. Each film was examined in three stages: Film summary, Scene analysis, and Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*' Respectively, the film summary elaborates on the story and how it was used to raise awareness. The scene analysis explains, in detail, the technical methods used by the directors to emotionally engage the viewer. Finally, the extracted film-aesthetics detail how the film-techniques were employed in '*WDIGFH?*'

In summary, I selected and screened twenty key films that mainly focus on raising awareness; these pictures proved to be of immense value to the creation of my film, '*WDIGFH?*' I now briefly highlight the major film-techniques employed by the different directors of the key films and clarify how these techniques were assimilated in, '*WDIGFH?*' as tools to grip viewers emotionally and raise awareness on Kuwaiti Bidoon's plight.

Evaluation of the selected films

I proceed with my evaluation of the different films on the selected list from a viewpoint that is based on a belief that images are "argued to be powerful conduits for the sensory experience" (Rose, 2014, p.29). This is because images allow individuals to visualise the situation as well as understand it better; hence, it is more influential. Furthermore, "visual methods enhance the richness of data by discovering additional layers of meaning, adding validity and depth, and creating knowledge" (Glaw, Inder, Kable and Hazelton, 2017, p.1). Ultimately, films serve as a powerful tool to convey meaning and reach a broader audience. With this in mind, I start by analysing the Middle Eastern films and end with Western films, where each key film is examined as a separate division. I pay attention to how visuals (strengthened by other elements) are used in each film to impact audiences. As mentioned above, each film is categorised into the analysis of three main parts, *film summary*, *scene analysis*, and *extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'*

Detailed evaluation of the selected Middle Eastern films

1. *A Girl in the River* (Director: Obaid-Chinoy, 2015)

Film summary

This documentary raises awareness on the unjust honour killings faced by Pakistani women in Pakistan. The film is about Saba, a young Pakistani woman who falls in love with a man named Qaiser. Because Qaiser is of a low caste, Saba's family disapproves of the relationship. Nonetheless, Saba was adamant about marrying Qaiser. A few hours after her wedding at the courthouse, she was taken against her will by her uncle, with her father's knowledge and consent, to a river side. Saba was then beaten and shot. Nevertheless, against all odds, Saba survives. Both father and uncle were arrested and jailed, awaiting trial. Saba's family, and indeed the community, expected her to get her father and uncle released. She was pressured to forget and forgive in order to bring peace to the community.

Through the documentary, Obaid-Chinoy reflects on three controversial issues common to Pakistan's Muslim society: inequality, suffering, and injustice. Saba's surgery, her confrontation with her family, and her court case exemplify those issues. The background story of the documentary clearly emphasises the oppression that people, especially women face in Pakistan (Grobar, 2016). It specifically points out Pakistani women, who are mostly mutilated or even put to death by radical moralists. The film also reports those individuals who are continuously fighting against such practices and rebelling against them to attain their rights. This film is considered a blow to transgressors and a sign of revolt against the sinful practices of the society. Indeed, an eye-opener for every individual, especially women, to be confident and raise their rebellious voice (Grobar, 2016).

A Girl in the River (2015) was shot and forecasted as a premier based on the investigation made by the directorial team of Obaid-Chinoy. The film, in essence, questions "the interpretations of Islam that allow this brutal practice that claims the lives of more than 1,000 girls and women each year, and the human rights groups lobbying for new laws to protect them" (National Public Radio, 2016, para 4). Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan altered the law of honour killing after watching this documentary. The power of the film was evidenced in the reviews of women audiences, who supported Saba to lead a life of dignity (National Public Radio, 2016). Although Saba was from a small-town, she was supported by the social services teams to recover both mentally and physically. This change in the minds and hearts of the

people who stood with Saba throughout her ordeal is a reflection of raised awareness of the oppressed.

Scene analysis

The living room scene was analysed as it emotionally engages the viewer. Two film-aesthetics are extracted and investigated in this scene; the close-up frame and use of sound. In this scene, an emotional Saba, framed in a still close-up, is describing her horrific story. The tight frame connects the spectator to the unfolding action as it “highlights the emotional nuances of the actor while at the same time signifying to the audience the relevance of the moment of emotion” (Lam, 2014, p. 89). Director Obaid-Chinoy uses the close-up frame to reveal the shocking gunshot scar on Saba’s face. As Saba narrates her story, Obaid-Chinoy intercuts fast-paced handheld swamp footage in combination with sharp sound-effects, such as water splashes to enrich the visuals of the scene. Sound is a powerful film-technique; it unites the visual attention with aural attention. It engages a “distinct sense mode”, therefore, “can actively shape how we perceive and interpret the image” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003, p. 348).

Furthermore, Obaid-Chinoy layers a dark music score to indicate the upcoming gruesome crime. The music score not only adds emotion to the visuals but also guides the viewers to vital elements of the scene/narrative (Hoeckner, Wyatt, Decety and Nusbaum, 2011). To evoke an emotional response, Obaid-Chinoy intercuts swamp footage, mixed with an intense soundtrack, with Saba’s close-up visuals. This editing can contribute largely to maximising the scenes’ emotionality, thereby making use of different forms of temporal manipulations. It also compresses time for building energy, as well as for making everything faster and comparatively more kinetic (Coleman and Friedberg, 2017).

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

Here, I analyse how I utilised the close-up frame and use of sound film-aesthetics into the boatyard scene of my film ‘WDIGFH?’ In this scene, Hamood approaches Dalal with a fist-full-of-cash. A surprised Dalal enquires about the money, to which Hamood replies ‘part-time job.’ Similar to that of Obaid-Chinoy’s method, the scene intercuts additional footage explaining the backstory of Hamood acquiring the money. In the backstory, it was revealed that Hamood had stolen the funds from his parent’s savings. However, unlike Obaid-Chinoy, who had captured Saba’s scene with a still frame, I filmed Hamood within a mixture of handheld close-up shots to suggest instability and heighten the intensity of the scene (Sijll,

2005). I utilised the slight shakiness of the camera frame of a handheld shot, to portray Hamood's desperation and panic behind acquiring funds, thus elevating emotion and visually adding intensity to the moment (Vineyard, 2008). The camera movement intensifies the action to further engage the audience with the scene. In addition, I filmed the sequence with close-up shots of Hamood grabbing the cash and his mother entering the bedroom to develop more tension. Furthermore, unlike Obaid-Chinoy, who utilised a dark music score, I layered a sincere music track over the visuals. The heartfelt music intends to portray Hamood's state-of-mind and allow the audience to sympathise with him, who is desperately in need of the funds to acquire a forged passport. Hence, music provided a narrative of the scene, sets the emotional mood, communicated elements of the film-setting and emphasised the psychological state of the character (Morricone, Morricone and Miceli, 2013).

2. *A Separation* (Director: Farhadi, 2011)

Film summary

This drama film raises awareness of the psychological impact that divorce has on children. *A Separation* (2011) depicts the conflicts and disputes related to relationships following the breakdown of a marriage. The emotional struggles faced by the couple (Nader, the father, and Simin, the mother), their ten-year-old daughter Termeh, and their dependent parent, Nader's Alzheimer's-stricken-old-father, are a central theme of the film. The story also revolves around the life of Termeh, the distraught daughter, who had to choose one of her parents. In the final scene of the film, Termeh and her parents are seen to be sitting inside a private courtroom. The judge asks her whether she prefers to live with her mother, Simin, or her father, Nader. Termeh, emotional and hesitant to make a decision, forces the judge to ask both parents to leave the room. Termeh's decision was never revealed and was left ambiguous.

A Separation (2011) dramatically represents the ideas of pain and suffering from different perspectives. The film commences with the suffering of Nader's father of Alzheimer's disease at an old age, leading to Simin's fight for an independent life with her husband, and Nader's anxiety and decision to file a divorce. The feeling of loneliness faced by Simin for having to return to her parents' home without her daughter Termeh, who decided to settle with her father, added to the dramatisation of suffering. Also, the pain of witnessing a broken family, experiencing courtroom sessions at a young age, and having to decide with whom to stay, have also been adequately represented in this film in minute details. In addition, Nader's experience staying away from his wife portrays a sense of silent pain. This Iranian drama portrays the

breakup of an unhappy marriage in the fascinating, painful, and the complex world in an explosive manner leading to the exposure of social and personal fault lines. *A Separation* (2011) offers the audience a perspective of the normal middle-class societies in Iran. Through this film, Farhadi has proved to be successful in changing the minds of the spectators towards the moral intentions behind filmmaking (Burke, 2011). This is a significant point and relates to my main investigation of raising awareness of social issues, specifically regarding the Kuwaiti Bidoon.

Scene analysis

I choose to analyse the courtroom scene for its intensity and intense emotions. The two film-aesthetics I highlight are: the ‘long-take’ and its use of ambiguous endings. Multiple techniques were used by Farhadi to evoke a sympathetic emotion among the spectators. Firstly, the lighting in the scene was set intentionally dim, which invokes a depressing atmosphere to the environment. Light “is fundamental to the way that we perceive and interact with the screen”; it enhances how we experience aspects of the film (Nevill, 2019, p. 188). Secondly, a more significant part of the scene focused on Termeh in a handheld ‘long-take’ close-up frame. A ‘long-take’ can be used creatively to draw the viewer’s attention to significant matters within the story-narrative (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003). In the courtroom scene, Farhadi captures Termeh’s emotional face by a ‘long-take’ to force the viewer to dwell on the cost of separation.

In the courthouse scene, different options and story-narrative techniques are employed by Farhadi. One such example is when the judge informs Termeh that she has to decide between residing with her mother or father. The director utilises the subtle shakiness of the frame to inform spectators of the character’s mental state and unsettling demeanour. After a long pause, the judge asks Termeh: ‘If it is too hard for you, do you want them to go outside?’ she replies: ‘Can they?’. Here, the camera captures both parents leaving the courtroom. Consequently, the spectator can no longer confirm Termeh’s decision, and the ending of the film is left ambiguous. This film-technique not only adds mystery, but it also creates sympathy between the viewer and the distraught character of Termeh.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

I analyse now how I utilised the ‘long-take’ and ambiguous ending film-aesthetics in ‘WDIGFH?’ In the living room scene, I captured the fight scene between Hamood and Waleed in a ‘long-take’ that lasted for two minutes and three seconds. The ‘long-take’ in *A Separation*

(2011) builds tension by allowing the viewer to experience a moment in actual-time (Weston, 1996). In my fight scene, instead of portraying the scene in its entirety, and to build tension, I jump-cut all the important elements of the 'long-take', such as Hamood manhandling Waleed, into one small fast-paced sequence to add intensity and excitement. I intended to emotionally grab the attention of the viewers towards the unfolding action sequence (Dancyger, 2002).

Furthermore, unlike Farhadi who captured Termeh's disturbed state-of-mind using a 'long-take' in his final scene, I depict Hamood's yearning for his lover Dalal, sitting at a desk anxious to hear the outcome of his asylum case, by intercutting fast-paced flashback footage of them together. The fast sequence guides the emotional response of the viewers to the film's unfolding narrative (Dancyger, 2011a). Additionally, Farhadi did not add a music score to the ending of *A Separation* (2011). Instead, he used natural sounds, such as atmospheric and faint sounds of families in distress. In the ending of '*WDIGFH?*', I add a subtle music score in order to subconsciously draw the spectator into Hamood's uncertainty. The layered music score "has a special ability to affect listeners' emotions and can be regarded as a second source of emotion besides the film itself" (Steffens, 2020, p. 4). In addition, director Farhadi portrayed *A Separation* (2011) in a linear narrative, while '*WDIGFH?*'s narrative depicts two-time parallels - *present* and *past* events. The past events provided the spectator with Hamood's backstory and his social status in Kuwaiti society. Meanwhile, the current events were situated in London, the United Kingdom, with Hamood awaiting the decision of his asylum case.

Like Farhadi, the ending of '*WDIGFH?*' is ambiguous and even after investing in the character, the spectator is left clueless of the outcome of Hamood's case. I wanted the ending of my film to mirror the Bidoon's current unresolved situation in Kuwait, forced to remain stateless for over 60 years. Open endings may not always satisfy the viewer because the questions of the film are not answered (Preis, 1990). But in '*WDIGFH?*' the open ending was there for symbolic meaning, that is, as a metaphor for the uncertain future and social status of the Bidoon in contemporary Kuwaiti society.

3. *Asmaa* (Director: Salama, 2011)

Film summary

This Egyptian film raises awareness about AIDS' patients and the prejudice and mistreatment they receive. The film follows protagonist Asmaa, a HIV-positive woman who confronts the taboos of her society with unexpected courage. *Asmaa* (2011) is considered to be an

inspirational film (Farber, 2012) and one of the best in the entire Palm Springs film festival (2012). According to a report by The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (2011), films made about this genre intend to spread awareness on the reality of HIV patients and help patients deal with all types of associated problems, including those of their insecurities, social rejection, and fear, among others. *Asmaa* (2011) was primarily produced to make people aware of the problems faced by patients with AIDS and encourage spectators to gather adequate information on AIDS (Halligan, 2011). Despite being a part of the HIV support group, the protagonist Asmaa hesitated in revealing her true health conditions. Penalised, in the past, for giving honest responses in varied instances prevented Asmaa from disclosing her state-of-health. Asmaa was suffering from a gall bladder infection and urgently required surgery, her honesty in revealing her affliction with the AIDS virus had led to grievous consequences. The doctor treating her refused to perform the surgery while other medical practitioners refused to provide the necessary treatment facilities. Asmaa was completely isolated. In brief, *Asmaa* (2011) is about “a woman who decides to break the fear barrier to demand her basic rights for health care” (UNAIDS, 2011, para 12).

Scene analysis

I analyse the operating room scene for its complexity and entangled issues. The film-aesthetic I investigate is the pace of editing. In this scene, set in the hospital, Asmaa was pre-examined by a doctor. The doctor asks if she has any pre-medical conditions, to confirm her suitability for the treatment. Asmaa fails to reveal her medical condition. When she was escorted to the operating room, where the medical staff prepares her for surgery, nervous Asmaa informs the staff of her health condition and the shocked team of doctors refuse to operate. To draw the spectator into Asmaa’s state-of-mind, director Salama shoots this scene with handheld footage dipping in-and-out of focus. ‘Focus’ is a storytelling tool and can “be shifted during a shot, thus leading the eye and the attention of the viewer” (Brown, 2016, p. 38). The shifting of the focus from one object to the other indicates Asmaa’s nervous behaviour and hesitance to inform the staff of her condition. In addition, Salama uses the big-close-up frame to capture Asmaa’s anxious eyes as she laid on the surgical operating table. The big close-up frame on Asmaa’s eyes evokes a sense of emotion. The big-close-up shot captured the character’s expression, which “is perhaps the most basic tool of dramatic construction, without which all narrative lacks its essential driving force” (Crittenden, 1996, p. 91). Finally, to convey Asmaa’s anxious behaviour, Salama edited the scene in a fast-paced rhythm to “make a powerful narrative

statement that showcases a pivotal and extended set of events, preserving the integrity of time, space, and performance in the process” (Mercado, 2013, p. 174).

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

Director Salama used the pace of editing film-technique to express Asmaa’s nervous state-of-mind. Similarly, in ‘WDIGFH?’, I use a fast-paced visual rhythm to convey Hamood’s state-of-mind throughout the important events of the film’s narrative. For example, in the yard scene, Hamood paces back-and-forth hesitant to inform his father of his secret departure. As Hamood paces, he utters varied phrases, such as ‘father, listen...’ and ‘...I’m leaving.’ To demonstrate Hamood’s nervous condition, I edited this sequence in a fast-paced rhythm. However, unlike Salama, I added jump-cuts to the sequence to highlight Hamood’s anxiety and translate the scene’s tense emotion to the viewer (Pearlman, 2016). Jump-cuts are very visible, and they disorient spectators (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003), leading them to experience Hamood’s mental-state.

4. *Between Two Seas* (Director: Tolba, 2019)

Film summary

This drama film was directed with the aim of raising public awareness on the cultural beliefs associated with the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Northern Africa. The film revolves around the life of a young woman named Shahd and the tragic instances she had to go through after her horrific operation. The brilliant shots taken throughout the film portray “a dream of sorts, grippingly capturing Shahd’s thoughts, a blur of emotions and her parents’ nervous words of consolation” (El Beih, 2019, para 3). These evocative shots further contribute to keeping the audience’s attention away from the trauma of directly viewing the genital mutilation process occurring in Shahd’s world. *Between Two Seas* (2019) reflects the gap existing between the seas of knowledge, as well as of ignorance, which adds largely to illustrating the locational setting of the events in the film, Geziret El-Dahab in Maadi district of Cairo (Samir, 2019). The film also highlights the struggles of Zahra (Shahd’s mother) in fighting against societal norms for her daughter’s rights facing the tragic accident, thereby instigating the completion of her education and even leading to the enlightenment of her surrounding community.

Between Two Seas (2019) works on identifying the range of societal issues faced by women, especially those residing within the rural areas. In this film, inequality and the role of education

in creating a significant impact on women's lives have been adequately highlighted. The portrayal of suffering and injustice work hand-in-hand in this film. *Between Two Seas* (2019) reflects several concerns and cultural misconceptions that women face in the patriarchal society, such as FGM, early marriage, and subsequently deprivation from education and work (Samir, 2019). Viewing *Between Two Seas* (2019), UN Women (2019) reports, that women have become highly aware of their continuously degrading position within society. In fact, Egyptian women who watched *Between Two Seas* (2019), developed a deep awareness of issues related to societal ill-practices (Egyptian Streets, 2019).

Scene analysis

The most significant filmmaking techniques that director Tolba used in *Between Two Seas* (2019) were utilised in the operation scene. The three film-aesthetics extracted from the scene are: camera operation, lighting, sound, and pace of editing. This scene portrays the surgical operation of protagonist Shahd's genital mutilation. It entailed a combination of dim lighting, fast-paced editing, use of close-ups, and sound design, which were used to evoke disturbing emotions for the spectators.

Lying on the bed, Shahd was surrounded by her family members, including a nurse. To convey Shahd's disoriented and vague memory of the operation, director Tolba captured the scene through a point-of-view frame dipping in-and-out of focus. The sequence draws spectators' attention towards the unfolding narrative by considering the camera lens as the character's optical viewpoint, which is often described as a Point of View (POV) shot. This filmic device is used here to represent loss of vision and consciousness (Buckland, 2011). Consequently, camera optics, used by Tolba, raise awareness of Shahd's confusion during her horrific ordeal.

Moreover, Tolba uses light and shadow patterns to convey the state-of-mood Shahd experience, and help the audience further understand elements within the scene (Barnwell, 2008). The editing of the scene, which was fast-paced and comprised of flashing camera shots, draws attention to and reflects Shahd's vague memory of the operation. The sound design which consists of echo dialogue and sharp sound-effects, enhances the quality of the visual images and further attracts the spectator. This sound technique manipulates the audience's perception, imagination, expectation, understanding, and emotions allowing the story to unfold (Lopez and Pauletto, 2009). Finally, the scene was found to have been shot in a jittery handheld technique to "heighten the viewer's affective engagement" with the film (Tarvainen, Westman, and

Oittinen, 2015, p. 1). Shocking the spectator, Tolba concludes the scene with a dramatic visual of Shahd's body covered in a pool of blood.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

A harsh 'key' light creates a powerful dark shadow with straight edges, this maximises the dramatic intensity of the scene (Box, 2010). In '*WDIGFH?*', hard lighting was utilised to express the confrontation between Hamood and the Forger in the abandoned school scene. Unlike director Tolba who used a dim light. I added hard 'key' light to establish the Forger's sinister character when he attacks Hamood. Furthermore, in the lavatory scene, fast-paced editing was applied to convey Hamood's disturbed state-of-mind. However, unlike Tolba, I intercut fast-paced flashbacks of Hamood's past events to build up dramatic tension. The sequence of quick flashbacks communicates the value of the stolen money, and thus, emotionally draws the spectator towards Hamood. Hence, a depressed Hamood, robbed of his money, plays with a razor blade, while the emotional response of the viewer is guided through a fast-paced sequence (Sijll, 2005). The fast-paced sequence of Hamood's history of oppression prior to being physically attacked captures the viewer's attention and visually engages them to the unfolding narrative (Ward, 2002). Therefore, the fast-paced visual images demonstrated the value of the stolen funds needed urgently to purchase a forged passport to flee Kuwait with his lover Dalal.

Moreover, Tolba's use of dramatic sound-effects assisted me in designing the music score of the police chase scene in '*WDIGFH?*' This is depicted as Hamood runs to the Kuwaiti border, suddenly the music score, switches from a low to a dramatically high level. I intentionally utilise this film-technique to engage the spectator throughout the scene. Adjusting the volume level significantly alters "viewers' perceptions of many elements that are fundamental to the storyline, including inferences about the relationship, intentions, and emotions of the film characters [...] and the overall perceived tension of the scene" (Wakefield, Tan, and Spackman, 2017, p. 605).

5. *Beyond the Sky* (Director: Shalabi, 2013)

Film summary

This documentary film, directed by Shalabi, raises awareness on women's rights in Jordan. It revolves around the character of Tahani, a liberal single young woman working as a flight attendant. Tahani constantly faces judgment from society and her family, who demand she

stays at home and raise a family. *Beyond the Sky* (2013) provides in-depth insights into the personal ideals related to the work and life of a woman of a tender age residing in Jordan. The lonely and struggling life in Tahani's professional field had been adequately highlighted in the film. Although Tahani led an independent life, she missed the company of people around her. She was unable to settle the disputes related to her working as a flight attendant with her family. This profession of a flight attendant was, at that time, considered to be against societal norms set for women in a conservative Muslim society. *Beyond the Sky* (2013) influenced the Jordanian youth to broaden their mindset, identify their potential, fight for their rights and lead an independent life for themselves (Späth, 2016). Furthermore, women were also motivated to deal with societal issues and conservative practices by taking the required steps to fight for their existence in the true sense (Späth, 2016).

Scene analysis

The kitchen scene is examined here to see how these two film-aesthetics, camera frame, and character dialogue, are utilised to engage the viewer emotionally. In this scene, Tahani and her mother are preparing dinner. Her mother asks her daughter about her state of being single making Tahani uncomfortable, assuring her mother that 'everything will be fine.' The dialogue between the two subjects creates friction and emotionally immerses the audience in the narrative thereby evoking a sense of sympathy for the character (Cohen, Shavalian, and Rube, 2015). Without confrontational dialogue, viewer's interest to the unfolding plot diminishes. An effective dialogue plays a number of functions in the screenplay. But its primary objective is to create drama, hence, move the plot forward (Nannicelli, 2013). In addition, confrontational dialogue can be used to raise awareness for important matters - in this case, Tahani's mother insists that her daughter settles down to raise a family.

Moreover, Shalabi, created visual tension by recording the subjects in a close-up 'long-take' that had been framed as a 'two-shot.' There are no shot-reverse-shots in this scene and hence the spectator is fully invested in the emotion of this 'long-take.' Throughout the scene, when Tahani is seen to be cutting vegetables, her body language suggests that she was uncomfortable, she never looked at her mother. This goes well with Kenworthy's (2015) advice who stated that "when two characters meet [...] show them both in the same frame. Make it wide enough to see their body language, but close enough to make out their expressions" (Kenworthy, 2015, p. 10). Although Tahani was replying to her mother, the two-shot frame indicated her discomfort through her body language. Moreover, and in relation to the camera lens, Shalabi

subjectively positions Tahani's mother on the left side of the frame – with her body directly facing the camera. On the other hand, Tahani is positioned in a non-subjective manner – with her body facing away from the camera. Thus, the subjects' body positions established a power hierarchy: the mother facing the camera is superior to the daughter standing in a side-view and looking down at the cutting board. This prompts the audience to connect with the oppressed character and feel their emotion (Batty, 2011). At the same time, it emphasises that the story is not “merely a series of hollow actions” (p. 7).

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘*WDIGFH?*’

In the farm scene of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ an argument takes place between (Kuwaiti) Waleed and (Bidoon) Fahad. Unlike Shalabi's ‘long-take’, I captured the intense argument in a shot-reverse-shot, which in turn, allowed me to control the rhythm of the visual pace and cut between characters at intense moments. Moreover, I secretly instructed the actor playing Waleed to be slightly aggressive, thereby provoking a realistic reaction from the actor playing Fahad. Waleed's unfair treatment of Fahad was meant to evoke a sympathetic reaction from the viewer and also establish a strong bond between the viewer and the oppressed character. By establishing a character “as the causal focus of malicious action, narrative films can rouse or heighten the moral indignation of its audiences toward that character” (Christiansen, 2019, p. 19). Furthermore, Waleed's superiority had been demonstrated in the camera composition. In the shot-reverse-shot between the two characters, Waleed is deemed to stand alone in his frame. However, as the camera cuts to Fahad, his frame is intruded upon by Waleed's presence and this adds an incredible amount of intensity to the dialogue (Simpson, Utterson and Shepherdson, 2004). It also helped to present Waleed as the dominant character, the centre of attention, towering over Fahad reflecting “the power of visual symbols” (Kenworthy, 2016a, p. 70).

6. *For Sama* (Directors: Al-Kateab and Watts, 2019)

Film summary

This is a documentary film, which contributes toward raising awareness regarding the struggles endured by families during the Syrian Civil War Crisis (2011). *For Sama* (2019) comprises a series of painful incidences and struggles faced by a woman at the time of war, and the arousal of the cataclysmic conflict following her falling in love, getting married, and giving birth. In this film, directors Al-Kateab and Watts depict “a double tragedy: the children have somehow been forced to accept the reality around them, while the adults are no longer able to [cope]”

(Wallis, 2020, para 7). According to Wallis (2020), the momentum of *For Sama* (2019) had mainly contributed to raising the awareness of the people on Syria's current situation, while the struggles of the characters in dealing with the situations of chaos and panic evoked a sense of strong willpower. The completion and success of the film largely proved that the pre-conceived notion of people not being interested in Syrian affairs was completely false (Wallis, 2020). The engagement and support the film received by spectators proved that "people do care about the fate of people who are living thousands of miles away" (Carey, 2020, para 3).

Scene analysis

The film's introduction scene is analysed here with emphasis on three film-aesthetics: photographic images, rhythm of editing, and music score. The story revolves around Sama, a young mother, and her family during the calamity of war. The opening visuals of this documentary comprise a sequence of still photographic images of Sama's back history, dressed in her college uniform. In this scene, Al-Kateab and Watts use Sama's narration over the slow-paced sequence of visuals as a tool to emotionally draw and bond the spectator towards the subject. This is one method filmmakers use to elicit emotions in their audiences; other methods are "narration, images, colours, lighting, music, camera angles and characters" (Philippe and Guintcheva, 2015, p. 7). Furthermore, the slow visual rhythm allows the spectator to absorb the information. To this end, Dancyger (2007b) explains that "variation in pace guides viewers in their emotional response to the film, more rapid pacing suggests intensity; slower pacing, the reverse" (p. 373). In addition, to prompt a compassionate response, stimulate feelings and reaction, and "alter a viewer's perception of the dramatic links between words and images" (Beeman, 1981, p. 80), Al-Kateab and Watts added a piece of touching music score over the slow-paced sequence.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'

In the opening scene of 'WDIGFH?', I utilised still images to establish Hamood's back history. However, unlike Al-Kateab and Watts, I seeded a sequence of sketched images rather than just the live-action shots. The sketched images were based on Hamood's personal diary; hence, I used Hamood's diary as a gateway to enter the character's past.

7. *God Grew Tired of Us* (Directors: Quinn and Walker, 2006)

Film summary

This documentary film raises awareness of the refugees' condition during the Sudanese civil war (1985 – 2005). Its storyline revolves around the refugees, who were relocated to the United States, and must adapt to a new society and culture. The success of *God Grew Tired of Us* (2006) has contributed largely to enabling the spectators to attain in-depth insights into the strong connection between the values and roots of the African population. The film is about young Sudanese men who survived the Sudanese civil war (1985 – 2005) and flew to the US. However, they were unable to detach themselves from their native country, Sudan. They faced different challenges in the US, such as the new language and culture, as well as the values of the African American population.

God Grew Tired of Us (2006) “renders us all a moral service by putting this spiritual quality before our eyes in the person of John Bul Dau [a Sudanese refugee] who fled Sudan and wound up in a United Nations refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya” (Frederic and Brussat, 2006, para 2). Directors Quinn and Walker portrayed the characters (the young Sudanese men) in such a way that suffering, deprivation, and loss played a significant role. This role which “embraces compassion and toughness” is reflected in the “humanness, gentleness, hospitality, putting yourself out on behalf of others, being vulnerable” of the characters (Frederic and Brussat, 2006, para 2). The atrocities that took place in Sudan during the 1980s, while the civil war was in progress, contributed to increasing the suffering of the characters as presented in the film. Around 25,000 boys within the age range of 3-13 years were forced to flee from their homeland on foot. They not only struggled in walking a distance of around 1,000 miles but also in finding refuge in the barren deserts of Kenya and Ethiopia (Frederic and Brussat, 2006). Some other problems that led to the suffering, pain, and struggles of individual characters in the film entailed starvation-related deaths, injuries, and deaths due to bombing raids as well as wild animal attacks.

Scene analysis

The close-up frame, the archive footage and the static-frame are three film-aesthetics I analyse in the living room location. In this scene, Quinn and Walker raise awareness of the violence that occurred in Sudan by capturing intimate moments shared with a tearful Sudanese refugee named Mr. John Bul Dau. Bul Dau expresses a personal account that he faced as a young boy during his years of the Sudanese civil war, he says: ‘I was in charge of one group. 1,200 something person. That was the time I learned how to bury the dead bodies... Imagine, the age of 13, can bury. It was so difficult.’ Quinn and Walker used a static close-up frame to shoot the

living room scene to emotionally engage with the viewers. By applying a static camera shot, the viewers are immersed into the subject's monologue, as they are not distracted by the camera's movement. Hence, the camera shot becomes a window between the viewer and subject, thereby connecting the spectator to Bul Dau's emotional story. The tight frame "has the power to increase our emotional involvement, because it centers our attention on every nuance of behavior conveyed by a character" (Mercado, 2013, p. 41). In addition, Quinn and Walker framed Bul Dau in a close-up frame to capture the tearful expressions as he expresses his story, thus involving the viewers passionately. When the camera is framed close, viewers can see details on the subject's face. These details are not visible in wide shots (Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier, 2013). Furthermore, the directors gripped the spectator to the narrative by intercutting graphic archive footage of Sudanese mass graves with Bul Dau's monologue. The graphic footage intended to evoke a shocking and emotional response from the spectator.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

Examining Quinn and Walker's living room scene, I was inspired to include close-up static-frames and observational footage film-aesthetics into the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' In the seaside scene, Hamood expresses his frustration of his legal status with his lover Dalal. This scene contains no action, so I captured the narrative with a static close-up shot to ensure that the camera frame does not distract the audience's attention from the character's performance. A static frame "can provide a strong impression of realism by completely hiding the act of active filming" (Heimann, Uithol, Calbi, Umilta, Guerra, Fingerhut, and Gallese, 2019, p. 2). Thus, the close-up frame engaged the viewer with unfolding drama and the static-frame became a window connecting the spectator emotionally to the unfolding narrative.

Furthermore, unlike the archive footage used in Bul Dau's scene, at the end of '*WDIGFH?*' I included a sequence of observational footage that compared both the Kuwaiti community to that of the Bidoon. To capture this footage, I positioned myself behind "the camera, observing as an outsider, no longer directly interacting in the social world of the participants" (Paterson, Bottorff and Hewat, 2003, p. 31). In an observational mode, the viewers are so immersed into the unfolding narrative that the presence of the filmmaker capturing the footage is invisible to them (Tobias, 1998). Thus, the emphasis of this sequence was "to present a slice of life, or direct representation of the filmed events" (Buckland, 2010, p. 163). The observational footage indicates that although the storyline in '*WDIGFH?*' is fictional, the Bidoon and Kuwaiti communities are real. In the final shot of this sequence, I captured Bidoon children framed in

a subjective mid-close-up directly waving to the camera as if they were reaching out to the viewer. Observational footage offers the viewers personal and intimate moments of the subject (Aronson, 2006). Consequently, this footage is intended to evoke a sympathetic response from the spectator. The footage was framed in a mid-close-up, not only to capture the facial expression of the Bidoon children, but also their body language as they wave peacefully to the camera lens - a way of telling the spectator that ‘they exist.’ The intention was to reach out to trigger an empathetic response that could affect a change of understanding in the audience – if not potentially, action for change.

8. *Ka3bool* (Director: Al-Mutairi, 2013)

Film summary

Although, visual and audio material portraying the social struggles of the Kuwaiti Bidoon are demonstrated through multiple media outlets such as radio, websites, TV news and social media, fictional drama films about this subject are scarce to find. As stated, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is a notable exception and I claim, brings new knowledge to the screen about these issues. However, following an extensive search online, I discovered *Ka3bool* (2013) which raises awareness depicting a “story of the marginalized [Bidoon] who struggle to meet their dues amid a difficult family situation” (Moussa, 2014). Therefore, it was extremely important to investigate *Ka3bool* (2013) and dissect the film technically and narratively. In summary, director Al-Mutairi’s short drama film follows Khalid, a Bidoon man working as a birthday party Barney mascot to make ends meet. The film had a relaxed narrative portraying Khalid’s personal troubles in coping with the demands of life. Throughout the film Khalid is portrayed as a victim, and towards the end, he is mocked by Kuwaiti citizens leaving the spectator with an emotional feeling of sympathy. Furthermore, *Ka3bool* (2013) is a low-budget short film, and lacked a three-act-structure narrative. Thus, *Ka3bool* (2013) did not contain a rising-action that gripped the viewers from beginning to end (see below). However, I reviewed *Ka3bool* (2013) to collect ideas both from a narrative and technical point-of-view. The film-techniques that were useful were seeded into the narrative of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ such as real footage of the Bidoon environment and filming in authentic locations. Moreover, Al-Mutairi made *Ka3bool* (2013) after the Kuwaiti Bidoon (2011/2012) protests; ironically, his film did not contain any scenes of the Kuwaiti Bidoon protests.

After viewing *Ka3bool* (2013), I decided to make my film, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ which portrays a love-oriented fictional narrative wrapped within a political realm. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ differed from

Ka3bool (2013), in that the protagonist was a rebellious proactive individual fighting for the attainment of his social rights. In addition, I used the love story between Hamood and Dalal as a gateway to enter Bidoon's political world. '*WDIGFH?*' comprised dramatic scenes, such as political protests, emotional struggles, and a fast-paced police action sequence. These scenes are designed to emotionally connect the spectator with Hamood's journey. In short, a drama film that entails a sympathetic character in an emotional story has the ability to passionately connect with its viewers (Cowgill, 2005).

Scene analysis

The scene I analyse here is the introduction scene focusing on one film-aesthetic, observational footage. The introduction of *Ka3bool* (2013) grips the spectator with a sequence of observational footage of the Bidoon's slum-like environment. Al-Mutairi utilised the sequence to capture "the spontaneity and uninhibited flow of events as people were living them" (Rabiger, 2015, p. 51). The footage consisted of children walking with their mothers, an old man loading his truck, and young boys dressed in shabby clothes playing football on the hard desert terrain. The observational footage captured "establishes an 'intimate' relation to the filmed events and establishes a sense of place by refusing to manipulate or distort the events" (Buckland, 2010, p. 163). Al-Mutairi also added a piece of sincere music score combined with narration over the images. The music score played a vital role by emotionally connecting the spectators to the scene, while the narration summarised the Bidoon's plight. Al-Mutairi also used the elements within the narration to educate the public on Kuwaiti nationality laws stating that the Bidoon fathers pass their conditions onto their children. To emotionally evoke the spectator, Al-Mutairi combined that specific section of the narration with visuals of Bidoon children dressed in shabby clothes.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

Here, I analyse how I utilised observational footage film-aesthetic in the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' Observational footage of the Bidoon community was seeded in '*WDIGFH?*' but unlike Al-Mutairi, who shot only external footage, I used both internal and external footage of the Bidoon community. I captured uninterrupted footage inside the Bidoon community without intervening in the Bidoon's personal space. The emphasis, in this case, was to depict a form of authenticity while attempting "to be completely invisible" (Buckland, 2010, p. 163). On the other hand, Al-Mutairi seeded the footage in the first two minutes of *Ka3bool* (2013), while I interweaved-observational footage throughout '*WDIGFH?*' by integrating real images with the

fictional narrative storyline. My intent was to provide the spectators with an authentic visual feel to Hamood's emotional journey throughout the narrative. Those images were a constant reminder and aid in raising their awareness on the Bidoon's poverty-stricken community.

9. *Leur Nuit* (Director: Faqir, 2013)

Film summary

This short drama film portrays detailed insights into the problems faced by single women, with a focus on their economic struggles. The film presents Rkia, a forty-year-old Moroccan woman, who works on night shifts as a parking attendant to support her fourteen-year-old daughter. Through *Leur Nuit* (2013), director Faqir largely emphasises the pain and challenges of a single mother both from a financial, as well as a mental perspective. The film portrays a single mother having to leave her daughter alone at home at night to earn a living as a parking attendant. Although Rkia faced innumerable societal obstacles working at night, she did not lose hope and continued working. She struggled emotionally staying away from her daughter every night, contacting her occasionally over the phone, ensuring her security and well-being (Maghreb Des Films, 2014). Rkia's suffering can also be inferred from the fact that she had to deal with different types of people throughout the night whilst maintaining 'a happy face.'

Leur Nuit (2013) had proved to be a great mind-changer for people around the world, especially with regard to the most concerning issue of the position of women in society (Maghreb Des Films, 2014). It sets an example to the youths that women are not less than men, they do not need to rely on their male partners for security or survival. Rkia, was a single woman who was mentally-strong that dared to go out at night and work as a parking attendant without any support. The director's belief that "Rkia represents the male side that exists inside every woman" had changed the viewer's mind to a large extent regarding women and their potential (Charrad, 2014, para 3). The film has also encouraged female spectators to raise their voices to attain their rights, and even rebel against practices that harmed their rights (Charrad, 2014).

Scene analysis

The scene I focus on and analyse is the apartment scene and the film-aesthetic analysed is set design. In this scene, Rkia's apartment is cluttered with junk and litter scattered all over the floor. Faqir utilises the set design and props to communicate Rika's deprived lifestyle to the audience, and the set design translates the emotion and tone of the scene (LoBrutto, 2002). Furthermore, Faqir adds a low lighting source, which creates evocative shadows around the

apartment. By mixing light with shadow patterns, “the director of photography can evoke certain emotional and mental states in the audience” (Maszerowska, 2012, p. 82). Hence, Faqir also uses lighting to express the character’s social position to the spectator.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘*WDIGFH?*’

Set design in ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was used to convey authenticity and portray Hamood’s social position in Kuwaiti society. In my various visits to the Bidoon community in Sulabiya, I was able to detail interior and exterior visual records of the Bidoon’s actual housing structures. The logged data guided me to utilise sets similar to the Bidoon’s natural environment. Furthermore, I incorporated the actual external visual footage of the Bidoon’s environment into ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Thus, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ in this sense, appeared genuine in relation to set design and place. This was intentional as I wanted to use the set design as a film-technique to emotionally connect with the spectator during important sections of the film’s narrative. For example, in the bedroom scene a depressed Hamood sat on his bed, while the wide shot of the lens captured the shabby bedroom. I used the set design of the bedroom to enhance viewer sympathy toward Hamood.

10. *Omeleto* (Director: Zafrani, 2021)

Film summary

This short drama film raises awareness on the glimmer of hope of uniting friendship between an Israeli boy and a Palestinian boy during the ongoing political conflict between the two States. The film follows Nathan, an Israeli boy who befriends Khalid, a Palestinian boy. *Omeleto* (2021) is a representation of the sufferings and inequalities existing between societies across the globe due to cross-border enmities. The film depicts the life of the two boys, residing on each side of the border wall between Israel and the Gaza Strip, their differences and painful instances, and their developing friendship through a hole in the wall. Although the first communication between them occurred accidentally, it developed over time when a ball falls from the Palestinian side to the other side to be returned by a kick. The two boys searched for ways to play, thus improving their bond despite the standing wall between them. They were fearful of what the future held for their friendship. Their realities and where they lived suggested that their friendship may not quite survive (Zafrani, 2021). *Omeleto* (2021) succeeded in reflecting the delight, and innocence of childhood friendship, which could not be barred from flourishing even by the border wall. The spectators obtain a clear inference of the genuine connection between the two individuals at the early ages of life, which does not rely on any discrimination or religious conditioning. Therefore, “all the events of the narrative are

framed through the eyes of children, who have the gift of taking one another as they are” (Zafrani, 2021, para 4).

Scene analysis

The introduction scene provides three film-aesthetics to explore: the montage sequence, the close-up frame, and the music score. The opening scene commences with Nathan walking home from school. He is astounded when a football from the Gaza side lands in front of him. After inspecting a hole in the security wall, Nathan is surprised to see Khalid. The hole in the security wall was, since then, used as a communication path between the two boys. To reflect on the passing of time and the relationship being formed between the two boys, director Zafrani uses a montage sequence intercutting a selection of action-based visuals of the boys playing games together, such as board and water pistol games. The montage sequence did not contain dialogue, but the visuals communicated the narrative informing the viewers of the new friendship. For example, in one of the camera setups of the investigated montage sequence, Nathan glares at a paper pencil-drawing of both of them standing on each side of the wall. The audience later returns to the same image to see Nathan erasing the drawing of the wall between them, using a pencil rubber while smiling at the drawing, which indicates an already established friendship. Zafrani uses the montage sequence to draw attention to the possibility of goodwill and friendship between the two states. This technique of montage sequence plays a significant part in visually enhancing the film’s narrative by “attracting the viewers’ desire... [and] mobilize[ing] the viewers’ emotion” (Li, 2014, p. 599). The Soviet filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein, utilised montage sequence to provide intellectual meaning and to create metaphors with the juxtaposition of images, leading to the arousal of emotions and conveying complex ideas. Eisenstein explains that by placing two images beside one another leads to a combined new idea, - that is, montage, through juxtaposition, forms new reality (Pospiszyl, 2019). Accordingly, this is precisely how Zafrani used the montage sequence.

Zafrani also employed a close-up camera frame to draw the spectators’ attention toward the intimate moments taking place between the characters. In addition, the shot-reverse-shot between the two characters was framed differently. Nathan was framed in a non-subjective shot, while Khalid was approached in a subjective shot. Every choice “of angle, lighting, or perspective may affect the viewer’s understanding” (Kraft, 1987, p. 291). The subjective frame of Khalid “is unique in its ability to let the audiences experience the action as if seen directly through the eyes of a character” (Mercado, 2013, p. 83). Zafrani used the subjective shot to

emotionally draw the attention of the spectator towards Khalid. Moreover, a lively music score accompanies the montage sequence. The music score is used subjectively (switching from style and pace) to indicate, the change in the characters' viewpoints and was "used as a story element" (Sijll, 2005, p. 106). Since the montage sequence in *Omeleto* (2021) lacked dialogue, Zafrani used music to indicate the friendship forming.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'

I used a montage sequence in act-one and act-three of 'WDIGFH?'. In act-one, a montage sequence was used to establish the relationship formed between Hamood and Dalal. However, the montage sequence visually differed from *Omeleto* (2021), it commenced with a live-action scene of Hamood and Dalal walking together on an isolated beach, which was then transitioned into an animated sequence. This montage sequence was vital, it established the idea of a friendship formation between Hamood (the Bidoon) and Dalal (the Kuwaiti). Zafrani used his montage sequence to draw attention to the possibility of change between the states of Israel and Palestine. In 'WDIGFH?', I used montage visuals to express and stress a similar possibility (between the Bidoon community and Kuwaiti). Moreover, in twenty seconds of the montage visuals, I portrayed the passing of time, over months, and thus the bond and love formation between Hamood and Dalal. In this montage sequence, unlike Zafrani, I added the antagonist (Waleed's) abusive dialogue as narration over the visuals to evoke a sympathetic response from the spectator and emotionally connect them to the characters. My intention was to create a conflict between the lovers and an outraged Waleed (Dalal's father), who could not bear his only daughter falling in love with a Bidoon.

In act-three of 'WDIGFH?' a slow-motion montage sequence was used to portray Hamood's affections for Dalal. After fleeing from the city to the desert, Hamood waited for Dalal at the metal shack for hours, but Dalal did not show up. Here, I intercut different elements of the film's narrative to portray Hamood's current state-of-mind. The montage sequence intercut several scenes, such as images of Hamood waiting at the metal shack, Dalal frantically running in the desert to reach him, and previous images of the couple together at the beach. Unlike Zafrani, I layered a sincere heartfelt music score combined with a voice-over to evoke sad emotions from the spectator. When Dalal's image appeared in the montage, I added this dialogue: Dalal saying 'you must leave without me' and Hamood replying 'Do you realise that I cannot live without you.' Slow-motion was added to the visuals to intimately draw the spectator to the unfolding narrative and create dramatic impact. This film-technique was

applied to allow the spectator to absorb the images fully, and to add an emotional intensity to the sequence (Pepperman, 2004) thereby sympathising with Hamood. Furthermore, at end of the montage sequence, Hamood suddenly hears footsteps, thinking it to be Dalal, he rushes outside the metal shack but to his surprise, the sounds are from a stray camel. Hamood then passionately speaks to the animal. I used Hamood's dialogue to emotionally connect the spectator by having the character express his social status to the animal (Zafrani, 2021). I used a 'long-take' in the montage sequence allowing Hamood to express his inner thoughts thus emotionally connect with the viewer.

11. *Secret Slaves of the Middle East* (Directors: Damsgaard and Klovborg, 2016)

Film summary

This documentary film follows Mary Joy-Ay, a Filipino citizen who arrived in the Middle East to work as a housekeeper. Having arrived in Lebanon, Joy-Ay was shocked to witness that the job-occupation she applied for was not as advertised and that women were being deceived into slavery. *Secret Slaves of the Middle East* (2016) raises awareness to the crimes committed by employers toward their housekeepers and portrays the "abuse ... threat of violence, restriction of freedom of movement and economic exploitation or exploitative working conditions" posed on migrant women labourers (Sinha, 2021, p. 145).

Scene analysis

Directors Damsgaard and Klovborg commenced the film with a powerful visual, forcefully drawing the spectators' attention toward the unfolding narrative. The impact scene I analyse here utilises a handheld camera film-aesthetic to capture a violent act. The image shown is of a housekeeper being violently attacked by her male employer. Her employer was repetitively striking her on her head. The footage of the attack was captured handheld by using a wide frame. The screams of the housekeeper begging the employer to stop, and the camera's shakiness were techniques employed to emotionally shock the spectator. Damsgaard and Klovborg strategically placed the housekeeper's violent footage in the impact scene, to shock the viewer, and draw their interest in the film's unfolding storyline.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

Below I analyse how I utilised violence to create obstacles faced by protagonist Hamood in the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' Adding violence to '*WDIGFH?*' assisted to move the plot forward and create a conflict that engaged the spectator. This is important because it attracts the

viewer's interest in the storyline, creates obstacles that the protagonist (Hamood) had to face, and hence, involves the viewers in and with his journey. For example, had Hamood not been violently robbed by the Forger he would have obtained his forged Kuwaiti passport and left the state effortlessly. By having the Forger attack Hamood and rob him of his money, I created a path through which the audience passionately get involved; they identify with the character, sympathise with his journey and engage with the narrative. Similar to Damsgaard and Klovborg, I recorded the abandoned school scene, where the Forger violently attacked Hamood, in close-up handheld mode to portray a sense of realism. I captured the attack within a tight frame to ensure that the spectator can see the emotions on the characters' faces and in return provoke an emotional response. Thereby gripping the audience to the unfolding action. Furthermore, I added camera angles to create suspense amidst the characters. Changing the camera angles amid the characters assisted in implying "the relative strength of different actors, or change of emotional state for one actor. Angle relations can be either *higher*, *lower*, or the *same*" (Wu, Palu, Ranon and Christie, 2018, p. 7). Additionally, proper utilisation of the camera angles can "convey meaning and thus modify the interpretation of a given scene" (Baranowski and Hecht, 2017, p. 2). The image of the menacing Forger was captured from below, as a low-angle-shot "can make a character seem ominous and foreboding" and the Forger appears dominant (Brown, 2016, p. 43). On the other hand, the image of a helpless Hamood was captured from above, as this angle shot conveyed "weakness, passiveness, and powerlessness" (Mercado, 2013, p. 9). Moreover, the shakiness of the handheld camera capturing the unfolding violence added a sense of realism "equated with an unsteady frame" (Ward, 2002. P. 160). I also added thump sound-effects to the visuals of the Forger's boots striking Hamood's body. Added sound effects in post-production create "suspense to scenes, and/or tap into our subconscious" and "appear to be organic to the scene" (Sijll, 2005, p. 94).

12. *Wadjda* (Director: Al-Mansour, 2012)

Film summary

This drama film discusses gender discrimination faced by women in Saudi Arabia. The film revolves around Wadjda, a rebellious young girl, and her pursuit to purchase a bicycle. Inequality, in Saudi Arabia, on the grounds of gender is the foremost issue on which *Wadjda* (2012) had been produced. The film portrays the societal norms and restrictions put on women during different stages of life (Sari, 2020). The character of Wadjda, as presented in the film, depicts a young girl, who had rebelled against such conservative norms, and hence had to struggle tremendously to attain what she desired. *Wadjda* (2012) was a turning event for the

Saudi Arabian society, as it was the first feature film that had ever been completed within the region, where people were miles away from the world of cinemas and theatres then (National Public Radio, 2013a). The struggles of a young girl revolting against the conservative lifestyle and social expectations are considered to be the most important lessons preached in the film, which has broadened the mindset of the people to a large extent (NPR, 2013a).

Scene analysis

I analyse the school's car park scene and explore two film-aesthetics: sound design and character dialogue. Director Al-Mansour exemplified gender discrimination in many fashions throughout the film's narrative. It was demonstrated in both the story plot and in the subtle use of sound. For example, in the school's car parking scene, students are dropped off at the school's gate, they then walk inside the premises. Once the students are inside, two girls begin to laugh out loud. As a result, a strict schoolteacher disciplines the two, and orders them not to laugh loudly explaining that 'a women's voice must not be heard by men.' The car park scene consisted of four camera setups. However, it was the use of sound that conveyed the meaning to the spectator. According to Bordwell and Thompson (2003) dialogue "does not always rank highest in importance. Sound-effects are usually central to action sequences... by choosing certain sounds, the filmmaker guides our perception of the image and the action" (pp. 352 and 353). In the first shot of the scene, the sound informs the spectator of the power hierarchy between men and women. When the students left the bus, the sounds of men and engines overpowered those of girls. In the second shot, the camera was positioned inside the school premises, away from men, where two students were disciplined by the teacher for laughing out loud. As soon as the conflict occurred Al-Mansour moves the camera closer, allowing the spectator to see the emotions on the characters' faces leading to visual tension between the students and the strict teacher.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

I explain here how I utilised a sincere music score in the sound design and intense character dialogue to intentionally create the harmony of the scene. In the kitchen location, Hamood's parents Fahad and Salemah were seen drinking tea. The scene has little action; however, the loud and angry debate on the radio overwhelmed the narrative as one speaker stated to the other that 'Bidoon must plead their case at court... the fact is, there are 40,000 fraudulent cases!' According to Carmona (2017), a film's narrative "may have other objectives such as provoking experiences or challenging audiences' natural mind state... a film narrative provides the

spectator with an experience. It could be an intellectual, emotional, spiritual or another type of experience” (p. 10). Hence, the debate on the radio was used to raise awareness to the Bidoon’s plight by providing information on their legal status and the animosity faced towards them. Furthermore, a sincere heartfelt music score was added to the sound design to allow the viewer to sympathise with the Bidoon characters, especially as a broken-down Hamood walks past his parents after a hard day’s work and enters his shanty bedroom.

Detailed evaluation of the selected Western films

13. *Bambi* (Director: Hand, 1942)

Film summary

Bambi (1942) is an animation film that raised people’s awareness on the well-being of animals. Its impact on the viewers changed the game-hunting laws in the United States (Muth, 2000). *Bambi* (1942) serves as “a major point of departure for the rise of the modern animal rights movement as it relates to the blood sport... *Bambi* [1942] was the first to convey an anti-hunting message to a mass audience of millions of people in the United States and around the world” (Muth, 2000, pp. 843 and 844). This Disney’s animation film is about animals in the forest with no visible human characters. The story commences with all the animals excited about the birth of a buck fawn, Bambi, who is the central character in the film. Bambi learns about the suffering and challenges they have to face for survival, especially when exposed in the meadow. Bambi has learned these and more through the conversations with his mother, similar age friends, and rabbits along with the stories he was told of his father.

Scene analysis

The open meadow scene is one powerful scene I analyse. The film-aesthetics investigated here are music and pace of editing. The scene graphically delivers the violent death of Bambi’s mother and keeps the viewer engaged throughout the fast-paced action sequence. In this scene, Bambi, a young calf, follows his mother to eat the new Spring grass. As the animals graze in the open, Bambi’s mother senses danger and instructs Bambi to run to the thicket. Both animals ran for their lives as the sounds of gunshots blazed behind them. Bambi makes it to the thicket, but unfortunately, his mother was shot dead. There are two key film-techniques, which were used to evoke the spectator’s emotion. First, the music score was switched from playful to sinister. This dramatic switch informed the spectator of an incoming threat. The rhythm of the music also intensified when Bambi and his mother ran for their lives from the gunshots aimed at them. This “rhythm, melody, harmony, and instrumentation of the music can strongly affect

the viewer's emotional reactions" (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003, p. 356). At the same time, the camera shots and pace of editing switched from a slow to fast-tempo in combination with whip pans and quick camera shots. The fast-paced tempo draws the spectators towards the unfolding action and keeps them on edge not knowing whether Bambi and his mother will make it alive.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for '*WDIGFH?*'

I move on here to show how I utilised music into the narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' Music played a vital role in '*WDIGFH?*', especially in the desert scene when it was used to emotionally involve the spectator with the unfolding narrative. In this scene, framed in a mid-wide shot, Hamood peacefully waits for his lover Dalal. The faint sounds of police sirens attract his attention. The camera then cuts to Hamood's point-of-view in a mid-wide frame. To create a dramatic effect, I added a sharp zoom-in effect emphasising the threat of the approaching police vehicles centred middle-frame. In addition, to emotionally involve the spectator into the unfolding action, the camera cuts close to the approaching police vehicles, while the music tempo accelerates and switches from non-threatening to threatening zone. Moreover, the police siren sound-effects increases in volume, thereby indicating and alerting the spectator of the incoming threat. The sound design of the police chase scene was created to add a sense of fear and to aims to emotionally involve the spectator in Hamood's desperate escape. An effective sound design can stimulate viewer emotion and is therefore more likely to engage them in the unfolding narrative (Mott, 1990). Unlike director Hand, who only applied two gunshot sound-effects in the open meadow scene of *Bambi* (1942), in Hamood's police chase scene, to create a dramatic effect, I layered a continuous police siren effect track over the intense fast-paced action. This technique was to ensure that the spectator is locked into the unfolding sequence and keep them engaged throughout the duration of the scene. Implementing an intense police siren sound-effect into the sound-design engages the viewer and evokes an emotional response to the scene's rising action (Theme Ament, 2014).

14. *Cathy Come Home* (Director: Loach, 1966)

Film summary

This drama film raises awareness about the problem of housing shortages and the impact of homelessness in the United Kingdom during the 1960s. The film revolves around Cathy and her spiral to homelessness. The story commences with Cathy heading to the city looking for employment, where she meets Reg. The two fall in love and move in together in an apartment

complex. When Cathy becomes pregnant, she is no longer able to work. Reg soon becomes unemployed because of a work injury. Without financial income, the two must leave the apartment complex. Eventually, Cathy ends up alone, homeless and loses her children as they were taken away from her by Social Services. *Cathy Come Home* (1966) is a “powerful TV drama that charted a woman’s descent into homelessness” (Reeve, 2018, p. 165). The final scene of *Cathy Come Home* (1966) is “one of the most memorable in television history, hitting viewers like a punch in the stomach with its shock and raw emotion” (Cengage Company, 2021, para 14). The children’s cries and hysteria were real and indicated “Loach’s talent for getting natural reactions from his performers” (Cengage Company, 2021, para 14).

Scene analysis

I analyse two scenes here: the playground and the train station scenes. The film-aesthetics I examine are the use of voiceovers and editorial cuts. An important technique that director Loach utilises to evoke emotion in the playground scene was the voice-overs from both men and women, which provides evidence regarding the United Kingdom’s housing crisis. Loach layered the narration over handheld footage of children playing together. One comment is of a man stating that the ‘kids here they’ve seen rats running around the place’, another is of a woman arguing that ‘the children have accidents, nine out of ten times all the mothers come down.’ Loach uses the narration to provide spectators with information regarding the welfare system.

In the train station scene of *Cathy Come Home* (1966), government workers forcefully take Cathy’s children away from her. The sounds of Cathy and her children in distress dramatically cringe the spectator. The scene has few editorial cuts, and the majority of the scene is shot in ‘long-take’ using a tight frame that concentrates on Cathy’s screaming face. The camera frame slightly jerks left and then right, capturing her remorseless attackers. Loach draws the spectator in by creating a claustrophobic feel by positioning Cathy centre frame, as she was unable to escape her aggressors, who surrounded her.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

Below I analyse how I utilised visual images to portray information regarding the Bidoon’s plight and how I used pace of editing in ‘WDIGFH?’ Similarly, I provide the spectator with information related to the Bidoon’s plight. This information was demonstrated through still visual images embedded throughout the narrative of ‘WDIGFH?’ For example, in the Bidoon

community scene, Hamood shows Dalal a poster of a desperate family seeking medical help for their ill child. Furthermore, Loach's techniques were applied in the fight scene between Waleed and Hamood, which was shot in close-ups handheld combined with a fast-paced visual tempo. Unlike Loach, who applied a few editorial cuts, I cut from one camera set-up to the next to ensure that the spectator is locked in the intense action. I also added a dramatic music score over the screams of Hamood's mother, Salemah, to evoke an empathetic emotion from the audience.

15. *I Daniel Blake* (Director: Loach, 2016)

Film summary

This drama film is aimed at exposing the humiliating process people experience when seeking help from the United Kingdom's welfare system. The narrative centres around Daniel Blake, who suffered a heart attack and was forced to completely rely on the welfare system for survival. The film depicts the struggles that Blake faces during his unemployment due to the unhelpful benefit system. *I Daniel Blake* (2016) raised awareness regarding the UK welfare crisis and generated "debate with the hope of bringing real societal change" (Zenith Media, 2022, para 3). Furthermore "the film was even discussed in Parliament, where Jeremy Corbyn, [Opposition Leader] urged Prime Minister Theresa May to watch it to understand the 'institutionalised barbarity' of the UK's benefits' system" (para 9).

Scene analysis

In the living room scene, I analyse one film-variable: character design. In *I Daniel Blake* (2016), the welfare system and the employees operating there were portrayed as the film's antagonists, who were creating obstacles for Blake. For example, in the living room scene, a frustrated Blake is seen interacting with an unhelpful employee. Although the scene had no action, it covered a conflicting back-and-forth dialogue, engrossing the spectator in the unfolding narrative. Blake's frustration was captured in a 'long-take' which further ensured that the spectator is psychologically engaged with Blake's discontent while on the phone. The character designs of the unhelpful welfare employees create obstacles for Blake, which results in tension and conflict between them. This tension which emotionally engages the viewers in the unfolding narrative as they begin to sympathise with Blake (Cowgill, 2005).

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'

In my film, the story had two antagonists: the first is the oppressive lifestyle of the Bidoon, such as the strict laws denying them nationality and access to government services. The second antagonist is the provocative characters, such as Waleed and the Forger that prevent Hamood from reaching his goal of obtaining a forged passport and fleeing Kuwait with his lover Dalal. Waleed prevented his daughter Dalal from seeing Hamood and the Forger robbed Hamood of his money. These obstacles allow the spectator to sympathise with Hamood. They also immerse the viewer in the narrative to achieve their “emotional transformation” (Batty, 2011, p. 52). I used both the social system and conflicting characters as a film-technique to connect the viewer in Hamood’s emotional journey.

16. *Philadelphia* (Director: Demme, 1993)

Film summary

This drama film offers an in-depth exploration of homophobia and discrimination against gay individuals. The film follows Andrew Beckett, a homosexual man with the AIDS virus. Beckett soon develops lesions across his face and body. His employers notice the lesions and deliberately accuse Beckett of misplacing vital documents; as a result, Beckett is fired from work. Eventually, Andrew hires a solicitor to file a case against his employer on acts of discrimination. *Philadelphia* (1993) provides a detailed understanding of human rights violations, the preconceived notions and prejudices that colour how AIDS patients are treated within society (Oktafiyantri, 2014). It also assists in enlightening spectators about the virus and in broadening misconceived opinions directed toward patients with AIDS.

Scene analysis

Camera angles and a close-up shot are two film-variables I consider in the library scene. In this scene, Beckett was approached by a library clerk, who intentionally raised his voice, saying: ‘you’re right, sir, there is a section on HIV-related discrimination.’ As a result, a group of people seated at the same table uncomfortably stare at Beckett. The library clerk then persuades Beckett to use a private research room. Director Demme created tension by establishing a power hierarchy; throughout the scene, the library clerk stands up and looks down at seated Beckett. Moreover, Demme utilises close-up shots between Beckett and the library clerk to portray instability and applies the tight frame to allow spectators to view the emotion on the character’s face “as if the person on the screen has opened himself up to” them (Katz, 1991, p. 124). Furthermore, the music score and underpowered lighting added to the tension and assisted in building the emotions of the scene.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

In this section, I analyse how I utilised different angles in my handheld camera operation in ‘WDIGFH?’ to capture violent footage and how I employed a close-up subjective frame to assist the viewer psychologically in identifying with the unfolding narrative. Scenes displaying conflict were added in ‘WDIGFH?’ to emotionally draw the spectator towards the narrative. For example, In the restaurant scene, a mother with her child pleaded with a man for some pocket change. Unlike the verbal harassment in the library scene of *Philadelphia* (1993), I aimed to hold the viewer’s attention by having the man physically assault the woman and her child. Furthermore, unlike Demme who captured the library scene with a static camera to involve the viewers in the unfolding action, the restaurant scene was captured through handheld cinematography and consisted of several angles. After the mother and child were pushed, I captured the mother at eye-level with a balanced angle. This was achieved to allow the viewer to witness the cries on her face. On the other hand, the child’s cries were captured with a high-angle pointing downwards to his emotional face. The high-angle made the child look submissive, thus emotionally engaging the viewer to sympathise with him. The violent scene created a significant impact by shocking the spectator, with the intention that the viewer was emotionally invested in ‘WDIGFH?’s storyline.

Moreover, in *Philadelphia* (1993), Demme utilised the subjective camera frame to connect the spectator with the characters personally. The subjective shot “is unique in its ability to let audiences experience the action as if seen directly through the eyes of a character” (Mercado, 2013, p. 83). I utilised this technique throughout the narrative of ‘WDIGFH?’ For example, in the scene where Dalal met the Forger, I portrayed Dalal’s uneasiness by cutting to a point-of-view that entailed a subjective close-up shot of the Forger flicking his tongue at her.

17. *Schindler’s List* (Director: Spielberg, 1993)

Film summary

This drama film raises awareness on the unjust treatment and genocide that were faced by European Jewish people during the Second World War (1941 – 1945). The suffering evidenced in Spielberg’s film portrays the story of the protagonist and other associated characters during the Holocaust’s tragic events. The struggles involve the measures taken and the painful instances of saving the lives of a total of 1,000 Jewish people. This film is regarded “as a realistic depiction of life during the Holocaust, in terms of the brutality of the Nazis and the

lifestyles of those they persecuted” (Waxman, 2018, para 2). Spielberg, through this film, contributed largely to changing the minds of the spectators regarding holocaust storytelling.

Scene analysis

I choose to examine the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto scene. The two film-aesthetics analysed are handheld camera operation and fast-paced editing. This scene is extremely graphic as director Spielberg portrays how the German soldiers forcefully separated the men from the women and children. The handheld close-up camera shots and movement allow the camera frame to weave in-between the chaos capturing emotional moments amidst the characters, thereby “lend[ing] an air of authenticity” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003, p. 270). The fast-paced editing overwhelms the spectator, capturing one violent event after another, while the sounds of the women and children in distress grip the viewers towards the unfolding narrative.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘*WDIGFH?*’

I, too, utilised handheld camera operation, sound-effects and fast-paced editing into the unfolding narrative of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Handheld camera operation along with the use of sound and fast-paced-editing techniques enables prompting emotion, a combination technique that was used throughout ‘*WDIGFH?*’ For example, in the mosque car park scene, to articulate Fahad’s long working hours selling produce, I captured the visuals with a close-up handheld camera frame. The tight frame captured the emotions on the character’s face, and the camera’s shakiness simulated manual labour.

Fast-paced editing was utilised to express the character’s state-of-mind and control the scene’s tempo. For example, in Dalal’s bedroom scene, as Waleed was searching for his daughter, fast-paced editing was applied to draw the spectator towards the unfolding action by demonstrating Waleed’s panic. Additionally, to portray Waleed’s distressful state-of-mind, I captured the visuals with a ‘Dutch-tilt,’² thereby creating an off-balance image. There are some instances “where we want the visual tension of this off-level condition to work for us to create anxiety, paranoia, subjugation, or mystery. The term for this is the “Dutch-tilt”” (Brown, 2016, p. 44). This was my approach.

² The frame is deliberately tilted either towards the right or left of the visual image.

In Hamood's farewell scene, to emotionally engage the viewers and to evoke an empathetic response, crying sound-effects were applied to Hamood's weeping mother, Salemah. This technique amplifies her suffering, evokes feelings of sadness and "also a stronger empathic response" from the viewers (Maffei, 2019, p. 4).

18. *The Terminal* (Director: Spielberg, 2004)

Film summary

This drama-comedy film follows Viktor Navorski, a tourist from Karkozhia visiting the United States. This light-hearted comedy film by Spielberg presented the sufferings of a man stuck in the airport of a foreign land. After reaching New York airport, the protagonist discovers that a war has struck his homeland. His tensions increased when he found out that his passport was no longer valid as a result of the war. Thus, he was trapped and unable to return to his home country or enter the United States. This dilemma was the main suffering that had been portrayed in the film. *The Terminal* (2004) raises awareness to the viewers about the issues of statelessness and how important documentation is needed in a person's life (Calvo and Sánchez, 2016). The film also helps the spectators understand that humanity can exist even in humorous situations. Moreover, the character's innocence, simplicity, and honesty in the film inspires spectators to raise voice in situations where the law contradicts humanity (Calvo and Sánchez, 2016).

Scene analysis

I look at the use of subjective camera movement as a film-variable in the airport lounge scene. In this scene, TV news broadcast images of the civil war in Karkozhia. Witnessing the news, Navorski frantically runs from one TV set to another to obtain in-depth information. Director Spielberg articulated Navorski's anguish by capturing the scene in fast-paced tracking shots. The scene ended with the camera subjectively pulling away from Navorski, as he stood alone lost among hundreds of passengers at the airport. This pulling away movement of the camera itself works as a metaphor of loneliness "characterising the tone of the evening" (Sijil, 2005, p. 176). As the camera pulls away from Navorski, not only does Navorski decrease in size in relation to the camera frame, the camera movement symbolises his weakness as he is left stranded and emotional in a busy rush of an airport (Wu, Palu, Ranon and Christie, 2018). For dramatic effect, the music score slightly increases in tone simultaneously as the camera pulls away. The music aims to evoke an emotional response from the spectators, as they sympathise with the lonely character.

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for ‘WDIGFH?’

In this section, I analyse how I utilise subjective camera movement in the narrative of ‘WDIGFH?’ Throughout ‘WDIGFH?’ subjective camera shots were employed to depict a scene’s emotion. For example, as Hamood arrives at London Heathrow, he seems to be unfamiliar with the culture and the fast-paced rush of the airport, especially as he accidentally bumps into a man who verbally mistreats him. Similar to the technique Spielberg utilised, the scene ended with the camera pulling away from Hamood, leaving him bewildered and confused in the hectic chaos. As the subjective camera shot pulls away from Hamood, his size in relation to the frame decreases. Thus, the camera shot demonstrates Hamood’s helplessness. The scene also consists of a sincere heartfelt music piece to evoke an empathetic response from the viewers (Steffens, 2020).

19. *Trevor* (Director: Rajski, 1994)

Film summary

This short drama film centres around Trevor, a young homosexual boy facing discrimination. The protagonist narrates the film. As a result, director Rajski establishes a direct source of communication between the viewer and the character. The narration is taken from Trevor’s private diary, revealed only to the audience and not to the characters in the film. Hence, the protagonist appears to be reaching out to the spectator and speaking his innermost thoughts. *Trevor* (1994) presents a population of the society who undergoes severe fluctuations in emotions and mental stability once reaching the age of puberty and identifying their sexuality. “Trevor wants nothing more than to be accepted by his friends. When they reject him, he tries to kill himself” (Jones, 2017, para 16). His difference created a significant boundary and excluded him from the children around him. Trevor likes ballet, as well as the theatre and Diana Ross songs. *Trevor* (1994) proved to be a mind changer to the extent that different agencies and organisations came up with initiatives and programmes to support this population group to adjust in the society (Jones, 2017). As a result of the attention this film received, “the Trevor Project — now a national nonprofit suicide prevention service for LGBTQ youths was born” (Jones, 2017, para 20).

Scene analysis

Here I analyse the bedroom scene and investigate the use of monologue. Rajski employs two visual styles throughout the film’s narrative. The first is a subjective camera frame that

captured a monologue by Trevor. The second is a reenacted based narrative of Trevor's social issues. The film's visuals had intercut back-and-forth between the subjective monologue and the re-enacted drama narrative. Rajski uses the subjective camera frame to engage the spectator in the monologue scenes. However, the monologue, where Trevor expresses his intimate thoughts freely, seems to passionately grips the audience. For example, Trevor reveals: 'Dear diary, I'm now totally convinced that Mom or Dad can care less if I lived or died. Last night, I walked into the living room while they were watching TV, fell dead to the floor... No response from them.'

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'

Similar to Rajski, I used Hamood's sketchbook as a tool to directly engage the spectator. However, unlike the narration used in *Trevor* (1994), in 'WDIGFH?' I utilised Hamood's sketched images as a visual metaphor to convey meaning of his troubled life in Kuwait. These sketches are considered "a cinematic tool which works in a way to evoke and encourage insights" (Behura, 2020, p. 2547). Moreover, I used Hamood's monologue to express the character's inner thoughts in the stray camel scene, to passionately engage the spectator. In this scene, a lonely Hamood states: 'I wish I was a camel... I would wander the land in God's grace... Without a care or thought... Without troubles or worries... Free, as you are...'. Hamood's monologue combined with a sincere heartfelt music score is used as a film-technique to engage with the viewer, to evoke an emotional response in the viewer.

20. Wonder (Director: Chbosky, 2017)

Film summary

This drama film directed by Chbosky is about a child living with Treacher Collins syndrome, a medical condition which refers to the deformity of a person's face. The film centres around a young boy named Auggie who was born with a facial deformity. The pain and sufferings faced by the protagonist had been effectively presented in the narrative. Due to his deformity, Auggie has spent years being home-schooled for some time. Auggie's parents decided that he is ready to attend public school and begin to socialise with the other children his age. Shortly after attending school, Auggie was bullied by a group of children who persisted in mocking him. Despite his hardship, in the end of the film, Auggie is given a medal accompanied by a standing ovation for his outstanding school year's performance.

Wonder (2017) raises awareness about people living with Treacher Collins syndrome and the psychological effects of bullying (Candraningrum, 2021). Leaders at Barrow Cleft and Craniofacial Center (based in Phoenix, United States) are using *Wonder* (2017) to raise awareness on the medical condition and spread the message of choosing kindness (Moore, 2017).

Scene analysis

In the bedroom scene, I analyse the importance of the static-frame to emotionally engage the viewer with the unfolding narrative. At the end of Auggie's first day at school, he returns home depressed because of the mistreatment and bullying he received from other children. In the bedroom scene, a tearful Auggie asks his mother: 'why do I have to be so ugly?.' Chbosky, utilises Auggie's crying sound-effect and captures the scene in close-up to get intimately engaged with the viewers' emotions. Moreover, Chbosky lights the scene warmly. The orange illumination sets the mood and emotion of the scene and provides a soft glow over the characters' visuals. In addition, the static close-up frame does not distract the spectator from the unfolding narrative but instead acts as a window that is intended to create audience empathy with the characters. The slow pace of the editorial cuts is a technique designed to allow the spectator to become connected with the emotional characters on screen (Mercado, 2013).

Extracted film-aesthetics and implications for 'WDIGFH?'

A static camera frame to capture the intimate moments between the characters was utilised throughout 'WDIGFH?' For example, in the kitchen scene, Hamood, seated at a dinner table, was served dessert by his mother Salemah. At this point, Salemah was unaware of her son's secret plan to depart Kuwait. Nonetheless, to immerse the viewer into the passionate scene between mother and son, I captured the visuals in a static middle-shot, placing the camera at the opposite side of the dinner table and aiming directly at Hamood. The camera's position, at eye-level, engages the viewer with the unfolding narrative as if they sat at the table with the characters.

Engaging an audience; a path to the hearts and minds of the viewers

I move on now to give an overall view on the pre-production of 'WDIGFH?' I specifically elaborate on the decisions made for this film's story and visual design. These decisions were guided by my aim to raise awareness and provoke conversation regarding the Kuwaiti Bidoon

situation through the viewer's emotional engagement. The elements I highlight are: character strategy, screenplay and choice of visuals to shoot '*WDIGFH?*' based upon limitations such as the production budget. These elements interconnect, and this is why I discuss them, not in order of mention, but collectively. The design of the screenplay and film's visuals were all carefully crafted in order to emotionally engage the audience in protagonist Hamood's journey throughout the story's narrative.

In comparison, some of the selected key films (above) were more emotionally engaging and effective than others. Examining this point informs the process of designing a screenplay that will emotionally engage the Kuwaiti film viewers and ultimately, raise awareness to the Bidoon's plight. Hence, I studied the characters and their journey throughout the films' plots, cross-referencing with my film, '*WDIGFH?*' In my investigation, all the reviewed films raised awareness of important issues within society. However, not all the films had the same level of effectiveness; some stories were more emotionally gripping than others. Take for example, *Leur Nuit* (2013), which is about a single mother, Rkia, who worked on night shifts as a parking attendant to support her young daughter. However, the daughter is not revealed to the audience throughout the film and is just referred to through Rkia's dialogue. By not revealing the daughter, the film lacked intimate visual scenes between the mother and daughter. Through subtle scenes, such as the mother feeding her daughter and the daughter hugging her mother, are the visual moments that can emotionally engage the spectator with the characters. In contrast, in *A Separation* (2011), as both parents fight through divorce, Termeh, the young daughter, is present throughout the film's narrative. The film contains intimate scenes taking place between Termeh and both her parents. Those scenes generate sympathy and, thus, establish an emotional connection between the viewer and character.

'*WDIGFH?*' was fed with passionate scenes, such as when Hamood expressed his social status with Dalal, and when he was bidding farewell to his parents. Such moments added to the film's narrative evoke an empathetic response from the spectator. This was evident in one viewer's response after watching '*WDIGFH?*' The viewer stated that 'the film's message is clear. The Bidoon are unjustly treated. It broke my heart when I saw Hamood hug his parents and leave... I could not help but cry' (Anonymous film viewer, 2021). Other film viewers stated 'I screamed at the amount of pain in the film. I was touched by the difficult circumstances Hamood faced in the story', 'the story touched my heart and reminded me of myself' and 'a very realistic story that touches on real-life conditions' (Anonymous film viewers, 2021). The emotions from the

viewers were promoted because I designed an original sympathetic Bidoon lead character, Hamood, that the audience could emotionally connect with. Furthermore, I wrote an original drama screenplay that was enriched with visual scenes of different kinds that were designed to arouse viewers' feelings.

Screenplays that cover unjust stories of oppressed characters are vital in engaging an audience. According to James (2009), "once we identify with people's problems, we are hooked; we worry about them and so must continue watching to see what happens to them" (p. 4). Thus, a successful narrative is when the viewer psychologically identifies with the characters in a story (Hay, 2014). To connect with the film viewers, '*WDIGFH?*' needed a lead character to passionately bond with. All films I screened had a unique protagonist who not only suffered injustice but also endured an emotional journey throughout the film's narrative (James, 2009). Thus, designing a vulnerable character was the first step to emotionally connecting with the film viewers and triggering empathy and feelings (Igartua, 2010; Wiley, 2003). As a result, '*WDIGFH?*' followed a victimised fictional Bidoon protagonist named Hamood, a sketch artist who flees Kuwait seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. In '*WDIGFH?*' I designed a protagonist that the audience could sympathise with. Hamood was depicted as stateless and lacking civil rights. His love for Dalal was denied by her father Waleed, and he constantly faced conflicts throughout the film's narrative.

It is important to view the filmmaking choices within a budget context. A screenplay and a budget are considered important factors that lead to the successful completion of a film's production. A film might not be produced without a budget, and without a dramatic screenplay, audience identification may be lost. Hence, both features play a key role in a film's impact and development. Furthermore, the cast's performance plays a vital role in evoking emotion and engaging the spectator in the narrative. Although a budget has nothing to do with the cast's performance, a filmmaker can use it to hire a professional cast. For example, the cast's performance in Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) differed from the performance of the cast in Faqir's *Leur Nuit* (2013).

As for me, the majority of the cast were non-professional actors. However, I utilised director Ken Loach's tactics, such as hiding elements of the screenplay and revealing the elements to the cast before a shoot to evoke a natural response. I encouraged the cast to believe that they were the characters they played to stimulate a realistic performance. Further, the screenplay of

‘*WDIGFH?*’ was written based on a visually action-based narrative making use of minor to brief dialogue, rather than heavy conversation. Little to no dialogue is demonstrated in the majority of the scenes. In addition, I used real environments, such as a shanty location to resemble Hamood’s bedroom. I was also unable to hire a lighting crew. As a result, my options of using light to convey a character’s emotion or set the scene’s tone were limited. Instead, I utilised natural sunlight and manipulated the contrast of the visual images in post-production to set the mood of a scene.

The budget can also contribute to the marketing and selection of the film’s visual style. Since I worked with a student’s low-budget, Ken Loach’s Social Realism was chosen as ‘*WDIGFH?*’s visual style, as it utilises a documentary-drama style approach. But a film’s budget does not always determine the film’s outcome. A director can shoot an epic big-budget screenplay, but the results of the film may be ineffective because, for example, the story lacks conflict and character development. On the other hand, a low-budget screenplay that follows an engaging story with in-depth characters may have more impact on engaging an audience. For example, Disney’s *John Carter* [2010] cost around \$350 million to shoot (and market), but the film was unsuccessful, costing the company roughly \$200 million (Regalado, 2018). On the other hand, the low-budget film titled “*The Blair Witch Project* [1999] produced for \$60,000... went on to make \$248.6 million at the global box office” (Kring-Schreifels, 2019, para 8). The fact is, a filmmaker needs a budget to shoot a film and “the first question asked of a filmmaker presenting a script... is how much is it going to cost” (Gates, 1992, p. 85). Thus, the screenplay influences the film’s production, which is determined by the budget. If a screenplay requires major set designs and props, the budget tends to rise considerably.

In view of the above, Spielberg’s *The Terminal* (2004) was made with a significantly higher budget than Al-Mutairi’s *Ka3bool* (2013). The film’s plot was set in an airport and required a vast production crew to design and shoot in the large sets. On the other hand, Al-Mutairi strategically shot his film on the location using real environments and thus saving in production costs. According to Wiese (1998), “writing a budget means researching costs and becoming creative... [to] find the most economical ways of doing things” (p. 54). And since I worked with a low-budget, like director Al-Mutairi, the screenplay of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was strategically written to consider natural environments and utilise a small cast. There are three primary methods of writing a low-budget film, the writer must limit his locations, work with a small production crew, and design in-depth characters (Brown, 2006). Ultimately, the film’s impact

is based on the audience's engagement with the story's narrative. This is determined by both an emotionally gripping story and the budget that a filmmaker is working with.

'*WDIGFH?*'s screenplay incorporated a three-act-structure design. A three-act-structure is vital to ensure a story has a *start*, *middle*, and *end*. This is divided into three *acts* which is discussed below. Each act has a purpose, and in each act the threat, conflict, and obstacles the protagonist face rise (Cowgill, 2005). A three-act-structure based screenplay is an important factor that emotionally engages viewers into the protagonist's journey.

Three-act-structure

The majority of the reviewed films are assigned a three-act-structure based narrative. However, there were a few films that did not follow this narrative design, such as *Ka3bool* (2013) and *Leur Nuit* (2013). The three-act-structure divides the screenplay into three-parts, namely setup, confrontation, and resolution (Nannicelli, 2013). In the first-act of a film's narrative, the setup is introduced, and the story commences with an exposition followed by the inciting incident and turning point. The exposition is vital, as it emotionally pulls the audience towards the protagonist. And this is where the spectator gets introduced with the protagonist's personal problems and his social status within society. For example, in *For Sama* (2019), the exposition aims to emotionally draw the audience towards Sama, as she briefly explained her backstory prior to the Syrian civil war (2011). In *Ka3bool* (2013), the film commenced with a brief backstory to the Bidoon's plight in Kuwaiti society, and in *The Terminal* (2004), Navorski had been denied access to New York City, as his current passport was deemed invalid.

Having established the character's objective, the second-act of a film's narrative follows the character through a difficult journey which is filled with obstacles and emotion. The third-act builds to a climax and ends with the conclusion of the story (Nash, 2012). Regarding *Ka3bool* (2013), although the Bidoon community and their social status within Kuwait were introduced, the film lacked visuals of the protagonist's personal backstory decreasing viewers' engagement. Furthermore, the protagonist Khalid did not have a goal to reach nor a conflicting journey that could grasp the audience. Instead, the film articulated Khalid's personal issues as a Bidoon but lacked a narrative purpose. Hence, the entire story of Khalid in *Ka3bool* (2013) feels similar to that of the exposition of act-one in a three-act-structure based film. The character lacks motive, and thus, the plot does not move forward. On the other hand, in *Wadjda*

(2012), the protagonist Wadjda was portrayed as a liberal girl, insisting that her mother purchases her a bicycle to race against the boys living in her community. The exposition introduced Wadjda, elaborated the context of gender discrimination and established the protagonist's goal of purchasing a bicycle to race the boys, her bullies. The audience is aware of Wadjda's goal and is drawn toward her personal journey, while wondering if Wadjda will obtain the bicycle or not.

To emotionally engage the spectator in the narrative, the protagonist must face conflict and obstacles (Hay, 2014). When the audience sees a protagonist go through conflict, their emotions rise (Cowgill, 2005). Conflict signifies the struggle between opposing forces and is considered a vital element of pushing the narrative forward. Without conflict, the story remains stagnant and the viewer's interest is lost (Waldeback and Batty, 2012). Conflict is needed to grip the spectator towards the unfolding action, which involves problems or obstacles that arise within a story (James, 2009). For example, *Beyond the Sky* (2013) was not as emotionally gripping as other reviewed films because the story lacked conflict and rising-action. On the other hand, *Schindler's List* (1993), for instance, portrayed a great deal of conflict, thereby gripping the spectator towards the unfolding narrative. The conflict, threat, and violence that the Jewish people faced throughout the film's narrative continuously rose; the Jewish people were removed from their homes, then taken to Krakow Ghetto, and finally face antagonist Amon Goeth, the psychopathic Nazi officer's wrath.

In the light of the above, my film, '*WDIGFH?*' highlighted a three-act-structure based narrative, with protagonist Hamood constantly facing conflict. In act-one, the exposition introduced Hamood, elaborated his social status, and established the protagonist's goal for claiming asylum in the United Kingdom. The narrative then dissolved to Hamood's past life in Kuwait, illuminating in detail, the back story of the character's journey leading him to seek asylum. I strategically utilised act-one to set the tone of the story and emotionally attract the spectator towards Hamood's goal. For example, in the impact scene, the assault on the mother and the child is intended to shock the spectator and invest the audience in the story. Act-one further revealed Hamood's struggles and social status, his unstable relationship with Dalal, and the ongoing Bidoon protests within Kuwaiti society.

In act-two, Hamood faced continuous obstacles and conflicts in the process of acquiring funds to obtain a forged passport. Failing to do so, he resorts to stealing the family's savings. This

act further displays Hamood's struggles as a Bidoon; beaten (by the Forger), denied employment, and led to participating in the ongoing protests. Moreover, Hamood's altercation with the antagonist Waleed, led him to flee to the desert for his safety. All events portrayed in act-two were intended to take the viewers on an emotional ride. Further, the viewer was aware that Hamood reached the United Kingdom, but was unaware of Dalal's absence and of the conflict and emotional struggles that Hamood faced. Concealing elements of the narrative to reveal later on in the storyline helps to build up the suspense (Waldeback and Batty, 2012). Therefore, emotionally attracting the viewers to the rising-action as they are invested in Hamood's journey.

In act-three, having fled to the desert, Hamood awaits alone for his lover Dalal at the metal shack. However, the conflict does not end there, as I raise the threat by having the police peruse Hamood with storming vehicles and loud sirens blazing towards the shack. Hamood then, had to abruptly decide on whether to flee the shack or wait for Dalal and face the consequences. This climax scene was intended to keep the audience absorbed in the unfolding narrative. Hamood must decide quickly, as time is running out and the police are getting closer to him; this made the spectator avidly anticipate his decision. Finally, upon reaching London, Hamood's case of claiming asylum is uncertain, he faces his second appeal, and the audience were left oblivious to the outcome of his case.

In all then, I emotionally draw the spectator towards the narrative by firstly creating a protagonist facing a social problem. The protagonist is given a goal to accomplish, and thus a journey is established, within which the hero faces constant conflict. It is this conflict that evokes a sympathetic emotion among the spectators. Although the Social Realism filmmaking of Loach was originally considered, the most appropriate *mise-en-scene* of '*WDIGFH?*', planned and unplanned production events led to the re-constitution of a more appropriate hybrid style (as discussed in detail in Chapter Two). Consequently, '*WDIGFH?*' evolved into a film which integrated live-action sequences with animated sketches. Thus, '*WDIGFH?*' combines both Ken Loach's Social Realism with animated sketches as a visual style to portray the Bidoon's plight. This new eclectic style is an advantage to film production and assists the story's narrative. In this regard, one viewer stated that 'the images and oil-coloured graphics in the film are new ideas, they are very beautiful' (Anonymous, film viewer, 2021). Thus, the intent of '*WDIGFH?*'s visual style was to make the film appealing to viewers and the design of the film's narrative was to engage them emotionally.

Distribution: reaching out to the crowd

Distribution is considered to be a significant role in the film process where films are advertised and released to the public (Landry, 2012). The available budget plays an important part and as a result, films can either be self-distributed or completed through a distribution company. Either way, distributors oversee the release of the film and design methods in which the film is marketed to the public (Lobato, 2012). Thus, marketing and promotion are key factors, and are the choices and strategies, to let people know that the film exists (Parks, 2012). These strategies could be through paid campaigns, posters, websites, and social media.

The different films I reviewed varied in distribution strategies. Spielberg's *The Terminal* (2004) had a greater production budget than Al-Mutairi's *Ka3bool* (2013). As a result, *The Terminal* (2004) was promoted and advertised through a distribution company, creating a major social impact. On the other hand, Al-Mutairi utilised a different approach to market his low-budget film, *Ka3bool* (2013). Al-Mutairi used the Doha Film Institute and the internet to market his film. Utilising a film institute is a beneficial tactic for low-budget filmmakers to get exposure, where the film is advertised through their network. Further, most of the Doha Film Institute's participants come from a mixture of the Arab Gulf countries, and hence, the film reaches a greater target audience. In addition to that, Al-Mutairi created a poster and uploaded his film online. A link to *Ka3bool* (2013) was circulated amongst the Kuwaiti public during the years 2013 and 2014. I, myself, received a link through an associate. Using online platforms is of great benefit for promotion. According to Gaustad (2019), "digitization has radically changed the way in which we consume films outside cinemas. Smartphones and tablets... allow us to watch films on the go" (p. 67). Furthermore, users can upload and send information freely, establishing a greater social network. Users can also "watch movies whenever they want to on any media device they desire" (Kim, 2014, p. 25289).

A Separation (2011), *Between Two Seas* (2019), *Wonder* (2017), and *The Terminal* (2004) were big-budget films and utilised a distribution company. They were promoted using various media channels, such as billboards, posters, TV ads, trailers, radio, and online advertising. On the other hand, low-budget filmmakers face limitations, but could still be marketed via the internet or by a film institute, as explained above. When promoting a film via the internet, the key to a film's effectiveness is to circulate the film via a network of popular users (Rather and Rather,

2019). Popular users have a great number of followers, and thus allowing the film to reach a wider target audience, and in doing so, the message of the film can be spread. In my case, and for ‘*WDIGFH?*’, the decision was not difficult to make. Since I worked with a low-budget, distributing ‘*WDIGFH?*’ via a company was not an option. Therefore, I analysed the methods by which low-budget directors distributed their films. The low-budget films I reviewed such as *Beyond the Sky* (Dir: Shalabi, 2013), *Ka3bool* (Dir: Al-Mutairi, 2013), *Leur Nuit* (Dir: Faqir, 2013) and *Omeleto* (Dir: Zafrani, 2021) were marketed via a film institute and through self-promotion. To promote ‘*WDIGFH?*’, I created a poster and utilised the internet to both screen and reach a target audience by circulating the film to online users. I initially wanted to market ‘*WDIGFH?*’ through organisations, namely a film festival, cinema, and at universities. However, my plans had to change when Kuwait went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic early 2020. Hence, I resorted to creating a film poster and utilising the internet (YouTube) to market ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Both, the poster and the link to ‘*WDIGFH?*’ were circulated via WhatsApp social media application amongst viewers in Kuwait. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Film review summary

As mentioned previously, I reviewed a total of twenty films: twelve Middle Eastern and eight Western ones, this investigation relates to my first sub-research question, where I study how I can produce a film that emotionally engages viewers. In all the reviewed films, the respective directors utilised key film-aesthetics, such as the close-up frame and a music score as filmmaking techniques to grip the audience during intimate scenes. The close-up frame is vital, it adds emotion to a scene thus drawing the spectator towards the portrayal of the character. Furthermore, the tight frame allows the audience to see aspects in the subject’s face such as fear, laughter and nervousness (Cooper, 2013). Also, a music score shapes how the spectator interprets the visual image and emotionally connects the spectator to the character, thereby involving them in the unfolding narrative. The music score added meaning to the different films and in different ways (Green, 2010). Also, all the directors were unique in portraying their films’ visual style; they used various filmmaking techniques, such as set design, lighting, composition, sound, and editing differently to articulate the film’s emotion. Thus, there is no correct method to portray a scene, rather how one uses the filmmaking techniques effectively to evoke an emotion from the audience is key. Other film-aesthetics that determine a film’s effectiveness are screenplay, budget, cast, production, crew, and distribution. Moreover, I

combined Ken Loach's Social Realism style of filmmaking with animated sketches. Combining these styles together presented the viewers with an original and new visual experience of portraying the Bidoon's plight.

Chapter Four



‘WDIGFH?’ Disseminated

My initial plan of screening ‘WDIGFH?’ and gathering feedback from audiences was hampered because of the spread of COVID-19 in early 2020. Plans had been made to attend different universities and screen my film and thereafter collect questionnaire feedback from the Kuwaiti audience. I had also intended to secure a private room to screen the film to the Bidoon participants and obtain their questionnaires’ responses. With COVID-19 cases rising in Kuwait, government officials issued a lockdown with a public curfew as safety precautions against the outbreak (Bao, 2020). All educational institutes were closed, and e-learning replaced classroom lectures (Almaiah, Al-Khasawneh and Althunibat, 2020). As a result, I was unable to physically attend and screen ‘WDIGFH?’ and collect the questionnaire responses face-to-face. Therefore, I had no option but to switch my plan to fit the online setting.

Online platforms as a means of distributing ‘WDIGFH?’ offer great benefits. For example, a large majority of the Kuwaitis own smartphones, which have become essential communicative tools, especially among the younger generation (Rather and Rather, 2019). In fact, nowadays sharing information and experiences largely occur online (Grundstrom, 2018). The online alternative became important to promote and reach as many people as possible (Cho and Ha, 2011). Thus, ‘WDIGFH?’ was uploaded online and a digital questionnaire survey was created. A channel on YouTube was specifically created for ‘WDIGFH?’³ I created one film questionnaire, for both Kuwaitis and Bidoon, via Google Forms. The questionnaire was anonymous and only recorded the answers to the selected questions. More importantly, the questionnaire was confidential. To ensure the confidentiality, I contacted Google help and was reassured by their team about the privacy of the forms. Furthermore, after collecting the responses, I erased all the information from online sources as instructed by the university’s ethics department. As soon as the YouTube page was established for public access, and the link to the film’s questionnaire was ready, I designed two digital messages containing both links; one for the Kuwaiti public and the other for Bidoon participants via WhatsApp, the most widely messaging platform in Kuwait (see Figure 13). The message briefly described who I was and what my film was about. Furthermore, the message was designed to look like a flyer in order to capture the recipient’s attention.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-k9q1vcr2k&t=484s>



Figure 13: Left: a display of the message circulated via WhatsApp to Bidoon participants in Sulabiya. The message is marked with (B). Right: a display of the message circulated via WhatsApp to Kuwaiti participants.

I contacted many university lecturers across Kuwait and asked them to forward my WhatsApp message to student groups. It was also dispatched through family members and friends who were asked to forward the online links to their groups and friends to attract as many online viewers as possible. In addition, the Bidoon WhatsApp message was forwarded to my guide, and he was asked to dispatch the link to as many Bidoon as possible. Both the Kuwaiti and Bidoon WhatsApp messages contained the same link to the film. However, each message contained a separate link to the online questionnaire. Hence, each link collected a different set of responses; one for Kuwaitis and one for Bidoon.

As a result, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was uploaded online and accessed by viewers on Tuesday 5th January 2021 and data collection ceased on Wednesday 27th January 2021. However, due to various factors such as: the COVID-19 restrictions, the limitations of collecting responses online, and an inability to precisely confirm the target group’s responses to both questionnaires, I took an alternative approach. I decided to combine the responses in one set and consider the replies of

the general public (as one): Kuwaitis, Bidoon, and expatriates. The merged answers are now response of the reviewers of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ Moreover, I used both Google translate and two translators to interpret the viewers’ comments from Arabic to English. This was done to ensure that the meaning of the viewer’s opinion was not altered.

Analysis of the questionnaires

The questionnaire consisted of five simple statements that were intended (as a whole) to help assess the viewers’ standpoints, knowledge, familiarity, and awareness of the Kuwaiti Bidoons’ plight and claims. Responders were also able to add their comments after each statement in the space provided. Using a Likert scale that contains five responses; strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD), the viewers chose a response that they most agreed with in reaction to each statement. There were a number of viewers who did not respond to some statements. I referred to that as ‘not supplied’ (NS). By the responses’ collection concluded, the total number of viewers who visited ‘*WDIGFH?*’ YouTube page was 3,791. From the total number of viewers, 569 completed the online questionnaire or parts of it. Responses that were incomplete or incoherent were excluded.

I now proceed with discussing viewers’ responses and posit my interpretation of those responses. My interpretation is not intended to generalise with respect to the raised issues, but rather to present a possible reading of them. I am aware that this task holds some challenges revealed by questions such as: can change (in awareness) be quantified? Is change (in awareness) a linear process? Hence, does it always proceed from story to action? (McLagan, 2012). Does the value of a film like ‘*WDIGFH?*’ reside in its contribution to the public awareness? But the most important question for me is: how can I portray the impact of the film and viewers’ reactions in a truthful manner that does not devalue their opinions?

Here is a table containing the questionnaire results in a simple format.

Table Key	
Strongly agree	SA
Agree	A
Neutral	N
Disagree	D
Strongly disagree	SD

Not supplied	NS
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Statement		SA	A	N	D	SD	NS
1	The film is an accurate presentation of the Bidoon community in contemporary Kuwait.	19%	55%	12%	6%	3%	5%
2	This film could help raise awareness of the Bidoons' plight in contemporary Kuwait, or even internationally.	21%	58%	10%	4%	2%	5%
3	Hamood's decision to leave Kuwait and seek asylum in the United Kingdom is a better choice for his future than if he chose to stay in Kuwait in the hope of securing his nationality.	22%	54%	14%	5%	1%	4%
4	The human rights of the contemporary Bidoon of Kuwait are regularly violated, their situation is unstable, and they fear persecution.	24%	46%	18%	5%	3%	4%
5	Bidoons' claim to Kuwaiti nationality is legitimate.	22%	38%	25%	6%	5%	4%

Table 3: Exhibits the results of the film questionnaire data.

A notable number of viewers replied to the questionnaire, and in response to all five statements an ample percentage of them (strongly) agreed. These particular viewers accepted that the film is an accurate representation of the Bidoon (74%) and that it could help raise awareness (79%). Furthermore, they agreed that Bidoon's human rights are violated (70%), and that their claim to a Kuwaiti nationality is legitimate (60%). Yet, they saw seeking asylum as a better alternative for Hamood (76%). On the other hand, the number of viewers (strongly) disagreeing with all statements is far less. Only 9% did not see that the film as an accurate representation, while 6% thought the film could not help in raising awareness. Further, 8% of them felt that Bidoon's human rights are not violated, whereas 11% believed that Bidoon's claim to a

Kuwaiti nationality is illegitimate. And 6% disagreed with Hamood's decision to seek asylum elsewhere. A good percentage of the viewers fell between neutral and no response. For example, 17% of the viewers did not take a position regarding the film nor if it was an accurate presentation of the Bidoon. While 15% ceased to take a position on the issue of raising awareness, 22% regarding the issue of human rights, and 18% in relation to seeking asylum. Almost a third of the viewers (29%) were impartial about Bidoon's claim to the Kuwaiti nationality. The full results are given in Table 4.

Statement		(S)A	(S)D	N(NS)
1	The film is an accurate presentation of the Bidoon community in contemporary Kuwait.	74%	9%	17%
2	This film could help raise awareness of the Bidoons' plight in contemporary Kuwait, or even internationally.	79%	6%	15%
3	Hamood's decision to leave Kuwait and seek asylum in the United Kingdom is a better choice for his future than if he chose to stay in Kuwait in the hope of securing his nationality.	76%	6%	18%
4	The human rights of the contemporary Bidoon of Kuwait are regularly violated, their situation is unstable, and they fear persecution.	70%	8%	22%
5	Bidoons' claim to Kuwaiti nationality is legitimate.	60%	11%	29%

Table 4: The combined results of the film questionnaire data.

Although the percentages seem hopeful in relation to raising awareness to the Bidoon's plight, making sense of participants' comments reveals aspects that give depth and context to those numbers.

Raising awareness of the Kuwaiti Bidoon's reality

In all, '*WDIGFH?*' stirred viewers emotions in different directions; some voices expressed the simplicity of portraying the Bidoon's condition and asked that more serious aspects of

Bidoon's lives to be portrayed saying that 'the reality is much worse.' Other voices complimented the film and revealed the passionate impact 'through the influential and powerful scenes that depict the reality of the Bidoon.' Still, others were angry voices disapproving of the Kuwaiti image portrayed in the film, asking for the depiction of the 'true and the correct image of Kuwait' (as they saw it): humane and charitable. There were also voices that echoed the common and official representation of Bidoon who 'seek a nationality they do not deserve while concealing their original one.' Their argument is entrenched in the idea that 'Bidoon want to live in and benefit from Kuwait and acquire the Kuwaiti nationality.' Some viewers were sentimentally affected 'screaming many times throughout the film' with 'tearful eyes.' I have no doubt that '*WDIGFH?*' touched viewers' hearts and minds, irrespective of the diversity of opinions reflected in the questionnaire's responses. This, for me, is not only reassuring, but also highlights the significance that films can be a tool of public intervention (Kerrigan and Callaghan, 2019). By pushing the boundaries and pursuing '*WDIGFH?*' practice creatively, I was able to challenge the commonly held representation of the Kuwaiti Bidoon. What is of great importance to me as a filmmaker is that viewers (unconsciously) reveal the (character of) context within which their commonly held representation reside. Understanding the uniqueness of the context can aid future filmmaking projects immensely.

Now I focus on making sense of viewers' comments in order to understand the context of their views. All questionnaire comments, as well as YouTube comments, were read several times in order to analyse the content and identify possible themes that categorise the content. I focused on the following questions: 'what do I want to find out? What does this mean? What is this participant saying?' (Prasad, 2008; Stemler, 2015). This helped me focus on my main research question and the subjects of the research, the Bidoon. I tried to be truthful to viewers' comments and their meanings by using their own words in the titles of the themes I identified. Quotes that best represent each theme were selected to as examples.

Trapped within the boundaries of charity; 'falsely painted as bad'

The numbers and percentages above seem to reflect an encouraging baseline of awareness of the Kuwaiti Bidoon among the viewers which can be further enhanced. But some of the viewers' comments suggest that their awareness is trapped in the humanitarian aid that Kuwaitis offer to the Bidoon. These viewers seem to be unable to see beyond the charitable boundary. They, therefore, reject the cruel depiction of Waleed, the Kuwaiti man, and fail to

see the Bidoon people as equal human beings to Kuwaitis. Hence, these viewers seem to be confined inside the charitable boundaries that dominate the relationship between Kuwaitis and Bidoon. There are many examples of those viewers' comments. In one example the viewer writes:

This is an exaggerated representation of Kuwaitis. They are depicted as monsters in this film, and this is not true. People are oppressed everywhere, whether they are Kuwaiti or Bidoon. Kuwaiti people are generous and if one or two are cruel, this does not mean all of them are (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

For this viewer, oppression is a fact of life and part of living, practically legalised and taken for granted. In this depiction, Kuwaitis and Bidoon are equal because they are both oppressed. But in spite of their oppression, Kuwaitis rise up to lend a helping hand to the Bidoon. Thus, defining a hierarchical relationship between the two, with Kuwaitis at the top and Bidoon at the bottom. In a longer comment, another viewer wrote the following:

There is a strong and growing local awareness of the Bidoon and their cases, especially those who deserve [the nationality]. This film is a simple depiction, and the reality is in fact much worse. This film has blindsided certain Kuwaiti people, like myself and my family and friends. We try to employ Bidoon in our private projects. The film also completely overlooked the role of charity organisations, which offer help. But of course, they can't cope alone because there are so many Bidoon and expatriates in this country. So, it comes down to the generosity of the Kuwaiti people. In fact, only yesterday eight houses were prepared for the Bidoon. But as I said, the reality is much worse, and now with the coronavirus, it's worse than ever (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

Although the second viewer seems to show a higher level of awareness on Bidoon issues, the view is still trapped within the charitable boundaries; giving a helping hand to the Bidoon to cope with the difficulties of life. Like the previous viewer, this one perceives the relationship that governs how Kuwaitis associate with Bidoon in a particular charitable hierarchical way, therefore denying how Waleed, the Kuwaiti character is portrayed. It is, in my view, this denial that needs to be shifted in order to be able to see Bidoon as equals who have rights like Kuwaitis. While this viewer seems to object to the unkind depiction of Kuwaitis in the film, a celebration of their generosity is pressed for, without revealing 'the reality' of the Bidoon which 'is in fact much worse' as expressed in the same quote above.

Objectifying the Kuwaiti Bidoon; 'best choice to pack and leave'

Another issue that is raised for me by the viewers of *'WDIGFH?'* is that many of them say Hamood's seeking asylum elsewhere is a better choice than receiving what is rightly his, the Kuwaiti nationality. In my view, this is alarming because it reflects the blindness of those viewers to Bidoon rights. It is no longer a question of social justice; it is cast as an inferior matter that is easy to deal with 'to pack and leave.' Let us for example take this viewer's comment:

That was the best choice Hamood made, to leave and seek a better life. It's not worth waiting for a piece of paper (nationality) to prove you belong to this land. Thank you to every Hamood who decided to leave. It is better than leaving this burden for your grandchildren to carry (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

It is only when 'nationality' is seen as a physical piece of paper, that it becomes easier to discard, regardless of its symbolic reference to belonging. But the official denial of a passport, and hence, the process of acquiring a (forged) passport, as well as the extension of deprivation to Bidoon generations to come, are all overlooked. When Bidoon people are objectified, when they are not seen as people of history and struggle, then stripping them of their identity and belonging becomes possible. Here is a powerful quote, written by a Bidoon viewer, which reflects their struggle and resistance:

I prefer to die here in Kuwait. This is my country. I will not leave. I will remain here despite the prejudices of people. I will not claim asylum in another country just because some people here don't acknowledge that I belong. I will work as hard as I can, and I will not leave the land of my fathers and grandfathers. I love this land until the day I die (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

'A representation of an absent, and even silenced voice'

To some viewers, this film opens up an avenue that could contribute to solving the Bidoon's calamity and providing a voice to the voiceless. Because it portrayed the Bidoon's struggle and experience and won the viewers' empathy. But it is an avenue filled with perils, and therefore questions such as: 'how committed a person is? How far can films on the Bidoon go? How political can these films be?' are important to pose. The 'democratic' reality in Kuwait dictates how deep activists, Kuwaitis, and others can dive without being legally prosecuted. In fact, few viewers expressed their concern for the safety of the film crew and cast members and hoped that they avoid any form of prosecution. One viewer stated in the questionnaire's comments:

We desperately need films like this. These films are the best means of solving the Bidoon crisis. There is no better way to convey and capture the emotional gravity and seriousness of what Bidoon experience than through films. There are some people who see us as enemies because they believe anything written about us. They have no idea about our lived reality. They see us as outsiders just because they believe the lies they read. We are the children of this country and we are thirsty for more recognition. We cannot do films like these because of the danger we might face (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

Another viewer saw the Bidoon's case as one of social justice. Therefore, any person who believes in justice must endure and persist in whatever avenue they follow (including filmmaking).

If one believes in justice then one should always take a stance for justice, no matter the case. It's not enough to reveal your stance only on some occasions. Their suffering is not a seasonal event, it is a daily suffering. Efforts must be made to defend the Bidoon. If one doesn't spend time researching and understanding what they go through, then they are not a priority, whatever one does (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

I tried to feed in different aspects of the Bidoon lives in '*WDIGFH?*' I raised issues such as healthcare, housing, forged passports, and the political history and protests; things that were overlooked, and not considered (by some viewers) to be a representation of reality. For one viewer: 'The film presented just one case [of marriage]. The Bidoon people are just like others; with different colours, backgrounds, experiences, and circumstances.' While another viewer wrote:

I wish you explored more serious realities the Bidoon face. For instance, how they turn towards drug trafficking, with many ending up as users and addicts, because they see no other alternative. Or perhaps, how many feel they have no alternative but to obtain forged and counterfeit documents from the black market, just so they have a chance of receiving proper educational or health services, but unfortunately, end up getting financially extorted because of this (Anonymous film viewer, 2021).

Other viewers expressed their feelings towards the Bidoon realities differently. For example, one viewer commented: 'the situation of the Bidoon is more brutal, especially the lives of their helpless children.' Another wrote: 'the feeling of loss and humiliation is so deep to be portrayed in a short film. The reality is much worse than this.' And a third said: 'there are touching scenes in the film that reflect the painful reality of what the Bidoon are going through.' These, for me, reflect viewers' thirst to free a voice that had long been 'absent and

even silenced.’, as one viewer conveyed. So, if on the surface ‘*WDIGFH?*’ seems to be taken by some as ‘brushing’ over serious matters, it is still considered a step in the right direction.

The ‘stolen right of the Bidoon’

I present here 13 different voices of some of the viewers of ‘*WDIGFH?*’ that when placed together, depict what is articulated by one viewer as ‘a stolen right of the Bidoon’. I am interpreting the different comments in an unconventional format, as if the different voices were in conversation with one another.

- Everybody must have an origin, a place they belong to. But personally, and I stress that this is a personal opinion, I don’t think Bidoon have a case. They demand a nationality that they don’t deserve. I think there are many others from different nationalities who deserve a Kuwaiti nationality more than them. They shouldn’t just get it simply and only because they are Bidoon. This is illogical and unfair.
- These people have been living in Kuwait for 80 years, if they are not Kuwaitis then what are they then?
- I don’t have much insight on the lives of the Bidoon.
- I am a Kuwaiti and I feel ashamed of what is happening to the Bidoon.
- The case of the Bidoon brings out a mixture of feelings. I feel angry, sorrowful, and sympathetic. I find it contradicting that we trust them as soldiers protecting our country’s borders, as doctors treating our patients, as teachers educating our children, but we don’t trust them to carry our nationality. We trust them when they perform duties towards this country, but not when they ask for their rights.
- They say things like, you are a Bidoon nurse, we need you, but your national ID card has expired; you are a medical doctor, we need you, but your national ID card has expired. Teachers, students, or employees of any kind have no rights if their IDs have expired. It is your humanity that has expired and not our ID cards.
- Hamood escaped his life but not his reality, the painful memories will haunt him.

- I think it's better to be a foreigner in a different land than a stranger in your own land. But the Bidoon are denied even this choice.
- Three generations have gone; they lived and died in Kuwait. Some sacrificed their blood for Kuwait, some defended it during the Gulf war [1991], some contributed to sports and science in this country, yet still they were not given a nationality. So, what is Hamood waiting for?
- Everyone must do what they can to help the Bidoon. This is a humanitarian issue that is extended beyond the confinement of racism.
- Awareness plays a big role in people's perception. Many Kuwaitis feel for the oppressed Bidoon. This film plays a big role in raising awareness about the Bidoon plight.
- There are so many Kuwaitis who don't even know what the word Bidoon means.
- It should not be referred to as a legitimate right of the Bidoon to claim Kuwaiti nationality; it is a stolen right of the Bidoon... (Anonymous film viewers, 2021).

From raising awareness to dialogue

The questionnaire allowed the viewers of '*WDIGFH?*' an opportunity to individually comment and express their views. Some viewers commented briefly, some in great detail, while others chose not to comment at all. There were also a few viewers who took advantage of noting their responses on the YouTube comment section. These viewers were aware that their words would be available publicly. Although some of the comments were regarding the production of the film, few others expressed annoyance with the cruel depiction of the Kuwaiti character, reminding the film director and readers of the generosity of the Kuwaiti donations. The YouTube comment section provided a valuable dialogue among a number of viewers; allowing discussions to take place organically without my/the filmmaker's intervention. I offer here the complete dialogue that took place, referring to the four viewers as A, B, C, and D. I stress that these are anonymous YouTube viewers of '*WDIGFH?*' that I do not know. The dialogue started with viewer A and continued with the replies of the others as follows:

A: This is a complete exaggeration. This film has presented us as a superficial society that is greedy and doesn't help the less fortunate. I don't believe that.

B: In the last ten years nothing has changed; Kuwait has remained static! There is a scene where the father is selling goods, and someone offers him money to help him out, but he refuses it. This is petty help. Kuwait is a closed society and is unable to see or accept different viewpoints. The result is a generation of irresponsible violent youths who get what they want by force. A recent study found that 150,000 individuals from 180 different countries identified Kuwait as an unpleasant place to live. What really got my attention is that many viewed Kuwaitis as unpleasant people; what do you think this means?

A: The film portrays an exaggerated negative side of Kuwait. We help Bidoon and others who are less fortunate. We empathies with their struggles because we are human. Our late Amir was called the leader of humanity. Kuwait has spent millions in aid to those in need around the world. House of Fayha is one example of a charity in Kuwait that helps the Bidoon. There are also other organisations that have been offering help, before and throughout the pandemic. There are people who generously support other families and ask for nothing in return. In response to this study that you mentioned and for those people who refuse help because they view it as ‘petty help’, let them go to other countries and experience paying taxes and other fees. Our country is tax-free; our healthcare is free. With all due respect, I don’t accept the demeaning representation of Kuwait in the film. I thought there were some positive aspects in the cinematography, but the storyline was a complete exaggeration.

B: I will gladly pay taxes if my rights aren’t breached. I don’t want your aid nor your charity. I don’t deny that individuals are not charitable or that charity aid doesn’t exist. In fact, I believe that almost all Kuwaitis are generous with their donations, but this is not the point of the film. People want their rights. They are not looking for aid or charity or a helping hand. I’m certain if Kuwaitis were aware of homeless Bidoon or a student struggling with school fees, they would not hesitate to help. But do you think this is the way we should go about it? Isn’t it better to give the Bidoon their rights?

A: That’s the point I was trying to make. This film didn’t even hint that there was any good in Kuwait. All it did was stress that Kuwait is an oppressive society. It completely overlooked the positive aspects of the country. Anyway, I pray for the Bidoon and I hope their suffering ends. There are many of them who deserve to be naturalised, but there are others who don’t deserve nationality.

It is here that a third person (C) briefly replied to A (while B refrained).

C: Stop focusing on the literal meaning of the film and try to be a bit open-minded so that you can grasp the symbolism of this story. Look beyond the obvious. You’re too wrapped up with the literal bits that you’ve missed the bigger picture. Take some time to really think about the message and perhaps you will be enlightened with the true reality.

Then D, a fourth person, joined the discussion.

D: Do you actually think that by donating two pieces of furniture or two bags of bread, then you've fulfilled people's needs? People need to mix with the rest of the population, they need good housing, good schools, free healthcare. This is the responsibility of the government. You as an individual can help, but you have no power over the situation. Why are you trying to conceal the reality that we live in? What do you have to hide? Let him expose it. We as a country are cruel and we have no humanity towards Bidoon or expatriates.

A: How can I make someone like you understand. If you don't like it then leave. Why are we to blame and why are we inhumane? (Anonymous film viewers, 2021).

The conversation ends here. This dialogue among the 4 viewers of '*WDIGFH?*' accentuates a number of important points: it confirms the conviction of viewer A of the charitable image of the Kuwaiti people towards the Bidoon, as if to say 'our duties towards the Bidoon are fulfilled.' It also reflects the level of awareness of other viewers (B, C, and D), and the responsibility they assume towards educating viewer A. Although viewer A insists on taking a hierarchical position, looking down from the top, stressing the commodities that Bidoon and others experience living in Kuwait, viewers B, C, and D try to highlight the serious issues that '*WDIGFH?*' reveals about the Bidoon. But, instead of rising up to the challenges, viewer A dismisses them and takes an easy way out of the dialogue replying to viewer D: 'if you don't like it then leave.' This reply is based on an assumption that D is not Kuwaiti, and reveals that viewer A is eliminating any responsibility towards the Bidoon which is further stressed by adding: 'why are we to blame and why are we inhumane?' In fact, in doing so, viewer A (in the final reply) unconsciously terminates the 'generous and humane' image that was the base of their argument. Still, viewer A was presented with an opportunity to see things differently, and rethink, and question the entrenched ideas, that the Kuwaiti officials succeeded in planting over the years towards the Bidoon.

To conclude, it is not an easy task to quantify raising awareness. Calculating the percentages of the questionnaire statements, reading and rereading the questionnaire comments and the YouTube comments, relating the pieces together in order to see a holistic picture, I have no doubt in my mind that my film '*WDIGFH?*' helped raise awareness of some viewers to some degree. I say that with confidence based on the fact the above discussion was provoked by how

‘*WDIGFH?*’ was designed and the decisions I implemented such as sympathetic protagonist, oppressive narrative and practical film techniques utilised during shooting and editing. We are still facing a challenging task of educating more people on Bidoon issues (raised in ‘*WDIGFH?*’), strengthening and deepening the visual representation of the Bidoon, such as adding the multiple layers of complexity of the Bidoon’s lives in further film projects. Also, seeking creative ways of presenting films that break the norm of the silent viewer. There is a strong belief that this “visual medium has the potential to be a creative avenue for enhancing awareness, critical thought and social justice” (Wiebe, 2015, p. 244). Although raising awareness is a first step, it is further enhanced by opening channels of communication and dialogue, and it is here that other important (future) plans can be pursued, such as films for critical thinking, social justice and change.

Chapter Five



Conclusion

The visuals of the poverty-stricken Bidoon community, at the outskirts of Kuwait City, imprinted a deep scar into my heart when I was first introduced to the community. I wondered who these people were and why they lived in such an environment. I started reading about the Bidoon and the impact of statelessness on one's life. I thought about Bidoon's daily struggles and how they were coping and managing to live life in Kuwait, my oil rich country. The Kuwaiti Bidoon's plight inspired this practice-based Ph.D. research. I was once victimised, abused, and received prejudiced remarks and treatment while living in Britain during my childhood and adolescent years. But films were my refuge. They provided me with knowledge and entertainment. I was also able to emotionally connect with the characters on-screen. The passion for films and stories filled my life, and I wanted to use the magical power of film to help raise awareness of the Kuwaiti public on Bidoon's plight. I wanted to highlight their struggles, and unveil and challenge the commonly held representation of the Bidoon by emotionally engaging the film viewers in order to raise their awareness. This was accomplished through an original 60-minute drama film titled *Where Do I Go From Here?* ('WDIGFH?') that followed Hamood's journey, a Bidoon young man who was oppressed and faced numerous obstacles to achieve his goal. In essence, playing on the difference between Bidoon and Kuwaitis was the context of the unfolding narrative of 'WDIGFH?', a conscious approach used to stimulate viewers' empathy.

'WDIGFH?' is the first Ph.D. level 60-minute drama film about the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon and I am grateful for the opportunities that allowed me to address these issues. This research could potentially provide an original and significant contribution to this field of study. This film is visually unique, it combines aspects of Ken Loach's Social Realism filmmaking with animated sketches. Moreover, uniting audio and visual platforms, my film acts as a visual book/resource which informs viewers about the Bidoon's plight in Kuwait. Within this context, I asked this main research question: How can I produce a fictional film that raises awareness on an issue that is highly contentious, and which is widely shaped by decades of official/dominant narratives as well as policies classifying Bidoon as illegal residents? To help me pursue this question I posited two sub-questions. The first was: How can I produce a film on the plight of the Kuwaiti Bidoon that emotionally engages viewers? This sub-question aided

my efforts and focused them on the technical and narrative aspects of producing '*WDIGFH?*' The second question was: How do the perspectives of the viewers of '*WDIGFH?*' reflect awareness raising? This sub-question examined how far a film such as '*WDIGFH?*' can raise the awareness of the viewers on the issues related to the Bidoon's lives.

To answer the main research question, guided by my two-sub-questions, I conducted a thorough literature review on the Kuwaiti Bidoon. The literature review helped shape the structure of my screenplay as it provided an insight on the Bidoon's oppressive lifestyle. Furthermore, the literature review helped shape the narrative of my fictional story as it provided information regarding the Bidoon's historical roots and the violation of their human rights that they endure. In addition, the literature review was strengthened by my visit to, and observations of, the Bidoon community (in Sulabiya) as well as the ethnographic interviews which helped shape my story narrative and character design. I wanted my film to have a sense of realism and feel authentic, therefore I photographed and recorded images of the Bidoon community and seeded them into my film's visual narrative. The images (exterior and interior) also inspired the décor (set design) of my production scenes. Creating authentic scenes was done to achieve realism and authenticity thus reaching out to the viewer, and forming a sympathetic response. These techniques were utilised to emotionally engage the audience allowing them to empathise with the Bidoon.

Furthermore, I reviewed films that were solely designed and produced to raise awareness on social issues. I screened a total of twenty films, twelve Middle Eastern and eight Western films. This was carried out to examine the important aspects of fictional films that affect people emotionally. Two aspects of the reviewed films were my focus: to understand a film's screenplay (character design and story narrative) and extract important film techniques (camera angles, duration of shot, camera frame, editing techniques, lighting, set design, and use of sound) that characterised such films. Based on my investigation, I extricated a number of points that supported the production of my film. An audience is drawn to, and sympathise with, a protagonist facing problems and obstacles. There are many visual styles and a number of techniques that one can adopt, therefore, there is no correct way to film a scene but rather, how to effectively utilise film techniques to engage viewers emotionally.

'*WDIGFH?*' was produced with a visual style based on Ken Loach's Social Realism, that combined both documentary and drama techniques, utilises real locations, non-professional

actors, and addresses current social problems. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is an originally conceived project because it merges Social Realism with animated sketches to portray the Bidoon’s plight. The addition of sketched images allowed me to explore the Bidoon’s political realm and concentrate on statelessness at a wider issue. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ follows the journey of Hamood, a single Bidoon young man, and his personal oppressive life during the Kuwaiti 2011 Bidoon protests. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was not intended to elaborate all aspects of Bidoon’s historical account, nor constructed to cover all current Bidoon’s events. ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is modest in its design but forceful in challenging a widely held misconstrued representations of Bidoon issues. By intensifying the wide inequality between Bidoon and Kuwaitis, a compelling truth, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ seeks to arouse viewers’ empathy, and succeeds in doing so.

When ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was completed, it was screened online via a YouTube channel to the public in Kuwait to test its effectiveness. An online questionnaire, of five statements was designed using a 5-responses Likert scale with space provided for personal comments. The results reflect an awareness of Bidoon’s struggles and human rights violation. The majority of viewers agree that ‘*WDIGFH?*’ is an accurate representation of the Bidoon, and in fact their claim to the Kuwaiti nationality is legitimate. Nonetheless, they agreed that seeking asylum is a better alternative. It was through the comments supplied by some of the viewers that an in-depth meaning was revealed. In fact, the difference and wide inequality between Bidoon and Kuwaitis accentuated in ‘*WDIGFH?*’ paid off. Viewers were emotionally involved in different ways. Revealing those emotions helped extract some important themes that point to features unique to the Kuwaiti context. Many of the viewers opposed the cruel harsh depiction of the Kuwaitis in the film and the lavish lifestyle portrayed by Waleed. They were unable to see beyond the charitable Kuwaiti image that governed the hierarchical relationship between Kuwaitis and Bidoon. Bidoon were objectified and their history was erased and as a result they should seek a better life for themselves elsewhere. Films such as ‘*WDIGFH?*’ give voice to the silenced Bidoon that wish to express their ‘stolen right.’ The YouTube comments reiterated the questionnaire comments and added further the importance of provoking debate among viewers which could advance a more informed awareness of the issues.

‘*WDIGFH?*’ was written to be polemical in order to communicate the message of the Bidoon’s human rights violation throughout the film. I designed my film to trigger an empathetic response from the public viewers in the hope of raising awareness on the Bidoon’s plight. Ultimately, ‘*WDIGFH?*’ was meant to shine a spotlight on the Bidoon community in

contemporary Kuwait. The film was intended to raise the awareness of the audience, trigger their interest to investigate and draw their own conclusions on the issues presented. Films such as ‘*WDIGFH?*’ “can help in creating a climate of opinion. It can maybe trigger a question or two. But it can’t do more than that unless when people leave the cinema, they carry it further” (NPR, 2016). My film is one voice of many possible voices such in the press, television and social media. The decisions then to go a step further is left with the people in their different positions. Based on the collected film viewer’s data, implementing a practice-based research approach to filmmaking and producing a film to raise awareness on the Bidoon’s plight in contemporary Kuwait, has proved positive. If taken further, this may act as a possible agency of change. The Research Excellence Framework⁴ argues that new research not only must add to new knowledge, but also create impact to solve real-world problems, and deliver a meaningful and everlasting body of work. I created ‘*WDIGFH?*’ to address all these criteria.

In all, I can proudly state that this practice-based research led to genuine contributions to the field of filmmaking. When I chose Loach’s approach to filmmaking I wanted to honestly and truthfully inform my Kuwaiti viewers of the Bidoon’s plight. To achieve this, I combined my ethnographic data with the visual narrative of my film ‘*WDIGFH?*’ I selected Loach’s Social Realism style of filmmaking, a predominantly British cinema Art form, as the main visual style to shoot my film ‘*WDIGFH?*’ In doing so, I have appropriated a cinematic cultural movement from the West and used this Art form to shoot a narrative that is set in the Middle East, a new/different context. This has not been witnessed before, as far as I know, at least with regards to Kuwait and the Kuwaiti Bidoons. I have shown in my methodology (Chapter 2) in much detail how that was successfully attained from a methodological perspective giving much attention to how that was translated into my practical and technical presentation to produce ‘*WDIGFH?*’ But pursuing Loach’s Social Realism was not without its challenges. I have alluded to those challenges in detail throughout this thesis. I have also discussed how I successfully met those challenges. Persistence, creative and critical thinking and imagination, and the inner love for such work, all elements needed for research at this level, led me to successfully complete the project. Let me briefly stress with an example to conclude with the second major contribution.

⁴ Please view link <https://www.salford.ac.uk/research/ref-2021>

During the film production phase, I faced numerous limitations. One was the unavailability of my cast who pulled out during the process of filming (see Chapter two for more details). My thinking led me to try a different approach as a solution: animation. I, in fact, introduced animation to and combined it with the visual narrative of '*WDIGFH?*' Merging animation with my Social Realism film, created significant opportunities such as adding new content and filling in missing footage. These attributes were essential to the completion of '*WDIGFH?*' By uniting animation with Social Realism filmmaking, I have opened up a new avenue which can be further investigated and refined. In a private conversation with a British film expert, after viewing '*WDIGFH?*', I was commended and was told that Ken Loach would not think of integrating animation with live-images (A. Willis, personal communication, November 7th, 2019). The expert added that, this merging between animation and live-images is an effective contribution and a novel idea, an addition to the field of (Social Realism) filmmaking. This new path could be further pursued in the future.

Following the completion of '*WDIGFH?*' the BBC Arabic was interested in screening '*WDIGFH?*' and discuss the Bidoon's plight on their live online talk-show. I was also approached by academics in the field to upload '*WDIGFH?*' on their personal websites and social media accounts to use the film as a tool to raise awareness of the Bidoon's condition and other stateless communities' plight. These are possibilities that I could further to highlight issues of inclusion and social justice for the Bidoon.

Appendix



Ethics Approval



Research, Innovation and Academic
Engagement Ethical Approval Panel

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26 April 2018

Haidar Alameir

Dear Haidar,

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION AMT1718-42 – Bidoon – Citizens without Nationality, Statelessness, Human Rights and Community in Contemporary Kuwait.

Based on the information you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your application AMT1718-42 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project and/ or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting A&M-TaughtEthics@salford.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maggie Scott'.

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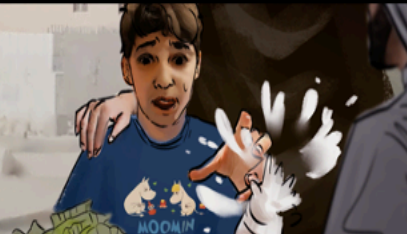
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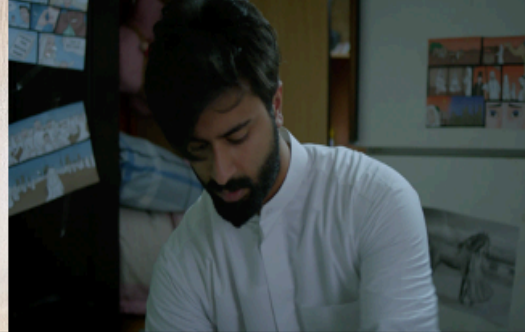
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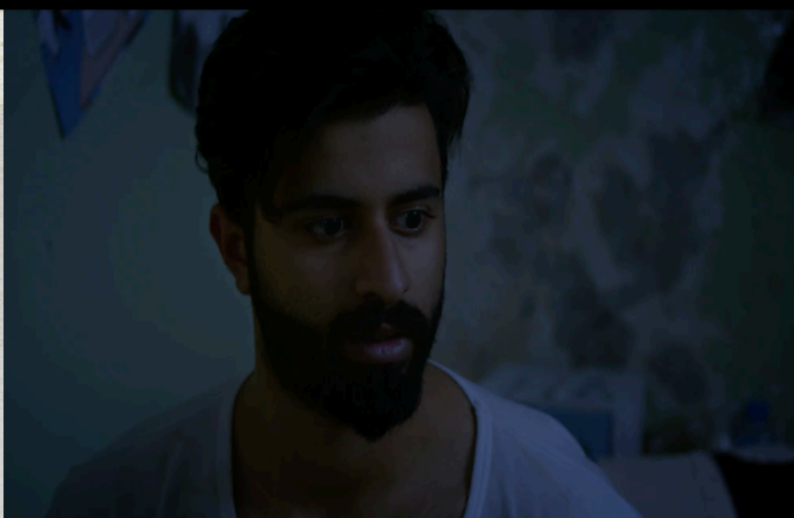
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That's a wrap!

مع السلامة.

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ.



وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ.

المرحوم الحاج:

فاضل محمد عبد الله الحسين الأمير (أبو عباس).

الفاخرة.



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