

What the book is doing overall

Carter's central question is the one many Moroccans reportedly asked her: "**What Moroccan cinema?**" She uses that question to show that Moroccan cinema is not just a body of films, but a field shaped by conflict over identity, state control, funding, audience taste, colonial legacies, foreign influence, and access to screens. She explicitly treats Moroccan cinema as a cultural, political, and institutional problem, not only an aesthetic one.

Her method is a **cultural studies approach**: she combines film analysis with institutional history, political economy, oral testimony, media studies, and postcolonial questions. She wants to explain not only what Moroccan films mean, but also **who gets to make them, who funds them, who sees them, and what national identity they are asked to represent.**

A major idea you should keep in mind throughout the whole book is this: **Moroccan cinema develops inside a tension between national authenticity and foreign influence.** Carter repeatedly argues that Moroccan filmmakers work under pressure from European models, imported films, local state institutions, and conflicting expectations about what "Moroccan" cinema should look like.

Introduction and framework

Book pages: Introduction 1; Methodology 4; Moroccan history and culture 13; Berberity 18; ancillary media 22; RTM 25; 2M 29; newspapers 31.

The introduction is essential because it gives you the book's governing argument. Carter says Moroccan cinema is shaped by multiple agents: filmmakers, the state, the economy, colonial history, foreign cinemas, and debates over representation. She also insists that the history of Moroccan cinema is inseparable from the history of Morocco itself.

She then situates Moroccan cinema in a broader national context: post-independence Morocco is still negotiating identity between **Africa, the Arab world, Europe, Islam, Berberity, modernity, and colonial afterlives.** That unstable identity, she argues, is reflected both in films and in the institutions that regulate film culture.

Another key introductory argument is that imported cinema matters. Moroccan spectators were raised on films from the United States, Egypt, India, Hong Kong, and Europe, while many Moroccan filmmakers were trained in Europe. So the question is never simply how to make films in Morocco, but **how to make films that are culturally legible as Moroccan while circulating in a field dominated by foreign forms and expectations.**

She also pays strong attention to **Berber marginalization**, arguing that state media and national culture often privileged Arab-Islamic identity while excluding Berber language and culture, which later pushed Berber communities toward alternative audiovisual production.

Chapter 1: *Laying the Industry Foundations, 1956–1970*

Book pages: 43–78.

This chapter explains the **birth of Moroccan cinema after independence**. Its main focus is institutional: how a newly independent state tried to use cinema for **nation-building**, public education, and symbolic unification. Carter shows that the **Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM)** became the key institution during this early period. Most production happened under its authority, and filmmaking was still largely limited to documentaries, development films, shorts, and newsreels, though the first feature films did begin to appear.

The main idea to remember is that early Moroccan cinema was not yet a fully autonomous artistic field. It was a **state-shaped field**, tied to post-independence political priorities. At the same time, the industry was fragile: there were very few trained filmmakers, exhibition and distribution were weak, and the country depended heavily on inherited colonial structures and imported film culture. Carter also notes that French-style cinema clubs flourished, while Egyptian films had a visible influence on Moroccan spectatorship and film language.

What matters most in this chapter is not just that Moroccan films began to be made, but that from the start Moroccan cinema was caught between **state pedagogy, weak infrastructure, and foreign cinematic models**.

The emblematic films in this chapter are:

Vaincre pour vivre (1968), *Soleil de printemps* (1969), and especially *Wechma* (1970).

For your research, **Wechma** is particularly important. Carter presents it as a landmark film made partly outside the normal CCM constraints through the Sigma 3 collaborative production model. Even though it received international recognition, it was poorly distributed inside Morocco. That contrast becomes one of Carter's recurring points: Moroccan films could be artistically important and even internationally valued, yet remain inaccessible to Moroccan audiences.

She also describes *Wechma* as a dark, oppressive film about a young man unable to integrate into society or find identity, and this is crucial because it signals a shift away from simple national celebration toward alienation, fragmentation, and critique.

What to take from Chapter 1

Carter's first period is about **foundations, not maturity**. Moroccan cinema begins as a state-supported and weakly distributed cinema, struggling to define its purpose. It is institutionally dependent, aesthetically unsettled, and already divided between films for national development and films seeking deeper artistic or social expression.

Chapter 2: *Looking to Define a Moroccan Aesthetic, 1971–1985*

Book pages: 89–165.

This chapter is about the search for a specifically **Moroccan cinematic language**. Carter places this period in the context of Arabization, educational expansion, urban migration, stronger state institutions, and the emergence of women into public life. She shows that government institutions

became more dominant in culture, while cinema clubs increasingly drew on **Third Cinema discourse** from Latin America and Algeria.

The central tension here is between three groups that wanted different things: the state, filmmakers, and critics/audiences. Carter stresses that these groups did not agree on what Moroccan cinema should be. This is one of the most important intellectual chapters in the book because it turns the question of cinema into a question of **aesthetics, authority, and public meaning**.

Institutionally, the chapter shows that the CCM lost its monopoly as the sole source of production, while funding procedures became more formalized and more bureaucratic. The CCM tried to regulate the new generation of filmmakers more tightly, but not always successfully.

A major point you should absolutely remember from this chapter is Carter's treatment of **ensorship**. She shows that censorship was not only the final visa or legal ban. It also worked indirectly through access to equipment, money, taxes, travel, distribution, and exhibition. In other words, censorship operated structurally across the whole life of a film.

She even notes that national films were scrutinized more rigorously than foreign ones, and that filmmakers often resorted to symbolism or obscurity to evade censorship, which sometimes made their work difficult for the wider public to understand.

The major films and directors here include *Al Hal/Trances*, *De l'autre côté du fleuve*, *Cauchemar*, Jilali Ferhati, Nabyl Lahlou, and Mustapha Derkaoui.

This is the chapter where Moroccan cinema becomes more overtly intellectual, experimental, and politically ambitious, but also more vulnerable to the criticism that it was too hermetic or disconnected from broader audiences. That issue echoes Carter's broader point that Moroccan auteur cinema often struggled to balance artistic seriousness with social accessibility.

What to take from Chapter 2

This is the chapter of **self-definition**. Moroccan cinema becomes more aesthetically ambitious and politically charged, but also more internally conflicted. Carter shows that "Moroccan aesthetic" is not a settled national style; it is a contested field shaped by censorship, state regulation, Third Cinema influence, and disagreement over whether film should educate, resist, experiment, or entertain.

Chapter 3: *New Developments, New Audiences, 1986–2006*

Book pages: 187–276.

This chapter marks a major turning point. Carter argues that Moroccan cinema changes significantly in both **style and audience relation** during this period. Some films begin to attract large national audiences, shorts re-emerge, and new directors reshape the field. But she also shows that this progress is contradictory: festivals multiply and make Moroccan cinema more visible, while at the same time theaters close, caravans decline, and many spectators turn instead to television, VHS, and satellite media.

One of the big ideas here is the emergence of **new audiences**. Carter notes elsewhere that Morocco's youthful population increasingly wanted films that addressed immediate realities such as employment,

sexuality, marriage, family problems, migration, drugs, and disappointment. This helps explain why certain films became more popular in the 1990s and 2000s.

This chapter is also very important for **diaspora and transnational filmmaking**. Carter shows that the CCM both restricted filmmakers and sought renewal through Moroccans living abroad, who were invited to bring new energy and ideas into national cinema. This helps explain the growing prominence of figures such as Nabil Ayouch, Ismaël Ferroukhi, and Laila Marrakchi.

Key films here include *Une porte sur le ciel*, *Un amour à Casablanca*, *L'Enfance volée*, *À la recherche du mari de ma femme*, *In Casablanca Angels Don't Fly*, *Ali Zaoua*, and *Marock*.

Ayouch's *Ali Zaoua* is especially important in Carter's narrative. She describes it as a huge national and international success, one that broke box-office records and treated street children with dignity rather than reducing them to sociological misery. The film also embodies one of her recurring themes: dreams damaged by harsh social reality.

So the chapter's main argument is that Moroccan cinema becomes more socially visible and more emotionally direct, but does so within a still-fragile ecosystem of uneven funding, collapsing exhibition, and institutional tension.

What to take from Chapter 3

This is the chapter of **renewal under contradiction**. Moroccan cinema becomes more popular, more diverse, and more internationally noticeable, yet it still struggles with structural weakness. Carter suggests that success did not solve the basic question of Moroccan cinema; it simply moved that question into new terrain: youth culture, diaspora, market shifts, and new social themes.

Chapter 4: Policies, Recent Developments, Themes, and Conclusions

Book pages: 301–319.

This chapter is more synthetic than the previous ones. Carter shifts from period history to a thematic reading of what Moroccan cinema has come to represent. She reviews infrastructure and policy, but most importantly she identifies the **dominant thematic clusters** of Moroccan cinema: women, emigration and alienation, tradition versus modernity, colonial experience, state bureaucracy and power, and pessimism/failure.

This chapter is probably the most useful one for your own thesis because it tells you what Carter believes Moroccan cinema recurrently says about Moroccan society.

On **women**, Carter argues that Moroccan cinema repeatedly represents women's difficulties across class and generational lines, but rarely imagines full liberation. Films show change and struggle, yet they tend to end within a wider structure of patriarchy and defeatism.

On **colonial experience**, Carter shows that some films revisit the protectorate and independence era not just to narrate history but to reclaim Moroccan memory and cultural agency. Her discussion of colonial-era representations emphasizes how cinema becomes a site for recovering suppressed history and exposing the lingering failures of post-independence promises.

On **state bureaucracy and power**, she notes that politics and government remained relatively taboo subjects, yet some films inserted criticism of state repression, official hypocrisy, and unequal power relations. This matters because it shows Moroccan cinema not merely as cultural expression but as a cautious form of political speech.

She also notes that many topics were historically constrained by policy and taboo, including drugs, guns, revolution, and direct criticism of the self or the regime. As a result, Moroccan cinema often moved toward abstraction, seriousness, or coded critique rather than open confrontation.

The final pages of the chapter raise the future-oriented question: **what future for Moroccan cinema?** Carter seems cautiously hopeful but never naïve. Her overall conclusion is that Moroccan cinema has become richer and more significant, yet still faces unresolved problems of audience access, structural fragility, funding, and representation. That is why the title-question remains open even at the end.

The biggest ideas you should remember from the whole book

If you are using this book for your PhD on Moroccan cinema, these are the arguments worth carrying forward:

First, Carter does **not** define Moroccan cinema narrowly by nationality. She treats it as a field of struggle over representation, infrastructure, language, and legitimacy.

Second, the book insists that Moroccan cinema cannot be understood apart from **state institutions**, especially the CCM. Production, censorship, distribution, training, and exhibition are all institutional questions, not just artistic ones.

Third, Carter presents Moroccan cinema as deeply shaped by **colonial and postcolonial tension**: France remains an influence, imported cinema remains powerful, and national identity remains unsettled.

Fourth, the recurring social themes of Moroccan cinema are **women, migration, alienation, modernity, power, and disappointment**. These are not side topics; they are the moral and symbolic core of the national filmography as Carter reads it.

Fifth, one of her strongest implicit claims is that Moroccan cinema has often been **more respected than seen**: artistically valued, sometimes internationally celebrated, but structurally blocked from reaching its own public.

Quick chapter map for citation use

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Chapter 2: pages 89–165.

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I can also turn this into a **thesis-ready analytical reading sheet** with chapter, argument, keywords, and quotations to cite directly.