

Mirian Paz de Almeida
Advanced Writing
International Language Institute
St. Petersburg College
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A Tale of Love and Oil...Not *that* Kind of Oil

Looking for something to watch, but nothing sparks your interest? Well, I'll let you in on one of the movie world's best-kept secrets: *Day of the Falcon*. There are just so many reasons to like this movie that I am almost unable to say what really caught my eye. It is one of those rare cinematographic concoctions capable of teaching you something while being enjoyable and broadly appealing. You can watch alone, with your significant other or friends. Everyone will stay glued to the plot because the movie is filled with action, values, honor and romance. The movie is worth seeing for its values and because it tells us about the Arab countries and their transformation into some of the wealthy, oil-based economies in the world.

The movie, filmed in 2011, was directed and adapted into motion-picture form by Jean-Jacques Annuaud. His inspiration came from a novel written in 1957, by Hans Ruesch, called *South of the Heart: A Novel of modern Arabia* (Rothe). The movie shows two Arabian tribal leaders battling under the relentless desert sky in 1930s. Their confrontation revolves around a desolated area called Yellow Belt. By the end of the fight, they agreed that the Yellow Belt does not belong to any of them. To seal the peace agreement and according to tribal customs of the time, one of the leaders, Nesib, will

"adopt" - or take hostage - the two sons of the other Ammar, the other leader: Saleeh (Akin Gazi) and Auda (Tahar Rahim). This is supposed to be a guarantee that no one will invade the other's territory. Auda becomes a book lover, while Saleeh becomes a warrior. Years later, Nesib is visited by a Texan working for the oil industry. He tells him that his land has oil and promises him fortune. However, there is a small problem: the oil is in the Yellow Belt. From this point the battle revives. But this time the war is filled with a sensitive, powerful, and intriguing love story, which finishes with the surprising transformation of the bookworm Auda into a charismatic, clever and charming leader. He manages to bring development to his nation by making usage of the black gold: oil.

The fantastic image of the desert, the war, and the conflict between religion and love are absolutely fascinating. Its mixture of emotion is more powerful than special effects. Antonio Banderas' performance is impeccable and breathtaking. The beautiful Freida Pinto, who performed as Latika in the 2009 Academy Award winning movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, is in the cast as Leyla. Tahir Rahim, who performs as Auda, brings sweetness, intellect and wisdom to his character. This rare combination must be seen in order to truly appreciate it.

In Andrew Pulver's opinion, the gigantic effort and the commendable intention of bringing *Day of the Falcon* to a majestic spectacle wasn't achieved (*The Guardian*). However, the quality of the movie is its lesson about the value of love, faith, integrity and humanity that bonds relationships together. We are accustomed to giving credit to movies for splashy effects

and shallow stories. That dulls our senses so much that we may become incapable of savoring the real, simple quality of a fine art.

Finally, *Day of the Falcon* is a great movie to be seen and shared with your beloved one or even enjoyed by yourself. Be prepared for surprises and for a short journey through the imaginary world. That fantastic world you used to visit by listening to the stories in your bed, when you were a child. The difference is that the movie is partially true, since it is based on a novel, which was based on a true story (Annud). All you have to do now is to buy the popcorn (the real kind, imaginary popcorn isn't as tasty).

Works Cited

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