

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Ecologies of Constraint: Eco-Critical and Ecofeminist Readings of Gendered Mobility in Haifaa al-Mansour's Saudi Film *Wadjda*

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Abstract

This article offers an ecocritical and ecofeminist reading of Haifaa al-Mansour's Wadjda (2012), focusing on the role of gendered mobility within the material and spatial organization of Riyadh. Existing studies of the film primarily investigate gender politics and female agency within Saudi society, focusing on the bicycle as a symbol of autonomy within the country's patriarchal context. This article, however, focuses on the film's exploration of its urban environment, and its relationship to the lives and experiences of the female characters. Through the application of qualitative close reading of the film as a whole, and the focused analysis of sixteen sequences identified for their depiction of public movement, transport, built space, exposure, enclosure, and the recurring bicycle motif, this study demonstrates how the material and spatial organization of Riyadh makes mobility unevenly available to women and girls within the film. Ultimately, I argue that the built form of Riyadh and the regulation of gender relations become mutually legible, as reflected in the movement of women through the city's various locations. Furthermore, I argue that the bicycle plays an ecofeminist role in the film, not as evidence of environmental activism, but as a non-motorized mode of transport whose access is gendered. Finally, grounding the analysis in specific sequences timestamps within Wadjda, the study demonstrates how the film links gendered agency and urban mobility, without the need to interpret environmental or patriarchal constraints as mere metaphors. Furthermore, it extends the study of eco-film and ecofeminism to Saudi and Gulf cinema, while recognizing the potential limitations of interpreting ecological intention within the realist mise-en-scène of a film like Wadjda.

Keywords: Ecofeminism; Ecocriticism; Middle Eastern cinema; Gendered mobility; *Wadjda*

Introduction

Haifaa al-Mansour's film, *Wadjda* (2012), is one of the most significant films of contemporary cinema of the Middle East and was the first feature-length film shot entirely within Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it was the first of its kind to be directed by a Saudi female film director (Hoggard, 2013). Beyond its significance for the film industry in

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Saudi Arabia, *Wadjda* provides one of the most revealing examinations of Saudi culture, and specifically the role of gender within that culture. Middle Eastern cinema focuses on topics that are of relevance to those countries and their cultures and often engage in the issues of identity formation, political control, and modernization that occur in the Middle East (Dönmez-Colin, 2007; Ginsberg & Lippard, 2020; Naficy, 2008). *Wadjda* explores similar themes as those found in films from the Middle East, but it does so by presenting a realist film that reveals the issues of gender in a conservative society. Studies of the film often focus on how the desire of *Wadjda* (the protagonist) to purchase and ride a bicycle demonstrates her desire for freedom from the patriarchal constraints of Saudi society (Atakav, 2016; Sarı, 2020). Through its child-centered perspective, understated humor, and attention to domestic and institutional life, the film critiques patriarchal conventions without taking an overt political stance.

Despite the amount of academic literature that has been published on the film *Wadjda*, the film's spatial and ecological themes remain underexplored. The film is shot within the contemporary Saudi Arabia and focuses on issues related to mobility within its capital Riyadh. Furthermore, a significant portion of the film's story is presented within the context of the walled residential streets of Riyadh, the vacant land within the city, the institutional spaces that are built within the city, the patches of greenery that exist within the city, and the presence of vehicles moving through the city. Films from the Middle East often feature space and landscapes as important aspects of their stories and their discussions of modernity, memory, and identity construction (Ghareeb, 1997; Rastegar, 2015). Despite this, studies of the film *Wadjda* tend to focus more on themes of gender segregation, realism, cultural symbolism, and female agency than they do on the city of Riyadh as an environment within which those gender dynamics are shaped. Therefore, Riyadh should be understood as more than just a backdrop for the story of *Wadjda*, but also as an element of the story that influences the movement of its characters through access, exposure, enclosure, and everyday mobility.

Therefore, to examine the ecological and gendered dimensions of *Wadjda*, we must explore the film through both ecocritical and ecofeminist perspectives, without considering the two perspectives to be synonymous with each other. Ecocriticism focuses on the depiction of Riyadh as a material environment organized through roads, walls, cars, exposed open ground, and climatic atmosphere. Ecofeminism, on the other hand, focuses on the impact of those spatial elements upon women and girls by examining hierarchy and unequal access. Therefore, this study analyzes the relationship between the limitations that are imposed upon girls within Saudi Arabia and the material constraints of their environment as interacting rather than interchangeable processes. This will allow the analysis to move away from the idea that the ecological impact of Saudi Arabia upon the film is related to a specific environmental crisis within Saudi Arabia, and to move toward an exploration of how the bodies of women move through and depend upon and negotiate their environment in Saudi Arabia.

One aspect of the film that is particularly important to understanding these elements is the recurring theme of the bicycle. The bicycle is both a means by which Wadjda moves through her environment and a reflection of her desire for the freedom of her own body to do so. Studies of the film have highlighted the symbolism of the bicycle in terms of its relationship to femininity and its defiance of patriarchal constraints. The ecological argument for the film's symbolism of the bicycle, however, focuses upon the idea of the bicycle as a means of mobility that is distinct from vehicles that are powered by motors. Furthermore, the film's depiction of the bicycles and the cars that are used to transport people in the city shows the contrast between these means of transport and the gendered rules governing who may use the bicycle. Furthermore, this provides a spatial-ecological dimension to the film without suggesting that the bicycle in *Wadjda* is a symbol of environmental activism by the protagonist of the film.

Before proceeding to the analysis, it is essential to briefly discuss the film's plot. *Wadjda* tells the story of a ten-year-old girl named Wadjda, who dreams of purchasing the bright green bicycle that she sees at a local toy store. However, she is repeatedly told that bicycles are unacceptable and even dangerous for girls. Wadjda therefore seeks ways to purchase a bicycle for herself, by selling bracelets and negotiating with her friends at school, and even attempting to participate in a Qur'an recitation competition. The plot of the film incorporates many different themes of contemporary Saudi Arabia, such as the school system within the country, the relationship between Wadjda and her family, the mother's emotional and economic pressures, and the constraints that are imposed upon Saudi women and young girls and the places within the country that they are allowed to be in. The story of *Wadjda* explores these issues through the actions and desires of its young protagonist, which allows the film to explore these gender-related, spatial, and ecological aspects of her reality in a subtle, yet impactful manner.

Literature Review

There is an extensive body of literature discussing al-Mansour's film *Wadjda*, with studies focused on feminist film studies, cultural studies, or the representation of women in the Gulf region. Studies on the film typically emphasize female agency in daily life, quotidian negotiation, and the subtleties of gendered social life in the society of Saudi Arabia. Sari (2020) provides an analysis of the film in relation to Saudi womanhood and the aspirations of girls within patriarchal settings, while Hambuch (2019) places the bicycle within a longer feminist history of mobility and emphasizes its emancipatory force in a comparative film context. Such studies often highlight the realism and humor and quotidian detail in the film as means of criticism that do not depend on overt political declaration. Additionally, from the perspective of feminist media studies, the film can be related to the manner in which media makes gender visible through everyday representation and institutional power (Carter & Steiner, 2003). Al-Mansour's focus on bodies, dress codes, and public visibility also relates to broader discussions of women's bodies as contested sites of mediated

meaning (Molina-Guzmán, 2010). Finally, studies on the film often incorporate the topic of girlhood and mobility in Saudi Arabia into wider transnational feminist debates.

Beyond the focus of sociocultural aspects of the film, many studies focus on the symbolic meanings within the film and the agency that is demonstrated by the characters within the narrative of the film. Ceuterick (2020) presents Wadjda as a willful girl whose everyday determination challenges normalized expectations of modesty and compliance, while Ali (2024) examines the film's feminist concerns and Wadjda's challenge to gender restrictions. Hambuch (2019), meanwhile, focuses particularly on the bicycle as a historically charged sign of female mobility. Across these studies, the bicycle represents more than an ordinary object, as it brings together desire, movement, competition, and the possibility of occupying space differently. While these studies do not analyze the bicycle's relationship to the built environment and urban mobility as their principal analytical problem, they indicate a feminist base for the article to explore this relationship.

Despite the accomplishments of studies regarding the film, the environmental and spatial dimensions of the film remain relatively undertheorized within the existing literature, even though the city landscape is visually prominent. For example, authors such as La Caze (2020), Hambuch (2019), Mahdi (2016), and Arishi (2021) provide an analysis of the film within various fields such as realism, resistance, gender studies, cultural context, and cinematic form. However, these studies do not develop a sustained ecocritical account of how roads, walls, exposed lots, school space, cars, and rooftops contribute to the film's organization of mobility. The gap is therefore not an absence of spatial observation in these studies, but the absence of a systematic account of how the material environment and gendered movement interact. This distinction also avoids treating every visible feature of Riyadh as inherently ecological or intentionally symbolic.

One approach that may be utilized to analyze the spatial dimensions of the film is ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is a field within literary studies that has developed into a multidisciplinary field concerned with environmental philosophy, cultural analysis, human-nonhuman relations, and the politics of urban and industrial environments. Authors such as Garrard (2014) and Maiti and Chakraborty (2019) discuss ecocriticism's expansion beyond the study of wilderness and pastoral environments, while Willoquet-Maricondi (2010) discusses cinema's ability to make ecological dependencies visible, Ivakhiv (2008, 2012) examines the relationship between film, ecological perception, and pedagogy, and Ingram (2009, 2012, 2014) discusses the relationship between environmental aesthetics and ethical inquiry. These concepts may be used to analyze the urban environment within which *Wadjda* takes place without requiring nature to appear only as wilderness or landscape.

In addition to the studies discussed above, ecocriticism has been extended toward global environmental crises and intermedial forms. Pop (2020) describes film as a cultural form capable of addressing Anthropocene anxieties, while Bruhn and Salmose (2023) examine ecological meanings produced across cinema, visual art, and digital media

through intermedial ecocriticism. Furthermore, the films of the Middle East and Gulf regions are less frequently studied through eco-film frameworks than Euro-American traditions. *Wadjda* is particularly well-suited for an ecocritical analysis due to the film's focus on the urban environment and its impact on the lives of its characters. Its realist style repeatedly makes roads, walls, vacant ground, transport, courtyards, rooftops, and small areas of vegetation visible as parts of the characters' everyday movement rather than simply as landscape. This makes the film particularly suitable for an ecocritical analysis of infrastructure and embodied mobility.

Additionally, the concept of ecofeminism may be utilized in the analysis of the film. Ecofeminism is a framework that analyzes the relationship between gender, hierarchy, and the environment. Authors like Buckingham (2004), Kirk (1997), Mellor (2007), and Plumwood (2004) discuss hierarchical dualisms and practices of domination as important concerns within ecofeminist theory. Additionally, Gaard (2015) extends ecofeminist analysis to unequal vulnerability under environmental pressure, while Oppermann (2013) challenges simple associations between women and nature by emphasizing material entanglement and posthumanist critique. These approaches must therefore be applied cautiously to the film, without suggesting an essential relationship between women and nature, but instead examining how material environments and gendered systems of access can reinforce one another. Therefore, the film can be analyzed from an ecofeminist perspective through analyzing the relationship between gender and the urban environment within which the film takes place, such as the school environment and domestic and rooftop spaces as well as transport dependence and the bicycle.

Finally, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and media theory can all be combined to provide a more complete analysis of the relationship between humans and their environments. For example, Bladow and Ladino (2018) examine ecological meaning through affective and sensory registers, while Monani and Adamson (2016) emphasize place, identity, and relationality in visual and cultural ecologies. Dasht Peyma (2025) relates environmental representation to broader questions of social justice, while Vakoch (2022) brings together ecofeminist approaches to literary and cultural narratives through gendered environmental experience. While these studies have not focused on analyzing *Wadjda*, they can be used to analyze the relationship between gender, mobility, and the environment within the film. This article will combine ecocriticism and ecofeminism with established feminist scholarship on the film, positioning gendered mobility, rather than a presumed symbolic identity between women and nature, as the principal point at which eco-film criticism and ecofeminist analysis meet.

Methodology

This study combines qualitative close textual analysis with situated visual and spatial interpretation. For the purpose of this analysis, the entire 96-minute-55-second version of *Wadjda* was reviewed from start to finish prior to the selection of any sequence for more

in-depth analysis. Furthermore, a second pass was made through the film in order to note the recurring spatial elements and patterns of mobility within the film, along with the timestamp of each sequence containing these elements for verifiability. Th, 16 sequences distributed across the beginning, middle, and final portions of the film were selected for analysis.

In this study Riyadh is treated not merely as a dramatic backdrop, but also as a material system that is represented by the elements that can be seen within the film. Elements such as the architecture, the streets, the walls, vehicles, the exposed land, the courtyards, the rooftops, and patterns of bodily movement, all represent this system. Ecocriticism allows the study to foc on the elements of the environment within the film and how those elements structure the relationship between bodies and the environment. Additionally, ecofeminism allows the study to foc on the unequal distribution of movement, visibility, access, and enclosure within the city. Th, both of these lenses will be utilized within the study as complementary but non-identical lenses. However, the study does not claim that elements of the environment (such as streets, walls, or barren lots) are inherently patriarchal. Instead, the study seeks to determine how these elements acquire gendered significance due to the actions, restrictions, or dependencies staged within them.

For the purpose of this study, 16 specific sequences were selected from the film due to their meeting of at least two of the following criteria: (1) the sequences show movement within exterior or public space, including walking, cycling, or automobile travel, (2) the sequences highlight the presence of specific environmental or architectural elements within the film as visually salient, such as walls, vacant ground, vegetation, direct exposure, or enclosure, (3) the sequences exhibit an implicit or explicit rule relating to gender and mobility, visibility, or access to certain spaces within the film, or (4) the sequences foc on the bicycle as an object or practice of movement within the film. Some of the sequences selected for analysis include the early walking and bicycle sequences, the schoolyard, vario automobile trips, sequences at a bicycle shop, sequences at vacant lots or within the neighborhoods of Riyadh, two rooftop practice sequences, and the final bicycle ride. Sequences that only contained dialogue without a meaningful spatial or mobility function were not included as primary analytical sequences, though they were considered when contextualizing the selected sequences.

Each of the 16 selected sequences was re-viewed at the shot level and annotated. The annotations for each shot include the framing, the *mise-en-scène*, the movements, the mode of transport, any visible greenery or exposed land within the sequence, any boundaries or enclosures within the sequence, and the interaction between the characters and their environments. The timestamps for each sequence are based on the 96-minute-55-second version of the film and may vary slightly across commercial or streaming editions. A specific foc was placed on the sequences that show the protagonist and the bicycle within vario different environmental settings, as this object appears at vario times within the film, as a desired commodity, as a mode already available to boys, as an object

ed for practice in semi-private space, and finally as a means of public movement. Th, by focusing on the object within its vario contexts, the study can test claims about its meaning against its changing visual context rather than assuming a pre-defined meaning of the object.

By applying both ecocriticism and ecofeminism to the study, it is possible to separate the observations from the interpretations within the film. For example, the study observes the prevalence of car-oriented movement, exposed urban surfaces, enclosure, and intermittent greenery within the city, but interprets these observations in terms of their ecological or ecofeminist significance and their relationship to gendered mobility within the film. This interpretation is especially critical to the study becae the film does not contain any reference to environmental stainability as a political goal. Instead, the study is primarily based on sequence-specific evidence and comparative spatial patterns rather than claims about authorial intention.

Eco-Critical Reading of the Urban Environment

The Riyadh depicted in *Wadjda* is characterized by a series of contrasts between the forms of transportation utilized by its inhabitants. Early in the film, Wadjda is depicted walking through her residential neighborhood, with Abdullah passing her on his bicycle (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:06:30-00:09:20). Later, there is an establishing shot of a road bordered by an undeveloped, rubble-strewn plot and low-rise buildings, with only a single pedestrian crossing the frame (00:10:30-00:12:10). Additionally, there is a sequence depicting traffic in another neighborhood of Riyadh (00:39:50-00:40:40). While none of these sequences suggest that Riyadh is an empty city, they do suggest that movement through the city is made legible through roads, compound walls, cars, and distances between destinations. The organization of space in the city and its infrastructure create the scale and sensory conditions through which its inhabitants encounter their urban environment (Garrard, 2014; Ingram, 2014).

In terms of the greenery within the city, the film presents both areas with vegetation and areas with little greenery. For instance, there are trees along some of the city walls and streets in the neighborhood where Wadjda resides (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:08:30-00:08:50). In the final scenes of the film, there is a greener area that is visible as well (01:31:40-01:32:10). However, there are also areas within the city that lack vegetation and are covered by rough surfaces. Examples of these include the vacant lot mentioned above (00:10:30-00:12:10), an area where boys are gathered with bicycles (00:38:10-00:39:10), and the bare rooftop ed for bicycle practice (00:51:00-00:52:20; 01:01:00-01:02:20). Th, rather than indicating a scarcity of vegetation, the film indicates an uneven distribution of shade, vegetation and comfortable outdoor spaces.

The film does not, for the most part, foc on the issue of climate within Riyadh. Instead, the scenes within the city are primarily filmed under bright sunlight. Pale walls, exposed

soil, and little cover are visible in some of the immediate spaces through which Wadjda walks or waits (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:10:30-00:12:10; 00:40:00-00:42:00). While these visuals can form part of an ecocritical reading of the sensory experience of mobility, they should not be treated as evidence of an ecological crisis that the film never demonstrates. Instead, the focus of this reading is on the various environmental aspects that exist within the city, the ways that those environments and elements interact with the transportation of the individuals within the city, and the relationship between these elements and the movement of those individuals through the city (Ivakhiv, 2008).

The film does, however, suggest that there are inequalities in the modes of transportation within the city, based on the genders of the characters within the film. For instance, Wadjda is shown walking while Abdullah moves through the same neighborhood by bicycle (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:08:20-00:09:20). Additionally, Wadjda's mother must be driven by a male driver in order to travel around the city, as shown in the early pickup sequence and during the trip to the shopping mall (00:05:00-00:06:00; 00:30:40-00:32:00). The boys in the film are also able to move easily on their bicycles within the various rough outdoor spaces of the city (00:38:10-00:39:10). This inequality in the distribution of transportation within the city is the most compelling evidence for an ecological reading of the film, as it indicates that certain modes of transportation are available to some groups of individuals but not to others within the city based on different technologies and social permissions associated with gender.

The bicycle plays a significant role within the film, standing in as a non-motorized contrast to the cars within the city. Wadjda is seen wishing to purchase a bicycle for herself (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:34:30-00:35:00), and Abdullah is shown using his bicycle for transportation (00:42:20-00:42:50). Additionally, Wadjda practices riding her bicycle on the rooftop (01:01:00-01:02:20) and eventually enters the road alongside Abdullah (01:33:10-01:34:00). These references to the bicycle within the film suggest an ecological dimension to its themes, even if the film does not advocate for sustainability. The bicycle allows the rider to interact with the environment and the distances traveled within the city in a different way than the automobile does. Moreover, this material difference also becomes a gendered one because access to the bicycle is governed by the social permissions surrounding female mobility (Hambuch, 2019).

Overall, the film's ecocritical contribution lies not in an explicit environmental message but in the manner in which the film visually portrays the movements of its inhabitants and the urban elements that make those movements possible. The roads, walls, open plots of land, vegetation, cars, and bicycles all contribute to the ways that the characters within the film move through their urban environment. While the film does not suggest that the city is barren or treat every urban surface as evidence of environmental degradation, it does indicate that there are different types of mobility within the city that are available to different groups of characters within the film, and that these modes of transportation create different relationships between those individuals and their urban environment. Th,

the ecological dimension of the film lies in embodied mobility and infrastructure rather than overt environmental advocacy.

Ecofeminist Reading of Gendered Space

The ecofeminist analysis of *Wadjda* highlights how gendered spatiality within the film's setting becomes an issue of movement rather than a symbolic connection between women and nature, or a statement on the inherent patriarchal nature of urban materiality (Buckingham, 2004; Mellor, 2007; Plumwood, 2004). Ecofeminism critiques hierarchical systems that organize bodies, environments, and forms of agency through relations of control and subordination. The film draws attention to several spaces that are central to the issue of gendered spatiality and access to movement for Wadjda and other females in the film, including the school, street, automobile, domestic rooftop, and bicycle. Thus, its ecofeminist significance emerges through differences in access to movement and the points where spatial arrangements and gendered rules meet.

The school is presented in the film as a site where gendered spatiality is institutionalized. From the beginning of the film, the school's courtyard is depicted as a uniform, enclosed space containing almost no visible vegetation, where the girls are arranged into lines and groups (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:00:40-00:02:30). Furthermore, school activities occur in open courtyards where teachers can oversee the students' movement and activities (00:15:00-00:18:20). Finally, near a later assembly, the principal speaks to the girls through a megaphone, which further highlights the girls' placement within the school's structured, bounded environment (00:59:00-01:00:00). However, the material sparseness of the school's courtyard should not be seen as a cause of the girls' behavior, but rather as a spatial regularity placed in visual proximity to the behavioral regularity expected of those girls. Hence, ecofeminism is particularly valuable for analyzing the convergence of controlled spaces and controlled conduct within society (Mellor, 2007; Oppermann, 2013).

The film challenges the traditional distinction between public and private spaces, particularly through the depiction of the domestic environment. The rooftop is depicted as a bare, exposed surface containing parapet walls, unfinished brickwork, wires, and satellite equipment (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:51:00-00:52:20). Nevertheless, it becomes one of the few spaces where Wadjda can rehearse the mobility she desires. The rooftop scenes, for example, reveal Wadjda practicing on her bicycle in a semi-private space before such movement becomes possible on the street (01:01:00-01:02:20). Hence, the rooftop functions as a threshold between domestic enclosure and public mobility and offers the opportunity for embodied agency.

The film also introduces the issue of gendered spatiality through the portrayal of the mother's movement in the automobile. While the automobile offers the women speed and enclosure and protection from the street, they are dependent upon a male driver for this movement (Al-Mansour, 2012, 00:05:00-00:06:00; 00:30:40-00:32:00). Hence, although

the automobile helps to overcome the distances between vario locations within the city, it makes women dependent on another person's availability and authority to travel these distances. Ecofeminism can analyze this social dependency upon infrastructure in the city without claiming that the automobile itself is patriarchal. The dependency arises from the city's infrastructure, which commonly relies on cars for longer journeys, and the gender order that restricts women's independent access to that technology within the film's historical setting.

Lastly, the bicycle represents a concentrated form of gendered spatiality for Wadjda. Wadjda's motivation for riding her bicycle is to gain a sense of freedom and competition and is connected to her relationship with Abdullah, not due to an ecological awareness. However, the material properties of the bicycle, including its human scale and dependence upon the rider's effort for propulsion, are important to the message of the film. It is also able without a driver. The rooftop scenes where Wadjda practices on her bicycle (Al-Mansour, 2012, 01:01:00-01:02:20) and the final scene where she rides her bicycle on the street (01:33:10-01:34:00) demonstrate how Wadjda moves from a protected rehearsal space into public circulation. Hence, ecofeminism suggests that the bicycle, rather than being a symbol of the need for an ecological movement, demonstrates the ways in which bodily autonomy and gendered permission become visible through a non-motorized relation to urban space (Hambuch, 2019; Oppermann, 2013).

All of the aforementioned scenes suggest an ecofeminist reading of the film *Wadjda*. Each space within the film (school, automobile, rooftop, bicycle) represents a different type of gendered spatiality that impacts Wadjda and other girls within the film. While none of these spaces proves that environmental and patriarchal domination are identical, they do show how social norms become materially consequential through the physical spaces and technologies within which life occurs within the city. Hence, an ecofeminist reading of *Wadjda* is not only less dependent upon generalized claims about environmental degradation, but it also focuses upon specific, observable aspects of the film and its message regarding gendered spatiality.

Converging Ecologies of Gender and Space

The combination of ecocriticism and ecofeminism is best understood when reading the film *Wadjda* through a "gendered mobility regime." This is not to say that the environments and infrastructure of Riyadh are inherently patriarchal. Rather, they become gendered due to the unequal access that male and female characters have to these spaces and the means to traverse them.

The final scenes of *Wadjda* bring together these two frameworks by focusing on Wadjda's journey from her rooftop practice to her ride on the streets of Riyadh with Abdullah. While the environment has not been significantly transformed, Wadjda has changed in her capacity to navigate this space. The bicycle allows her to alter her relationship to some

of the limitations placed on her movements as a female within Riyadh, th highlighting the connection between her body, the technology of the bicycle, the space of the city, and the gendered constraints that are present within that space. Ultimately, *Wadjda* is a film in which the protagonist achieves a limited amount of agency within the city in which she lives, rather than escaping from it to achieve complete freedom.

Conclusion

Synthesizing the analyzes, *Wadjda* can be described as a film that focuses on the gendered agency of its characters and their relationship with the various spaces depicted in the film. The streets of the city, the automobiles within the narrative, the institutional courtyards and buildings, the rooftops of the city, and the bicycle that the main character uses all contribute to the depiction of the ways in which each of these spaces are associated with gendered experiences of the world. The article further demonstrates that the environmental and patriarchal forms of oppression that are found within the narrative of *Wadjda* do not merely mirror one another, but instead that the built environments and types of transportation depicted in the film acquire gendered consequences when access to them is unequal. Therefore, Wadjda's use of the bicycle can be described as a form of changed embodied access rather than simply an abstract symbol of liberation.

However, this interpretation does have several limitations. First, there are no explicit instances within the film that indicate that cars, exposed ground, urban form, or the bicycle are presented as environmental politics. Some of the locations that appear in the film are present simply as a part of the film's environment and may reflect ordinary location and production choices rather than deliberate ecological symbolism. Th, while the film does present the film's environments in a manner that is consistent with the ecological perspective that this article presents, there is no way to know for sure what al-Mansour's authorial intentions were. Second, there are several other frameworks that could be used to analyze the film and its depiction of gendered experiences of spaces and locations. For example, frameworks that explore legal, religious, social-historical, class dynamics, feminist theories, or urban planning principles could be used to interpret the film's depictions of women and their journeys through space. Th, while each of these other frameworks may be capable of explaining gendered experiences of mobility, they may do so without assigning ecological significance to the film's mise-en-scène. Finally, while ecofeminism is employed to explore interacting hierarchies of access and control in the film, the article avoids suggesting an essentialist relationship between women and nature. Th, while there are limitations to the analysis presented in this article, they do not invalidate the interpretation, but instead define the scope within which its claims should be understood (La Caze, 2020; Plumwood, 2004).

Despite these limitations, the study of the relationship between ecofeminism and gender studies in the context of Saudi cinema provides a spatial perspective on Gulf cinema, women, mobility, and social transformation. Future research could examine the depiction

of these relationships in a broader corp of films from Saudi Arabia or the broader Gulf region. Additionally, research could compare car-dependent and pedestrian environments across different cities. Finally, future research could explore how the changing dynamics of women's movement and urban policy within these regions can alter the ways in which they are depicted in the cinema of the Gulf region. Comparative research could also distinguish between environmental conditions explicitly presented by films and ecological meanings generated mainly through critical interpretation. Th, future research into the relationship between gender and environmental concerns in the Gulf region could help to determine when gender jtice and environmental jtice genuinely converge, and when they should be viewed as distinct concepts.

Disclosure statement

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