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Egyptian Cinema's Male Gaze on Lebanese Women Artists

Mısır Sinemasının Lübnanlı Kadın Sanatçılara Erkek Bakışı

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FOREWARD

To all the women who have passed my life and contributed to forming the woman I am today. To my mom, Sawsan, who has been a supporting stone, a warm refuge, and a best friend since the day she gave birth to me. To my two grandmothers, whom I loved and bickered with until the day they both left us. To two of the most loving and supporting strong women I have ever had the luck to know and call aunts, Khalto Isaaf, who sadly is not here to see this day, and Amto Mona, who have pushed me and rooted for me as much as she humanly could from a long distance to help finish this thesis. To Auntie Aysha, who was the real meaning of a pure motherly soul, and who loved Egypt dearly and would have been so happy to see me finish this thesis. To my favorite starlet, the late Soad Hosny, my idol, my inspiration, and one of the main reasons I aspired to be part of the entertainment industry growing up. To Egypt, Omm el Donia (mother of the world), as Egyptians and Arabs call it. To my Egyptian friends who helped me during the process of writing this dissertation. To all the objectified and misrepresented women in the industry and to feminist men who refuse such labeling and see women as pals, not toys. To my father, Khaldoun, who I miss daily as he is unfortunately no longer with us, I hope I am making him proud even in his absence. To my friends who supported me with many memes and a lot of advice to finish this study. Special thanks to my advisor Dr. Nazan for her immense patience and kindness that allowed me to finish this thesis despite all the hardships I faced.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
ÖZET	viii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Cinema in Egypt	3
1.2 Censorship in Egyptian Cinema	4
1.3 Clean Cinema	8
2. FOREIGN WOMEN IN EGYPTIAN CINEMA	11
2.1 Women in Egyptian Cinema	11
2.2 Foreign Women in Egyptian Cinema in the Past	13
2.3 Foreign Women in Egyptian Cinema at the Age of Video Clips	14
2.4 MTV Stars Filling the Void	15
2.5 The Gap	17
3. METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 “The Gaze” Methodology	21
3.2 Lebanese Women in Egyptian Cinema	25
3.2.1 Table Frequency Analysis	35

3.3 Behind Cult Posters	37
4. CASE STUDY	42
4.1 Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience	42
4.2 Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul	52
5. DISCUSSION	66
5.1 Posters’ Overview	67
5.2 Character Background, Behavior, and Attire	68
5.3 Character's Relation with Other Characters	70
5.4 Cinematic Language and Camera Angles	71
5.5 Misogyny, Harassment, and Violence	74
5.6 Reality Vs. Comedy and Systematic Objectification	75
CONCLUSION	81
REFERENCES	84
ANNEXES	91

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Nicole Saba films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	27
Table 3.2 Marwa films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	28
Table 3.3 Dolly Shaheen films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	30
Table 3.4 Maria films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	30
Table 3.5 Cyrine Abdelnour films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	31
Table 3.6 Haifa Wehbe Marwa films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	32
Table 3.7 Amar films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	33
Table 3.8 Maya Nasri films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	34
Table 3.9 Madeline Matar films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	34
Table 3.10 The 4 Cats films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	35
Table 3.11 Roula Saad films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020	35
Table 3.12 Categories and repetition of identifying character jobs of Lebanese singers acting in the 48 Egyptian films between 2000 and 2020	37

ABSTRACT

This study argues that popular Egyptian cinema reconstructs and normalizes violence against women and uses foreign women to increase the impact of comedy in this process using a specific pattern. It does so mainly through misrepresenting said foreign women or, as a matter of fact, representing them in a particular manner. "Foreign" here is not in its literal meaning, given that the first idea that comes to mind when we say foreign is western. Whereas here, it is meant to indicate non-Egyptian women of Arab nationalities, specifically those of Lebanese origin. The research questions aim to pinpoint the pattern, showcase its existence, and discuss its societal background in addition to a few study cases in detail using Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze theory as feminist critical analysis method. The study focuses on the years 2000 till 2020 as it correlates with the emergence of videoclips into the Arab World leading to the popularity of Lebanese videoclip singers, especially those who had a career shift into acting in Egypt during the mentioned timeframe in the study.

Keywords: Egyptian Cinema, Male Gaze, Foreign Women, Female Representation, Sexualization, Lebanese Singers.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, popüler Mısır sinemasının kadına yönelik şiddeti yeniden inşa edip normalleştirdiğini ve bu süreçte belirli bir örüntü kullanarak komedinin etkisini artırmak için yabancı kadınları kullandığını öne sürmektedir. Bunu esas olarak söz konusu yabancı kadınları yanlış tanıtarak veya aslında onları belirli bir şekilde temsil ederek yapar. Yabancı denilince akla gelen ilk fikrin Batılı olduğu düşünülse de burada "yabancı" gerçek anlamıyla değildir. Oysa burada, Mısırlı olmayan Arap uyruklu kadınları, özellikle Lübnan kökenli kadınları belirtmek amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma soruları, feminist bir eleştirel analiz yöntemi olarak Laura Mulvey'in Erkek Bakışı teorisini kullanarak birkaç çalışma vakasının yanı sıra kalıbı tam olarak belirlemeyi, varlığını sergilemeyi ve toplumsal arka planını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, video kliplerin Arap Dünyasında ortaya çıkmasıyla ilişkili olduğu için 2000-2020 yıllarına odaklanıyor ve Lübnanlı video klip şarkıcılarının, özellikle çalışmada belirtilen zaman diliminde Mısır'da oyunculuk kariyerine geçiş yapanların popülaritesine yol açıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mısır Sineması, Erkek Bakışı, Yabancı Kadın, Kadın Temsili, Cinselleştirme, Lübnanlı Şarkıcılar.

INTRODUCTION

Historically known as "the Hollywood of the Middle East," Egypt is also one of the main producing and exporting media countries, be it on the golden or the silver screen. Given the country's rich and vivid historical and cultural heritage, the different epochs it went through had an impact on the entertainment industry, changing the way it is, the system it follows, and what is to be considered okay or not. Many trends surfaced and were demolished as the haven it represents, but one of its unchanging components over the years would be the presence of foreign artists in its huge art scene throughout history. If anything, many of the icons who are to be considered pillars of Egyptian cinema in its golden age are of foreign origin. However, even with the foreign element remaining in the industry, the way this element is being used, cast, and represented is in a different path than it used to. And to reinforce the concept once more, foreign in here is intended for Arab yet non-Egyptian stars and not necessarily western. It has been sparking attention that there appear to be negative cases of problematic representation and commodification of foreign female artists, specifically those of Lebanese origin. While there are many articles regarding the representation of women in the media in general and cinema in particular, there is, a noticeable gap concerning foreign women's representation in the media, and Egyptian media. More specifically, women who are not necessarily Egyptian (yet still Arab) and their representation in the Egyptian media, be it serials or films. It is important to note that the only difference despite being Arab and speaking the Arabic language between Egyptian and Lebanese or any other Arab nationality is the accent or dialect used, and it is the sole way for differentiating where the Arab is originally from given the language remains the same but the dialect makes the difference.

This research aims to shed light on the characters played by foreign women in Egyptian cinema, questioning the existence of a specific form of representation within

the industry that might be biased. Moreover, to do so in the shadow of the area's historical, political, religious, and cultural context, as well as certain casting choices, like which actress of which nationality gets cast in what role. Critical content analysis from a feminist perspective methodology represented in the "male gaze" theory by Laura Mulvey will be used. The findings address the commodification of foreign female artists, specifically those of Lebanese origin, in a negative light for the sake of promoting the show. It is further argued that they serve in adding a comedy element where the artists themselves, their characters, or nationality is targeted racially or inappropriately for the laughs, being subjected to "the gaze" not just in a sexualizing manner but in a judgmental one also.

For methodology, critical content analysis from a feminist perspective is used to get answers and address the targeted unfairness towards foreign female artists in Egyptian cinema, as well as the targeting and negative portrayal and oversexualization and commodifying of "the other" female actress. The actress is often a Lebanese singer, subjecting her to "the gaze" not only in a sexualizing manner yet rather a judgmental one. In developing an argument, this thesis specifically focuses on famous hits in the past 20 years, be it serials or films with a focus on films that contain a foreign actress playing a foreigner or an Egyptian role. The critical point here is gathering information on all the films that starred Lebanese singers and looking into whether their casting had an advertising or marketing impact on the film (based on whether they were used on the main poster of the film or not); which would help us fathom the importance of the role that is being given to the foreign artist given her appearance on the poster, as well as the power she has in means of promoting the film with said appearance. After that, two films will be selected based on popularity for a content analysis from a feminist perspective using Laura Muvley's Male Gaze Theory as a critical analysis method.

Male Gaze theory constitutes a significant methodological framework to analyze visual content for a contextualized discussion within the historical, political, and cultural backgrounds. Content analysis from a feminist perspective method would

be suitable to go along with the research, given the critical and analytical nature of the topic and its aims. However, most importantly, it is based on the personal perception of a female researcher after all. This in return, fits this case as the student doing this study is a woman and a feminist who grew up watching and being influenced by Egyptian films. Leading to a realization of the gap and an urge to do this study in order to spread knowledge regarding systematic otherization and subjectification of foreign women in Egyptian cinema.

1.1 Cinema in Egypt

Egypt's importance in the Arab art scene derives from its early bloom concerning arts and cinema "The seventh art arrived in Egypt nearly one week after the first cinematic show in Paris in December 1896" (Samak, 1977, p. 12). This fact makes Egypt not only a pioneering country but also notably unique since, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, it has been the producer of over three-quarters of 4000 Arab films since 1908, not to mention that 44 out of the top 100 Arab films are Egyptian. It is no surprise that Egypt is often referred to as the Hollywood of the Middle East.

Throughout the early years of the cinematic introduction to Egypt and its art-thirsty public of audiences, six women were notably the most important and influential in taking roles, initiatives, and many sacrifices to pave the way for the cinema industry in the country. Those women being, respectively, Aziza Amir (1901-1952), Assia Dagher (1908-1986), Bahiga Hafez (1908-1983), Fatma Roushdi (1908-1996), Amina Mohamed (1908-1985), and Mary Queeny (1916–2003). These women were of different backgrounds, financial levels, religions, and regions. However, they all had a passion and a love for art creation in the form of cinema strong enough for them to let go of their families and the unaccepting societal culture along with their previous lives to become actresses, producers, directors, editors, composers, and many other film-

related jobs all at the same time. There was a special honorary mention to the six women in the Cairo International Film Festival CIFF in its 2019's 41st edition, where a special video was created to tribute the visionary legacies and their essential and prominent contributions and sacrifices (Ahram Online, 2019).

One of the most notable and probably defining elements of these women, though, is the fact that they were all born and lived during a very revolutionary and critical time that the world was going through at that time; World War I. During this, women were encouraged to go to work since men were either deployed or wounded. Another element that should also be mentioned is the European influence on the culture at that time, especially after the British occupation of Egypt. And the fact that many families and scholars would send their children to study in Europe, which, if anything, did its job in influencing the youth growing then. Women's rights movements date back to the early 20ies in Egypt, for example, which also was at a national revolutionary time for the nation itself as women were demonstrating alongside men against the British mandate. The women were so influential in Egypt and the industry that "for a brief time, they were even stronger than men within the industry." (Haaretz, 2015).

1.2 Censorship in Egyptian Cinema

Meanwhile, the cinematic scene kept booming slowly but steadily. In 1952 the overthrow of King Farouq and the change that had taken the country by surprise had its share of impact on cinema as well. One of the heightened remainders is the fact that ever since the throw, any film that was made previously during the King's era, and in any scene that took place in an official building with the King's portrait in the background, the frames were altered one by one by blurring or whiting-out the image of the fallen King (Samak, 1977). And that shows the importance and influence that the cinema industry as a tool was thought to have and did have over the public. An

important note is that despite the dismissal of the impact of cinema on its audiences, it is essential enough, or otherwise, it would not face censorship.

After King Farouq, Mohammad Naguib temporarily became the president of Egypt. During his reign, Naguib made sure to make cinema one of his power-proving tools, and so after 40 days of the 23rd of July 1952 revolution, he stated that cinema is an entertaining, educational method, and refused "vulgarity and obscenity" on which he claims cinema was based upon earlier. He also insisted on art as a form of cultivation and not as a mere source of financial gain. However, as cinema does not adhere to sudden revolutions, there were many films that either contradicted the new rules or followed too literally, while films that had already been shot prior to the revolution; just had the endings altered (Swissinfo, 2007)

Jamal Abdul Nasser followed Naguib, who took charge of the newly introduced country to the presidential system, making him Egypt's second president. After the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, the year 1957 witnessed substantial presidential attention towards cinema, where a supportive foundation was created to help filmmakers and cinema improve on a financial and human basis, which led to the 50ies being the golden years of Egyptian cinema. A Cinema institute was created in 1959, and there were many socially critical films and films with a feminist approach. Nasser then took yet another move toward the cinema in 1966 when he fully nationalized the industry as part of the so-called socialist movement the country was adhering to, which ended up having a negative impact on the industry (Alaraby Aljadeed, 2015).

After Nasser, Anwar al Sadat became Egypt's president from 1970 until his assassination in 1981. During these years, and from the 1970s to the 1980s, there was a considerable decline in the industry, and what was then called "contractor films" were on the rise. Films of this era were known to be political and sexual. The industry, shackled through the country's political ups and downs, was too fragile and "dipped"

in the late 60ies to the early 90ies. It took away with it all the importance and attributes of women it once had in its early years.

Moreover, as the contractor films surfaced, the return of society to tradition and religion added more shackles to the role of women in the industry. It was a period in the Arab world where Egyptian and Levantine families would move to the newly rich and rediscovered oil mines of the Arab Gulf and return to their home countries with more money and more religiously conservative thoughts. Those being demonstrated through the headscarf or Hijab, something that represents the traditional attire of women in the Gulf, affiliated with the Islamic religion, and had its widespread at that time in the Arab world. The Hijab that's removal was one of the main fighting causes and demands of Huda AlShaarawi, the first known Egyptian feminist in the 20ies who initiated and fought for the removal of the head covering of women. (Haaretz, 2015). The spread and influence of the Wahhabi religious movement that originated in Saudi Arabia (Britannica) and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood MB in Egypt also during that time all played a role in showcasing art and cinema as a sinful and shameful abomination that calls for the destruction of family and society morals.

Eventually, during the ruling period of President Hosni Mubarak and after a battle with cinematic creativity, 1997 was the year when comedy offered hope to the industry. A huge boom of comedy films submerged the market, attracted the public, and got the cinemas back in business. Thus, the return of the cinema's glory made sense to be happening through family-suitable light comedy or musical films, which created the term "clean cinema" referring to films that are ideally PG13 or even less, meaning that they have no sexual references or romantic scenes which would inspire or encourage such unacceptable deemed acts or portray them.

Moreover, just as we can see, every political period and reign in Egypt has had its direct and undeniable impact on the cinema industry, even the directly previous periods of said political event; for example, specifically before The Arab Spring of

2011, a new style of films became the hit in 2010, and after the country had suffered a protracted increase in the poverty rates, "Shaa'bi" films which literally translates to "common" flooded the film market. The films focused on people under the poverty line who resided in the slums and showcased them as drug addicts, violent, perverted, underdogs, and the ones who have morals from the bunch were made heroes fighting for the truth or for justice. These types of films are still produced to the day and get a lot of public and box office attention. It has created its own culture that impacted the country's and region's daily dialect, style, and hit songs. The peak was in 2016 when a "Sha'abi" TV series became a huge hit and attracted negative opinions and exclamations from critics and social experts, where it was called "a phenomenon that spoils taste and culture" (Gouda, 2016).

The year 2011 witnessed one of the most highlighted events in the history of modern Egypt; the 25th of January revolution, which resulted in the impeachment of President Hosni Mubarak and his regime. The revolution was a huge turning point for the cinema industry, or so they thought; however, no one can deny the change in cinematic tone and approach it created. The event was documented and celebrated by many films and documentaries that took it upon themselves to tell the stories of different people from different points of view. That being said, it did not get the censorship off the backs of the filmmakers in Egypt. A censorship that ironically and very precisely focuses mainly on political content and less often on sexual content whenever it is reported, yet other than that, does not have any role concerning the protection or improvement of the industry, its creators, and or its audiences most importantly.

1.3 Clean Cinema

The importance of cinema and its impact on the people is proven by the forced censorship that is mainly political, which differs as with regimes and political reigns. Moreover, as mentioned before, during the 80ies and the religious movement that took over Egyptian society, the industry was impacted heavily due to the resigning of many box office stars, or as they are popularly called, "repentant stars" where many important and famous Egyptian vedettes especially those known for their seductive roles such as Shams Al-Baroudi "the temptress" quit acting to repent. Shams gave up her career during its peak, "donned" a face veil, and started attending religion lessons (Kristianasen, 2006). She later started giving them herself alongside her husband, Actor Hassan Yousef, who also adopted a religious lifestyle with his wife like many other "repentants."

While many argue that Hijab or the Islamic headscarf, which was already famous in rural Egypt, has spread as a political and social denouncement of the west, especially after the loss of the 1967 war, and also as a feminist call against western female objectification, and a method of self-protection and enforcing respect in the work field (Ikran, 2000), others, argue that the widespread of the Hijab in Egypt and the Arab world during the 80ies and 90ies was a political statement influenced by the Wahhabi movements and the Muslim Brotherhood (Hafez, 2015). Those had a wider spread through the migration to Gulf countries where it is the local dress code to work in higher paying jobs which at a point seemed as a requirement for many women who either accompanied their husbands or did not (Hatem, 1992).

The movement and spreading impact of the circles of private religion lessons and the repentant big names such as Al-Baroudi, Afaf Shoaib, Souheir Al Babily, Shadia, and many others caused over 20 stars to step down between 1990 and 1995 (Nieuwkerk, 2013). With the spread of VCR, the demand of the financially capable and powerful gulf countries, and the nonexistence of cinemas, mainly in Saudi Arabia,

many TV programs and tapes were recorded by religious men and the repentant actresses. Promoting their repentance and emphasizing the judgment day - over 90 tapes which were Gulf funded. These records, along with the Gulf countries opening many TV channels, also meant that the Gulf states were becoming the biggest producer and markets for shows. In Egypt, like all other creating countries, it was only natural to accommodate the religious censorship of the Gulf in order to be accepted by the Gulf customers and their customs and fundamentals (Nieuwkerk, 2008). It is speculated that the repentant actresses were actually paid or did the religious movement only for profit purposes; however, it is yet to be proven.

What matters is that this impact and movement in the industry made it very challenging and judgment-filled for any new actresses to steer away from the conservative ideologies that the society was soaking, thanks to the influence of the repentants and the conservative programs that were custom-made to suit the taste and censorship systems of the Gulf. This naturally created a void in the industry, especially in the liberty of the creators who were creating for the television, as it was more popular than cinema at that phase, and in the liberty of the remaining and future actresses regarding accepting roles. In addition to the aftermath that may be related to this as the societal stigma against sexuality, sensuality, and romance or seduction was getting higher. The shift created by this social and religious-induced unspoken censorship resulted in the cinema sector shifting from cheeky productions to a more family-oriented theme, "the clean cinema," as addressed before during the 90ies.

The politico-social reasons cloaked under a religious scheme are better explained in *Pious Stardom: Cinema and the Islamic Revival in Egypt* (Tartoussieh, 2007) as the article historically assesses and explains with examples and quotations the drastic change in the Egyptian filmmaking industry from the risqué seventies and the sexualized actresses to the "clean cinema" of the nineties after the Wahabi religious movement's influence which caused a shift in the society, and the industry into a religiously guided field. The article explains the importance of Egyptian cinema in the

Arab world and how the shift caused a standard where the actresses in Egypt today only seek and accept "clean" roles where no nudity, sexual innuendoes, or plots take place. The stars' image somehow got intertwined with their roles to an extent where an actress cannot be, or does not prefer to be, or does not accept to be kissed in a scene; otherwise, she is the one taking the blame from the judgmental audience. A couple of examples were given in the article with quotes regarding the actresses and roles considered stigmatic nowadays, or movies discussing infidelity, prostitution, and sexuality are made without a single kissing scene. It reaches a point when actresses who accept unwanted roles now are to be thanked for doing so by the filmmakers in speeches, those actresses being Egyptian, of course. In contrast, foreign actresses are expected to do such scenes. They are even cast, or in this case, "hired" in a way fits better, for merely doing these scenes. Keeping in mind that those who are called "foreign" in this context are not necessarily westerners or non-Arabs, but on the contrary, Arab nationals that are simply not Egyptian in here. And while the Egyptian cinema and drama industry has always been welcoming of foreign artists, the dynamic has changed and altered throughout the years.

One of the most recent examples of public raging would be the airing of the Arabic version of the Perfect Strangers movie on Netflix *Arabia Ashab, Wala Aaz* (2022). The film that is starred by many Arab leads of both genders and of different nationalities, the existence of Egyptian actress Mona Zaki "caused a stir in the Middle East," according to a Vogue Arabia article, which is one of many other articles and posts online regarding the subject. Zaki, who was first introduced to the public through clean cinema films and in roles such as the tomboy, good girl, and classic romantic interest, caused quite a stir online when she participated in the risqué deemed film according to the Arab and Egyptian audiences. Moreover, while the film also starred Lebanese actress and director Nadine Labaki and Lebanese actress Diamand Abboud, the participation of Zaki had audiences online raging and fellow stars as well as syndicates defending her choice of role.

FOREIGN WOMEN IN EGYPTIAN CINEMA

In this chapter, the showcasing of foreign women in the past and the present is studied in depth. Explaining further the void created by the clean cinema that called for the emergence of MTV-style video clip singers in Egyptian cinema, as well as a detailed explanation of the term and its era in the Arab world. And finally, the research gap created due to this alongside the questions that this study aims to answer.

2.1 Women in Egyptian Cinema

The role of women has changed immensely throughout the years that the cinema and television industries have been through; the strong pioneering beginning, the steady golden era, the objectifying 70ies, and finally, the passive 90ies and onward. A statement that may sound like a generalization to an extent since the role of a few films and notable revolutionary female directors must also be mentioned. Yet, the number and names are as few as it is possible to count on fingers, which causes a serious, alarming issue making it inevitable not to generalize to reach a point. In an article that questions the lack of leading female roles in Egyptian cinema today, Egyptian Director Kamla Abou Zekri is quoted in an interview where she states, "The absence of women in major cinematic roles in Egypt has to do with the decline in society's attitude towards women. Women today are not as appreciated as they once were. In the 50s, '60s, '70s, and even the '80s, women dominated the lead roles in movies. Actresses such as Faten Hamama and Soad Hosny were in high demand, but now, demand for women-lead movies is at an all-time low due to the changing mindset of our society." (Awadallah, 2019).

It is a matter of disdaining disappointment that the research and academic work on Arab-related topics or that in the Arabic language is not that of a vast quantity, nonetheless and in regards to the topic of female representation, there are a few generally-approaching pieces of research that speak of the topic such as Women in

Arab media: present but not heard (Nicolas, 2010) where Nicolas uses UNDP as a source for stats and info to discuss cases of representation and portrayal of Arab women in foreign and local media platforms, it gives examples on misrepresentation and sexualization done in the west, as well as a misrepresentation and unfairness in the east, leading to a very few progressive examples of proper representations and many recent rebellious movements and the results of such on the female figures and characters and their storylines when portrayed in dramas and movies as well as real life. The article uses and quotes statistics, studies, and examples to support its claims and accountings.

While the previously mentioned material discusses women in the Arab media generally, In *Disconcerting Images: Arab Females Portrayal on Arab Television* (Nashef, 2012), the writer uses interpretive discourse to try and prove that the representation of women in Arab television, more specifically, the television which does nothing but "commodify and enfeeble" them. The article starts by explaining a little about the historical background of popular television culture in the Arab world in the past two decades of the date it was written and analyzes the female-oriented shows, programs, and finally, female anchors represented on the screen. They are most fitting to the European beauty standards, and despite their lack of similarity to the Arabic stereotypes, they are supposedly accepted or forced norms on the screen. The writer also mentions the "oriental gaze" and how Arabs were taught to "judge themselves through the eyes of the colonials," which brings us to the infamous Orientalism (Said, 1987). In certain chapters, Said discusses the misrepresentation or the villainizing of Arab or Muslim characters in Hollywood, which somehow reflects on the subject from a different perspective yet on a similar note. This topic gets divided into two points, the gaze and the religious-political-social reasons and aftermaths, which intertwine culturally somehow.

2.2 Foreign Women in Egyptian Cinema in the Past

Having addressed the history, political, societal, and religious influences on and the results of Egyptian women as active factors in their local cinema industry. It must not go unnoticed that it was not only women of Egyptian nationality who had the impact and the influence solely. Actually, two of the six pioneering women previously mentioned who created the cinema industry in Egypt are of Lebanese origin; Assia Dagher and her niece Mary Queeny. Their important and notable contributions were some of the other vital contributions that "foreign" or non-Egyptian women artists made to the Egyptian film and drama sector.

For example, during the golden era of Egyptian cinema, some of its essential female pillars and stars were actually of Levantine origins, like the famous Soad Hosny or as she is nicknamed "El Cinderella," the Egyptian and Syrian legend who was one of the most influential stars during her active years. Or like Asmahan – and her brother Farid who was notably one of the most influential composers in the Arab world – the Syrian princess who preferred a career in singing and acting in some of Egypt's most prominent films at the time. Like Sabah, or as she is nicknamed "El Shahroura," who was a Lebanese singer and actress, as well as many other names; like the Syrian Hala Shawkat, the Lebanese Nour El Hoda, and many more that it becomes hard to count and name and tricky to keep track record. These women were and still are well-remembered and known prominent stars in Egyptian cinema. They played many different roles and were not assigned to certain kinds of roles in specific. They acted in an Egyptian accent as Egyptian women mainly, but also sometimes acted in their native accents as foreign characters; however, they were never subjected to any racial or national discrimination or profiling or labeling in terms of casting choices or roles, something that has formed a recurring disturbing pattern which has been noticed enough to spark this thesis.

2.3 Foreign Women in Egyptian Cinema at the Age of Video Clips

In order to understand the background of the new emergence of "foreigners" into the "clean cinema" -oriented Egypt, we have to go back to that era and what was happening back then in regard to the art industry in general. A topic that Contemporary Arab Music Video Clips: Between Simulating MTV's Gender Stereotypes and Fostering New Ones (Elouardaoui, 2010) discusses perfectly through the emergence of the video clip culture and the revolution it created in the industry and the Arab world. Elouardaoui explains the importance of Lebanon as an importer and introducer of new western trends into the Arab world, including the MTV-style video clips of the 2000s whose starring singers are the actresses cast in Egyptian dramas and films. The article stresses an analysis of an essential part of the Arab media history or a significant era in it; the emergence of MTV-style video clips from Lebanon and the export of the video clips and the Lebanese oversexualized singers to the Arab world. The article gives examples by naming clips and artists who helped "generating a new gender misconception." It analyzes certain clips and songs and does not miss to point out the power of the socio-religious lines the Egyptian and Arab artists have to face to produce art. Art that may not be deemed appropriate due to the sexualization and portrayal of the females but is still consumed despite the judgment pre its creation.

Egypt not being the only country whose industry has been affected by MTV's emergence; in Globalization and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema (Datta, 2000), Datta discusses the globalization impact and its before and after on Indian cinema in regards to the representations of women in general and Indian women in specific as subordinate roles. It is peculiarly interesting when the paper mentions the MTV cultural introduction and how Eurasian women were brought to play the roles of Indian women at some point. Something quite similar to Lebanese, Tunisian, or Syrian actresses who are brought to play Egyptian women in specific contexts. One of the

most famous production companies in modern-day Egypt is "El Sobky," named after the family name of the two brothers who produce the majority of the cinema films in Egypt and whose comedy genre-d films are well known for having a foreign actress, singer, or dancer. Sometimes the one star would be capable of doing all. The production company and its films of this kind have had much-mixed feedback regarding the quality of their productions. Egypt's Panoptic Cinema: From Colonialism to Sobky (Helal, 2014) is an excellent commentary on the topic, as it covers many of the subject's intertwined ideas with examples concisely and directly, like mentioning "the other" and the "foreign" existence in the historical dilemma of censorship and self-censorship Egyptian cinema industry has had to go through over the years following different political regimes.

2.4 MTV Stars Filling the Void

The late 90ies witnessed a revolution in the music industry. The demand for musical video clips was getting higher with the spread of satellite TV channels and foreign channels like MTV, which was and still is known for its techniques in fetishism and exhibitionism when it comes to video clips. This demand resulted in a new wave of Arab pop music that was created to cater to the youth's demands. That included over seventy Arab channels for music video clips created between 1992 and 2007, mainly private ones, the most popular being; Melody Arabia, Melody Hits, Mazzika (Egyptian-owned), Rotana, and Rotana Clip (Saudi owned). While Egypt may be the number one creator of cinema films in the Arab world, Lebanon, the bekknown more liberal Arab country, is the number one creator of music video clips. In Lebanon, western visual prototypes were recreated in a more culturally and socially appropriate manner to suit the tastes of the public. The fact that Lebanon is famous for being culturally more liberal could be an addition to the fact that it is also a "primary site for fashion." It is also the Arab capital for plastic surgery, where the "Lebanese look" takes

the characteristics of a small high-pointing nose, round full lips, and high-arched tattooed eyebrows, alongside some implants that are mainly in the chest region to promote curviness and femininity; something that is a desired trait in the Arab societies. Many of the singers or performers in these popular video clips, the Lebanese stars, who have had alterations to fit the Lebanese look criteria, have had successful hits in the music video clip world in the early 2000s, such as Nancy Ajram, Haifa Wehbe/Wahbi, Nicole Saba, Dolly Shahin, Maya Nasri, Elissa, and Cyrine Abdelnour among other names. Another notable name from the video clip stars of that era is Ruby, who is of Egyptian origin, unlike the Lebanese majority mentioned before. (Elouardaoui, 2013).

Many of the names mentioned above and many others have starred later due to their video clip-induced fame in Egyptian cinema films and dramas. In fact, only Nancy and Elissa, out of the previously mentioned names, did not star in a film or two at least. Whereas the other mentioned names have all created a different popularity and an additional career path for themselves through acting, and it all started in Egypt, where they were a primary factor alongside other Lebanese, Tunisian, and a few Egyptian actresses to fill the void in the industry, a gap that was formed by the repentant stars. And to take the bullets of the judging society, which has grown even more conservative yet oddly thirsty enough for the same scenes and clips they publicly denounce and demean.

In the early 2000s and after, Egypt had its share of "clean cinema," and during a time where television played a vital role in every household, as the MTV-style video clips and their airing channels increased tremendously, a new form of star recruiting appeared. The mainly Lebanese female singers making these contemporary and bit cheeky perceived video clips were getting cast to play roles in Egyptian cinemas and serials. Roles that would otherwise not be accepted or roles that were created specifically for the singer herself. Roles that profile these stars to dress and behave in a sexually objectifying manner that is too obvious not to be noticed. Provocative costumes, sultry dancing, kissing scenes, and many other clichés go on to the day with

a minor change since, as of around 2010 and onward, the belly dancing scenes that seem to be compulsory and jammed in every Egyptian films to promote it are performed by Russian or Eastern European belly dancers who are only hired for this purpose, whereas the musical shows that were previously performed by the same leading actress herself, given most come from entertainment or singing backgrounds. The Lebanese female stars are left to deal with objectification and commodification for the sake of comedy and attracting the audience who superficially calls out for "clean cinema" but deep down wants to re-watch the 70ies raunchy films in modern-day HD minus the plot altogether.

2.5 The Gap

The only material that was found and directly addressed the topic of foreign artists in Egypt as an entity is dialect and stance-taking by non-Egyptian celebrities in Egypt (Bassiouney, 2015). This was an interesting article to come across, as it does both qualitative and quantitative analysis of foreign celebrities living in Egypt. It qualitatively orders the celebrities based on gender and country of origin into tables. Then it follows the number of their interviews and years residing in Egypt, as well as which dialect they use while in an interview to fill the tables. Then the writer analyzes parts of specific interviews with three prominent cases of celebrities, and the importance of using the Egyptian dialect to be accepted or appreciated as a foreign artist in Egypt is concluded. The writer even slightly implies that it is a scheme to use the dialect to win the Egyptians' affection and admiration as a foreign performer there. Furthermore, whereas one must have some question marks regarding the translations, the sources of the information, and the reasons behind the research, it is only possible to see this as a massive step in support of this dissertation's topic.

Speaking of methods and inspirational ways to do research, *Women Empowerment as Portrayed Through the Egyptian Cinema: Content Analysis of Films*

Produced Between 2001-2011 (Ateya, 2014) is a research that is found to be very similar to the kind of research that this thesis' idea started as. The writer uses content analysis to understand the evolution of female roles in Egyptian cinema through a specific period by classifying the female characters in specific movies and the roles of such characters as well as their occupation and social status, taking into consideration the gender of the filmmakers.

And again, even though the approach the author has followed may not be the best suiting for this type of research, and some concerns are not to be ignored concerning the curation and discussion of results in the research, one cannot help but find it beneficial to the topic, especially since it is one of the few pieces of research to be found on such a specific subject.

A content analysis of a similar nature is *The Representation of Women's Roles in Television Series in Spain. Analysis of the Basque and Catalan Cases* (Tous-Robirosa et al., 2013) the writers create a quantitative methodology focused on content analysis to study female representation in local Spanish series and the differences between the said representations between the Basque and Catalunya areas. Furthermore, as they join the quantitative with the qualitative, a new option regarding a possible audience study flashes on the horizon. *In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences in the 1940s and 1950s: Gender, Genre and National Identity* (Treveri-Gennari et al., 2011) offers a great guideline for an audience study since it is an example focusing on cinema-goers in the 40ies and 50ies when Italy was said to be the most cinema-going nation according to the study itself. The process the researchers go through to reach their results and how they discuss their system and process in detail is very interesting and might be a good example to keep in mind. *Examining Portrayals of Female Protagonists by Female Screenwriters Using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis* (Sharpio, 2017) is research that follows the methodology this study aims to use as well. Based on Mulvey's male gaze theory and character analysis, Sharpio

studies female characters written by female writers using feminist critical discourse analysis, a study beneficial to the chosen topic of this research.

Going back to the basis of our topic, many older and more general sources are possible great additions to enrich any thesis. That being first and foremost, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class, and Nation* (Shafik, 2006) focuses on the role of women and politics in cinema and its impact on society as well as how society shaped some cinematic phases prior concerning the main topic and time period of study yet vitally important to explore. *The Acoustic Mirror The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Silverman, 1988) In the book, Silverman tries to analyze and discuss psychoanalytic theories and female representations (especially physically) in some films in regards to the way the woman or "the other" is perceived or located to be perceived due to her sexual/gender difference, and the outcomes that accompany such differentiation in terms of giving the female a voice. What kind of voice, and for what reason concerning culture, society, psychology, feminism, and sexuality. Something that Mirvat Hatem mentions in her 1986 article on the independent dynamic of sexuality and on how it molded the improvement of a segregated patriarchal framework in Egypt amid the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as its title already indicates; *The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Hatem, 1986). Lila Abu-Lughod's book *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Abu-Lughod, 2004) is where the famous anthropologist sheds light on the importance of Egyptian drama and films in the region and gives a well-constructed historical background on the topic. This proves the significance of what this research is trying to say regarding Egypt's cultural importance in the Arab world.

By the end of this chapter and its literature review content as well, the importance of Egyptian media is evident, being a historical and political background that inevitably intertwines with the cultural and religious causes and effects that lead the industry to the point that it is in at the moment. The lack of material regarding Arab

women and media in general and the nonexistence of material on the alarming xenophobic profiling and misrepresentation of foreign women in Egyptian media is a noticeable gap that this study shall try to cover. By answering questions regarding how foreign women are being represented in Egyptian films today, questioning the casting choices and the roles assigned to foreign actresses in Egypt, and whether there are stereotypes that it follows, if any. And finally, if there is a specific nationality targeted in the said castings, what are the reasons behind that, how could it be intertwined with sexuality, and how the Arab society might view the women presented.

Throughout the journey of material reading, we can see a problem that forms the gap, its possible reasons, and related consequences, which are all points to elaborate on through the content analysis using the guidance of the trials and studies mentioned earlier in order to answer the questions and to fill the gap while creating a new source on Arabic and Egyptian media for later research.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses the gaze methodology and its application in the process of analysis. The Lebanese singers who acted in Egyptian cinema are named, and their films are organized in tables.

3.1 “The Gaze” Methodology

According to Sigmund Freud, *Scopophilia* is defined as the act of "taking others as objects and subjectifying them to a controlling and curious gaze." And based on Freud's psychological explanation, the "male gaze" theory was created by Laura Mulvey in a trial to argue and prove that Hollywood films were shot and directed in a manner that satisfies the male scopophilia of the viewers and the filmmakers based on the camera language and the film as a whole. It is also argued that the cinematic experience as a whole is nothing but a large room filled with "peeping toms," a term used to describe those with voyeuristic tendencies upon which they act. In this case, it is the audience that is sitting in a dark room, peeping into the lives of the characters of the film through the screen that represents a large window onto that other world. And sometimes, if not most times, a mirror that reflects the viewers themselves and their deepest wishes and desires, which Lacan calls the "mirror phase" in which the audience and the cinema have a relationship that includes misrecognition and identification with what they see.

Nonetheless, the cinema, according to Mulvey, has taken it upon itself to manifest the "unknowing and unwilling victim" as female characters that would, later on, be used as a part of Freud's "dichotomy" theory where the passive females are used as scopophilia material for pleasuring as objects of sexual stimulation. Whereas the active males would be feeding their narcissism with the continuation of their ego libido

and by identifying with the images they are seeing on the screen of the main male leads. Moreover, in conclusion, the split between the active male and the passive female is the "sexual imbalance" that sets the order to the world and connotes the "look-at-edness" of the females. (Mulvey, 1974).

Furthermore, with the understanding of the male as the "bearer of the look" and the female as a "spectacle," finding the male gaze in films becomes less challenging as the films are getting tailored to suit the male gaze starting with the script, the casting, the camera language of the male director, his vision, and the awareness of the protagonist regarding her reason of existence in the film, all leading to the result where the films speak and cater to the male audience and project its tailor-made ideologies on both gendered viewers. Hollywood 1950ies Westerners' director Budd Boetticher explains the minor impact of a female character in a film even if she is a "protagonist" as he says: "What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself, the woman has not the slightest importance". (Erens, 1990). Moreover, between male directors and writers directing films towards a patriarchal society with a majority of male viewers and female artists lost between being sexual and being sexualized in an argument that resembles the chicken and the egg dilemma of which started first, here the question is which provoked the other. Hence, the results or projects are a saturation of the above, leading to films such as the films we shall be discussing and analyzing in this study taking into account and basing the analysis mainly upon Mulvey's male gaze theory and taking her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" paper as a sample in the means of the films' analysis.

Starting with the term "the gaze" itself, which many articles cover, be it the male gaze or the oriental gaze. Like *Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema* (Shohat, 2009), where one of the main highlights is focusing on postcolonial mentality, its impact, and examples in the cinema, the

antagonizing of "the other" and subjecting the land/people/women to the "colonial gaze" a manner that must be seen corresponding to the male gaze. *New Directions in Middle East Women's and Gender History* (Booth, 2003) discusses the "media gaze" this time and the religious-based social outrage over a council of women created by the past first-lady then to discuss issues; however, the people were only focused on the attire and gender of the participants who might shed light on the kind of mentality that has been created or that is targeted when we discuss the dramas and films and female portrayals and representations in them later.

While some articles focus on the religious and social aspects, some cover the aforementioned second point, like *The Creation of the Femme Fatale in Egyptian Cinema* (Bracco, 2019). Focusing on the political deployment of villainizing specific characteristics in women from as early as the 50ies, it creates an ideal standard of "good" and "bad" women through cinema based on political reasons at the time, which the society seems not to have recovered from its impact to the day. The article uses a form of content analysis as it describes the plots and quotes some dialogues of some films to prove a transition in the socially accepted representation of an Egyptian woman and what that was to include. Including its change after certain political movements and the way the identification and definition of a woman had changed into a more protected and controlled passive figure, and the old form of the representation was deemed as a negative outcast, or a "femme fatale" that is a subject to the male gaze. In contrast, the modestly accepted version is subject to male rules.

For the purposes of this research, the two most notable films from the ton will be chosen based on the importance and popularity of the films. The first is *Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience* – (Ali Idriss, 2003) as it is -ironically- the first big experience of a Lebanese video clip singer to act in an Egyptian film. The second film will be another film that had much controversy since the announcement that it was going to be made and until after its release. It even got banned after years; *Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul* – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2014). Its

protagonist, also known as the "queen of seduction," was used personally as a form of publicity for the film, including her body, fame, and name to create an impact.

After choosing the films in which the characters played by the Lebanese video clip singers are to be analyzed and discussed, notes will be taken during the viewing of the films; we will be eventually able to pinpoint and expose recurring themes and or cinematic, directorial, or production choices. After creating the bigger picture, we can ideally create an understanding or acknowledgment of the unconsciously internalized codes and concepts represented in these films, whether visually – which shall be analyzed – or verbally through a reflective or an intentional representation approach in means of certain words or terms (adjectives) that are used to refer to or call for the characters in the study which will allow us a better understanding of recurring patterns and any connotations or denotations related to them.

The material will be analyzed and looked upon through conducting a feminist critical content analysis while taking into account Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze and Visual Pleasure works as methodology on its own where it will be argued and proven that these films all use the woman's body and even identity in some instances to satisfy a scopophilia instinct that resides in the male filmmakers and male audience whom the films are directed towards. Using the male co-stars to demonstrate the visually pleasuring reactions, while the females are either taking a passive role in a material that is being viewed and preyed upon figuratively and literally in all the films. The feminist qualitative content is preferred and chosen given that the case is feminist, as well as the fact that using a feminist approach permits the utilization of theoretical structures through the deductive methodology. A feminist approach can have a massive part in how culture is contemplated and appreciated. Social and cultural relics are essential for the interaction by which thoughts are delivered, spread, and devoured by both men and women, in addition to any impact it may have on them and on creating their conceptions on different matters. The chosen content analysis from a feminist perspective methodology on which the Mulvey male gaze theory is to be applied is a

qualitative analysis at its core. According to Dr. Yvonne Lincoln and Norman Denzin in their SAGE Handbook for Qualitative Research (1994), it is said to be "guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world." Michelle Lazar (2007) says that the feminist critical discourse analysis' purpose is to "examine how power and dominance are discursively produced and (counter-)resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices, and through international strategies of talk" which is why the misogyny and the famous quotations of the study case chosen films are noted and discussed in detail. It is worthy to note that the analysis the Mulvey methodology will be used for is not a psychological one, yet rather a application of the method in a critical analytical manner to the films discussed from a feminist perspective.

3.2 Lebanese Women in Egyptian Cinema

The emphasis of this thesis will be on the female Lebanese nationals who started their careers or gained fame through video clips between 2000 and 2020. Specifically, who starred in Egyptian films as a main character – in addition to a few supporting characters as additional examples – to see the nature of the characters they were assigned and to study a few examples more precisely and in detail. The period between 2000 and 2020 is chosen since it marks the beginning of the video clips' emergence into the Arab world in its new format. It includes a significant period, aka 2011 – 2020, which is the period in which Egypt witnessed its 25th of January revolution, and as we can tell by now from the examples provided earlier, throughout history, political movements and changes have had and still has a huge and direct impact on the cinema industry.

The first music video clip singer that made it into the cinemas was Nicole Saba in 2003 through her role in the comedy film *Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience* – (Ali Idriss, 2003). In the film, Nicole plays the character of Anita, a

Danish Researcher who visits Egypt and is hosted in the house of Qadri, played by the famous Egyptian actor Adel Emam. Qadri is a minister and a father to four young men who start fighting over the hot new guest who has her eye on the older father. Furthermore, while there is an emphasis on the broken Arabic accent of the character Nicole plays, as she is supposedly Danish, there is a significant emphasis on her physic and sexual openness and even little gullible evilness in turning the brothers against one another and against their father in a fight over her heart and body. Nicole comes back in two other films in 2006, *Qesset Elhai Elshaa'bi – The Story of the Local Neighborhood* – (Ashraf Fayege, 2006), where she plays a seductive performer and belly dancer in the comedy where her beauty and body are once more the emphasis and center of attention. And *1/8 Dastet Ashrar – 1/8th of an Evil Bunch* – (Rami Emam, 2006), where Saba plays the role of a con artist in a gang member living with a partner without marriage in the romantic comedy. In 2008, Saba also starred in two films; the action motion *Aa'maliyat Khassa – Special Missions* – (Othman Abu Allaban, 2008), where Nicole plays the role of a martial arts trainer with a change in her most popular trait, her platinum blonde hair. And *Leilet El Babydoll – The Babydoll Night* – (Adel Adib, 2008) She plays the character of the ex of one of the leads in the dramatic satire film, which was a very controversial beginning with its name to its story and scenes.

In 2009 Saba starred in the dramatic thriller *Al Saffah – The Slasher* – (Saad Hindawy, 2009) alongside the main character. She then guest starred in the comedy *Baba – Father* – (Ali Idriss, 2012) and co-starred in the comedy *Samir Abu Alnil* (Amr Arafa, 2013), as well as guest starring in the romantic comedy *Hatouli Ragel – Get Me a Man* – (M. Shaker Khodeir, 2013). Her final contribution to Egyptian cinema was in the comedy *Hayati Mebahdela – My Life is a Mess* – (Shady Ali, 2016). We can notice how the size of her roles and the emphasis on her looks went down along with her roles as the importance of the music video clip trend went down as well. It is notable to state that she starred in 12 serials to the day starting in 2009 up to 2018, 10 of them being Egyptian productions.

Table 3.1 Nicole Saba films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>NICOLE SABA</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Altagroba Al Danimarkiya</i>	2003	Ali Idriss	Anita	Professor – Sexuality Teacher
<i>Qesset Elhai Elshaa'bi</i>	2006	Ashraf Fayeq	Layali	Singer – Belly Dancer
<i>1/8 Dastet Ashrar</i>	2006	Rami Emam	Lilly	Con Artist – Lover of 2 nd Lead
<i>Aa'maliyat Khassa</i>	2008	Othman Abullaban	Dima	Assistant
<i>Leilet El Babydoll</i>	2008	Adel Adib	Thourayya	Palestinian Rebel
<i>Al Saffah</i>	2009	Saad Hindawy	Rima	Cheating Wife – Lead's Lover
<i>Baba</i>	2012	Ali Idriss	Dalia	Guest Star – Ex of the Lead
<i>Samir Abu Alnil</i>	2013	Amr Arafa	Layla	Manager
<i>Hatouli Ragel</i>	2013	M. Shaker Khodeir	-	Guest Star – Gangster
<i>Hayati Mebahdela</i>	2016	Shady Ali	Faten	Library Owner

The second Lebanese performer who started through video clips and went into Egyptian Cinema is Marwa. The Lebanese performer started her fame by singing and shooting video clips of traditional Egyptian songs in a new seductive and dance-inducing style with belly dancing and strong colors, and Arabic makeup as defining characteristics, unlike the blonde western scheme Saba was after. Marwa started her Egyptian cinema debut in the comedy *Haha w Toffaha – Haha and Toffaha* – (Akram

Farid, 2005), where she plays the role of a wedding belly dancer and a secret mistress from a local neighborhood. In the comedy *Ayathonnu – Does He Think –* (Akram Farid, 2006), she again plays the role of a mistress, but this time in addition to being a gold-digger. In the comedies *Dr. Silicone* (Ahmed Albadry, 2009) and *Bonne Soiree* (Ahmed Awad, 2010), she plays supporting roles, one as a seductive secretary of an evil doctor and one as a performer in a nightclub. Also in 2010, Marwa stars in *Ahasees – Emotions –* (Hani Gerges Fawzi, 2010), where she plays an emotionally dissatisfied cheating wife. She plays a supporting role in the comedy *Tettah* (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2013) as a seductive and aspiring yet demeaned belly dancer and neighbor of the film's lead who harasses him. Her final cinematic contribution was in *Elli Ekhatshu Matou – Those Who Were Shy Died –* (Ismail Frouq, 2016), a dramatic film rated 18+ that speaks of the hardships and experiences seven women have gone through in life because of their gender. It is also notable that Marwa starred in 3 Egyptian serials throughout her career to the day, in most of which she played roles of a dancer or a mistress.

Table 3.2 Marwa films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>MARWA</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Haha w Toffaha</i>	2005	Akram Farid	Maysa	Belly Dancer
<i>Ayathonnu</i>	2006	Akram Farid	Almaza	Gold Digger Mistress
<i>Mohemma Saaba</i>	2006	Ehab Radhi	Camelia	Belly Dancer
<i>Dr. Silicone</i>	2009	Ahmed Elbadry	Sahar	Secretary - Dancer
<i>Bonne Soiree</i>	2010	Ahmed Awad	Lollos	Belly Dancer
<i>Ahasees</i>	2010	Hany G. Fawzy	Dalia	Cheating Wife
<i>Tettah</i>	2013	Sameh Abdelaziz	Folla	Harassing Neighbor

<i>4 Kotchina</i>	2015	Mohammed Gamal	-	Guest Star
<i>Abu Shanab</i>	2016	Sameh Abdelaziz	Ahlam	Madam (pimp)
<i>Elli Ekhatshu Matou</i>	2016	Ismail Farouq	Wallaa'	Belly Dancer
<i>El Fondonq</i>	2017	Atef Shoukri	Shams	Singer – Prostitute

The Third Lebanese singer and performer who starred in Egypt, which we will be discussing, is Dolly Shaheen. Famous for her tan, she started her cinema career in the drama film *Ouija* (Khaled Youssef, 2005), where she plays the role of a Lebanese thief. She co-starred in the drama *Elkhamas Nogoum – The Five Stars* – (Hatem Mousa, 2007) and in action suspense *Al Shayateen – The Devils* – (Ahmed Abu Zeid, 2007), where she plays the Lebanese member of a secret organization. In 2008 Dolly co-starred in the romantic comedy *El Mesh Mohandes Hasan – The Not So Much Of An Engineer Hasan* – (Manal Elseify, 2008) and in the Comedy *Nems Bond – Weasel Bond* – (Ahmed Albadry, 2008), where she played the role of the young cheating and gold-digging widow of a murdered old businessman who tries to seduce the goofy and clumsy detective hired on the case to deter him from solving the crime correctly using her physic. In 2009, Dolly co-stars in *Bidoun Raqaba – Without Censorship* (Hany Gerges Fawzi, 2009), where the lead goes to the music video clips star at the time the Lebanese Maria, the film that discusses premarital relationships of the youth stars two Lebanese singers and an Egyptian male singer as a lead. Shaheen participates in the comedy *Tetah Raheeba – Grandma Terrible* (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2012), and like Marwa, also participates in a more significant role though, in the comedy *Tettah* – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2013). Shaheen's last cinematic film was the comedy *Zarf Sehhi – Health Causes* (Iram Nasha'at, 2014). In addition to her cinematic contributions, Dolly has 4 TV series in her credit, all of which are Egyptian, the first being in 2009

and the last one being in 2016. Notably, Dolly is one of the few Lebanese singers who had the chance to act roles in her original accent despite the similarity in the nature of the characters portrayed.

Table 3.3 Dolly Shaheen films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>DOLLY SHAHEEN</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Ouija</i>	2005	Khaled Yousef	Sarah	Cheating Wife
<i>Elkhamas Nogoum</i>	2007	Hatem Mousa	Sally	Hotel Gym Coach – Lead's GF
<i>Al Shayateen</i>	2007	Ahmad Abu Zeid	Rana	Lebanese Gang Member
<i>El Mesh Mohandes Hasan</i>	2008	Manal Al Seify	Maha	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Nems Bond</i>	2008	Ahmad Albadry	Noor	Singer – Cheating Wife
<i>Bidoun Raqaba</i>	2009	Hany G. Fawzy	Riham	Sugar-baby
<i>Tetah Raheeba</i>	2012	Sameh Abdelaziz	Serene	Guest Star
<i>Tettah</i>	2013	Sameh Abdelaziz	Amira	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Zarf Sehhi</i>	2014	Ibram Nasha'at	Batta	Love Interest of the Lead

Table 3.4 Maria films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>MARIA</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Bidoun Raqaba</i>	2009	Hany G. Fawzy	Noor	Schoolgirl
<i>Ahasees</i>	2010	Hany G. Fawzy	Norah	Belly Dancer

The fifth example to be mentioned (taking into account the mentioning of Maria in Dolly Shaheen's section) is Cyrine Abdelnour, who starred in only two Egyptian films. In the comedy *Ramadan Abu Elaa'alamein Hammouda* (Wael Ihsan, 2008) where she plays the role of a singer that many youth followers admire, some of whom are students of a very stern teacher who ends up falling in love with the famous singer while he tries to separate his students from her. And a contribution to the dramatic film *Al Misafer – The Traveler* (Ahmed Maher, 2011). It must be mentioned that Cyrine is one of the few Lebanese singers who pursued an acting career outside Egypt, specifically in Lebanese and Syrian series, as she has over 18 series in her credit, all with great success, and only one of them being Egyptian.

Table 3.5 Cyrine Abdelnour films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>CYRINE ABDELNOUR</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Ramadan Abu Elaa'alamein Hammouda</i>	2008	Wael Ihsan	Nagla'a	Famous Singer – Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Al Misafer</i>	2011	Ahmed Maher	Norah	Love Interest of the Lead
Sou' Tafahom	2015	Ahmed S. Farag	Lina	Lebanese Love Interest

The most prominent example to be mentioned is Haifa Wehbe/Wahbi. The famous Lebanese singer is nicknamed "Queen of Seduction," as per IMDB. One of the most famous and successful performers in the middle east, she is well known for her middle eastern features and seductive moves, and feminine curves. "Haifa's spectacular music videos and stage shows have appealed to the taste of Arab youth who see her as the epitome of feminine beauty" (Elouardaoui, 2013, p. 118). There are few films that the vedette has starred in, yet both were extremely popular and equally controversial. Beginning with *Dokkan Shehata – Shehata's Shop* (Khaled Youssef, 2009) where she

plays the role of Beesa (Kitten), the innocent and feminine poor girl who falls in love and is engaged to the protagonist but is forced to be married to his greedy evil brother. The film had much backlash as Wehbe appeared in the film, dancing, wet, in a bra, and had kissing scenes as well. The second Haifa starring film is *Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul* – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2014), the drama that takes on the lines of *Malèna* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2000), which tells the story of Rooh, an extremely beautiful and innocent wife of a husband that is a migrant in the gulf. As she lives with her strict mother-in-law in a poor slum, she is under the stalking radar of all the males in the neighborhood, including a young teenager. Rooh is followed and blackmailed by many powerful, rich, and poor men in the film, who all try to ruin her reputation and win her over. When all fails, she is brutally raped by one of her powerful and wealthy (for the area) neighbors in a scene that took much harsh criticism. Haifa, in addition to these two blockbusters, has participated as an honorary guest star in the comedy *Khair w Baraka – Khair (Good) and Baraka (Blessing)* – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2017) and in *Bahr Al Noujoum – Sea of Stars* (Ahmed Mahdi, 2008) as herself. Haifa also has six top-rated TV series in her credit, all of which are Egyptian. She is generally playing strong, revenging, or poor surviving character in the series, and the main common point of all the characters is the emphasis on her beauty and seduction impacts on men even without meaning it.

Table 3.6 Haifa Wehbe Marwa films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>HAIFA WEHBE</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character’s Identifying Job
<i>Bahr Al Noujoum</i>	2008	Ahmed Mahdi	-	Guest Star – Herself
<i>Dokkan Shehata</i>	2009	Khaled Youssef	Beesa	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Halawet Rooh</i>	2014	Sameh Abdelaziz	Rooh	Housewife
<i>Khair w Baraka</i>	2017	Sameh Abdelaziz	-	Guest Star - Herself

Amar, a Lebanese model who started her career in 2009 as a singer, starred in the comedy *Hasal Kheir – It's Fine* – (Ismail Farouk, 2012). The film follows the story of a belly dancer who relocates with her young sister in a building apartment that families inhabit. And the married men of the building, a teacher, a singer, and a government employee, start following and simping over her while their jealous and angry wives try to end that. She has also taken a role in the action drama *Hamlet Far'ooan - Pharaoh's War* (Raouf Abd El Aziz, 2019).

Table 3.7 Amar films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>AMAR</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Hasal Kheir</i>	2012	Ismail Farouk	Amar	Belly Dancer
<i>Hamlet Far'ooan</i>	2019	Raouf Abd El Aziz	Rama	Refugee

Maya Nasri, another Lebanese model turned singer turned actress, has participated in many movies but with roles that were not to be considered risqué. *Code 36* – (Ahmed Samir Farag, 2007), *Khareg Aala al Qanoun – Outlaw* (Ahmed Nader Galal, 2007), *El Diktator – The Dictator* (Ihab Lamii, 2009), *Qesti Biyougaani – My Installment Hurts* (Ihab Lamii, 2018), and finally *Zenzana 7 – 7th Cell* (Ibrahim Nashaa't, 2020). Maya has also participated in eight series, five of which are Egyptian.

Table 3.8 Maya Nasri films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>MAYA NASRI</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Code 36</i>	2007	Ahmed S. Farag	Norhan	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Khareg Aala al Qanoun</i>	2007	Ahmed Nader Galal	Hana	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>El Diktator</i>	2009	Ehab Lamii'	Basma	School Teacher – GF of Lead
<i>Qesti Biyougaani</i>	2018	Ehab Lamii'	Sawsan	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Zenzana 7</i>	2020	Ibram Nasha'at	Hala	Love Interest of the Lead
<i>Rima</i>	2020	Ahmed Anwar	Mai	Housewife

Madeline Matar is also one of the famous singing names and voices of the early 2000s in the Arab world. Even though a singer, she has acted in Egypt - as it is understandably customary by now – first in *Akher Kalam – Final Decision* (Akram Fareed, 2008), the comedy where she plays the role of a girl striving to become a singer despite her father's dismay. And finally, in *Mohimma Fi Film Qadeem – Mission in an Old Film* (Ahmed Elbadri, 2012).

Table 3.9 Madeline Matar films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>MADELINE MATAR</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Akher Kalam</i>	2008	Akram Farid	Amira	Singer
<i>Mohimma Fi Film Qadeem</i>	2012	Ahmed Elbadry	-	Lebanese – Guest Star

The final two examples of Lebanese singers starring in Egyptian cinema films are the comedy *Asad w 4 Otatt – A Lion and 4 Cats* – (Sameh Abdelaziz, 2007) starring the Lebanese girl group band 4 Cats as themselves. They are witnesses of a crime in the film and are taken under witness protection by the gullible police officer who starts falling in love with the idea of marrying the four. Their accustoming period to life in a local neighborhood with the extra attention they receive from men and women alike because of their accents and attire is a comedy element. And the feature film *Ghorfa 707 – Room 707* (Ihab Radhi, 2007) stars Roula Saad, a Lebanese singer who became mainly famous for her video clips with one of the golden age's stars, Sabah.

Table 3.10 The 4 Cats films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>4 CATS</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Asad w 4 Otatt</i>	2007	Sameh Abdelaziz	-	Themselves

Table 3.11 Roula Saad films in Egypt between 2000 and 2020

<u>ROULA SAAD</u>	Year	Director	Character Name	Character's Identifying Job
<i>Ghorfa 707</i>	2008	Ehab Radhi	Sarah	Love Interest of the Lead

Although there are many other examples of foreign or non-Egyptian singers or actresses starring in Egyptian films, the examples mentioned earlier are all the films that star Lebanese female singers as main characters who were precisely chosen based on the video clip mania mentioned earlier. We can notice the decline of the singer's participation as time went by and as the novelty and power of the musical video clips wore off the public. We can also notice the increase in TV series productions after the

Egyptian 2011 revolution since the cinemas were not very popular due to financial, security, and production reasons. Moreover, even without getting into detailed discussions and interpretations of the characters the Lebanese singers were cast for, we can see the pattern that has been mentioned and referred to from the brief intros. This is one of the main reasons the void exists and needs to be studied and addressed further and in more detail.

3.2.1 Table Frequency Analysis

Our basic information is that we have a total of 48 films without the repetition of the films in specific tables, as some films had two foreign singers acting in them. The 48 films had 11 actresses act in them in total, according to the number of tables. The 48 films were directed by 31 directors. 11 of whom have directed more than one film with a foreign singer acting. Out of the 11, the highest-ranking director is Sameh Abdelaziz, with a total of 6 films out of the 48, followed by Akram Farid and Ahmed Albadry with three films each, and the other repeated directors with two films at a max.

Upon analyzing the identifying character job for the casted Lebanese singers in the Egyptian films we have mentioned, we conclude that their jobs could be categorized into the following categories shown in the table below. Notably, the belly dancer in the category could be intended as a soft format of the prostitution category in many films. Yet, it is not disclaimed openly for censorship reasons. In addition to that, the notion of the character being just a sex object is very prominent, as we are made aware by the table analysis.

Table 3.12 Categories and repetition of identifying character jobs of Lebanese singers acting in the 48 Egyptian films between 2000 and 2020

Category of Identifying Character Job	Repetition of Job in Films Mentioned (times)
Love Interest of Lead	14
Belly Dancer	9
Guest Star	4
Prostitute – Money in return of Sexual Favors	5
Cheating Wife	4
As Their Real Persona (Themselves)	3
Gang Member / Related to Gang Violence	4
Housewife	2
Other Categories	6

3.3 Behind Cult Posters

As stated earlier, Egypt's comedy genre has had a magical impact and success, especially in the late nineties and during the "clean cinema" phase. Comedy films are entertaining, recreational, and suitable for the whole family. We can see this clearly in the fact that the top-grossing films in the history of Egyptian cinema are all comedy genre films (Awad, 2019). It is also duly notable that video clips in the early 2000s were of colossal fame and had an incredible amount of respect and popularity, which it created for its makers, be it the performers or the directors. In a 2006 article on Al Riyadh newspaper's website, influential cinema directors such as Sherif Arafa, Tareq Elerian, Sherif Sabry, and Othman Abu Laban flaunted the importance of video clips, and how the industry is of the same complicity and importance as that of the cinema

that a video clip could be considered a cinema film and sometimes have even a higher budget (Aldabis, 2006). This, if anything, shows the grasp the video clip industry has had on Arab society and the star-making system. It is also worth mentioning that the Oscar-nominated Lebanese director Nadine Labaki started her directing career as a video clip director and created a significant imprint with her unique and famous video clips in collaboration with Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram all of which were attributed to being one of a kind (Mosalli, 2011).

From the previously mentioned, we can conclude and justify the importance and impact of video clips and the comedy genre, which most of the films we shall be discussing belong to, not to mention the impact of both on the Egyptian public. However, to further focus our choice of characters and examples to discuss and analyze, we will be choosing films where some of the earlier mentioned singers have starred as one of the main characters. And in order to specify such roles, only films where the singer/actress was put on the film's poster are to be chosen since being on the poster of any film proves the importance of the role of said character in the film. And could also be a showing or proving mechanism of the power of selling such a public figure might have on the public in regards to attracting them to watch the said film.

In Appendix A, we can see the poster of the film *Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience* – (Ali Idriss, 2003). The film, as we have mentioned earlier, stars an important comedy star in Egypt, Adel Emam, and the Lebanese singer Nicole Saba who plays the role of a Danish Ph.D. researcher who joins the house of a minister and his four young sons as a visitor. Yet ends up messing things up between the brothers themselves and the father also, with whom she falls in love despite the attention and drool bombardment she receives from every male in the film. In the poster, we see Emam, the respectable minister in the film, wearing tight pajamas and a jeans jacket, his belly showing. He is wearing a red beanie and, as accessories, a thick silver necklace and sunglasses with a blank, smiling expression on his old face. His

hand is circling the waist of the young and blonde Anita, wearing a very tight black leather ensemble of a crop top and low-waist pants. Her showing belly is stamped with a tattoo under her belly button, mimicking the "lower back tattoo" and its connotations in Western society. She is wearing dark makeup with a blank facial expression, and many silver strings and necklaces accessorize her devilish look. Nicole's hand rests on the shoulder of Emam's Qadri character as if to prove that she is the upper hand in this dynamic. How he is dressed is also filled with connotations to the impact Anita's character has had on Qadri, how he has been turned from a moral character to someone who dresses and acts not as their age implies.

Appendix F showcases a comparison between the poster of *Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul* – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2014) and that of the Italian film *Malèna* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2000). The Egyptian "remake" of the Italian film extended to its poster, as we can see clearly since the two posters are almost the exact same regarding the content and positioning of elements and figures. However, if we are to compare the details, the difference between the original and its remake shows immediately. Starting with the attire of the two characters, Malena, who lives in an Italian suburb, and Rooh, who lives in a local slum in Egypt. Both women are of stark beauty and feminine curves. However, the way they are dressed when taking the places they inhabit and supposedly portray into consideration, we come up with the logical explanation that it is indeed acceptable for Malena to wear a simple sleeveless beige and baby-blue summer dress given the geographic area and location she is representing through her character in the film, yet, it is baffling to understand how or why an even more revealing attire than that of Malena is worn by the Rooh character who is dressed in a very short and deeply low cut neck thin strapped red dress.

Moreover, while Malena is positioned in the poster in that manner to buckle her shoes with an expression that shows her anticipating someone coming her way, we see Rooh is just positioned that way for the sake of it. Looking away, and actually, if anything, flirtily having her hand in her dangled hair as if seductively having her

picture taken without her knowledge which is something out of character, unlike the case of Malena. It is also notable that Haifa's personal ankle rose tattoo is also in the center of the image, a detail that does not belong to the character of Rooh and something that is covered with makeup in the film, yet shown in the poster, as if it is not the character on the poster, but Haifa herself who is meant to be selling or promoting the film.

It is notable that the promotion and showing of this film have gone through many issues, be it the scenes that the Egyptian censorship deemed "inappropriate" and the many lawsuits between them and the film's producing company El Sobky who ended up losing the battle and having the film officially banned from airing in public cinemas in a 2019 order (Reda, A. 2019). However, in the summer of 2014 and during the film's showing, many large-sized cardboard figures of Haifa in her poster position were put out in cinema halls for promotional purposes. It was not missed to place a note saying, "now, the original version, without cuts," to promote the film. Especially since the promotional video of the film and its trailer were surrounded by many saying that the film was to be cut by the censorship due to its sexual content. One of the notable incidents in regard to the cinema hall figurines of Haifa was one with a public figure, Egyptian actor Ahmad Alfishawy. Who posted jokingly on his personal Facebook account a picture of him with the large figurine, as he posed standing behind it and positioning his hand on Haifa's bottom while captioning the photo saying, "Rooh's beauty is very large" (Anfas Press, 2015). We can see the post's screenshot in appendix G.

While in appendix H, we can see scenes from the promo of the film where just like the original Malena film's famous cigarette lighting scene, we see Rooh or Haifa. We cannot tell at this point in the video; it is all in black and white except for her red dress and red lipstick, going around in a street filled with men while trying to light up her cigarette, which she finally allows the little boy to do for her. As we can see in the images, the way Haifa is dressed with the focus on her cleavage and body, which is the

center of the attention of all the men in the promo, is not to be unnoticed. The look on her face, her heavy makeup, and her attitude, in addition to all the men who consist of some of the film's actors and some extras staring uncouthly at her bottom as she bends. Her open cleavage as she stands in a predatory manner; is something we will see and explore further due to its repetition in many of the films we will analyze. The message intended to be delivered from the promo has less to do with the film and more to do with the selling of sexuality or the body of Haifa as she is projected to the male gaze in a literal and direct manner.

After taking a brief look at the posters of the two films we are to discuss, and after generally checking other posters from the time frame, we can notice some recurring patterns in all of them. Starting from the heavy makeup and suggestive positions and ending with the most prominent and visual common element, the colors and fabrics used in the attire the actresses are dressed in. Other posters are available in the Annexes p. 90 for a visual reference.

CASE STUDY

This Chapter will discuss the synopsis and plot as well as the events and characters in the two chosen case study films. The films' retelling includes camera movement details and some translated dialogues to enrich the argument.

4.1 *Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience* – (Ali Idriss, 2003)

The film, written by Youssef Maaty, takes place in modern Cairo in the year 2003. We get introduced to Mr. Qadri single father of four grown men in their twenties. The film's opening scenes show us the close and lovely fatherly bond and brotherly bond the family exchanges with each other, be it in their routine morning jogs to their exercising sessions and their extravagant and somewhat exaggerated breakfasts for the sake of comedy. One of the first things we notice in the film, other than the emphasis on the close relationship Qadri has with his sons, is the normalization of violence and destruction, showing it as a regular male thing that, alongside inflicting pain on others, is not only deemed normal, yet funny. Throughout the film, we see that the family of five enter fights casually during the many scenes, which entails raising havoc in intended comedy scenes. We get to see that for the first time clearly in the first breakfast scene less than 10 minutes into the film when while eating, the boys hear the sound of a crash, and when looking outside the window, they realize a group of guys in a car bumped their parked car in the driveway. The scene continues with the sounds of beatings and windows of the ground floor (where the breakfast table is) getting crashed with the bodies of the men that the boys are beating, obviously, all while Mr. Qadri, with the perfect poker face, pays no attention to the mountain of bodies in his hall and continues to eat while chatting with one of his still seated sons. The comedy element is even heightened when the police come to find all the men that were piling on the ground, sitting with the family on the big table and sharing their feast, which they have for breakfast, as if, again, that's the norm.

The misogyny in the film continues with a wedding invitation that Qadri receives from an old friend to his son Bahaa's wedding. From the first time we see Bahaa in Qadri's office, we notice that he is silent and small-framed compared to Qadri's extremely large and athletic boys. The wedding scene is jump-cut to the right after. Qadri enters the venue with his boys, only to see the groom Bahaa sitting submissively on the groom's chair while the bride, with extreme makeup, a bizarre hairdo, and a short sparkly white dress, is looking in the direction of them and smiling, even winking provocatively. This kind of dress code in the Arab world connotes with street workers. Qadri and his sons have a good laugh bullying Bahaa about being this submissive, while Qadri tells his sons that he wants them to be like "lions" on their wedding day. We jump-cut to the bride dancing on top of the five men's table while Bahaa is still sitting in his chair, dancing femininely from his seat. When one of Qadri's sons carries the bride off the table, Qadri, in a comedy-serious tone, scolds his son to "return the thing, it is not ours," thus, addressing the woman as it or a mere thing, nothing else. When the bride's stepfather comes to discuss their inappropriate jokes with them, Qadri calls the bride an "experienced girl that's like honey" and even asks her if she is experienced, to which she answers that she is indeed. These, again, are implications regarding the bride's previous sexual activities for the sake of comedy. The whole wedding is ruined by a huge fight which the sons start which wrecks the venue.

We move on to the university graduation scene of one of Qadri's sons, Mahmoud. The scene in the university entails two scenes; one with Mahmoud in a cape with a huge group of boys and girls on the university stage. We can see the three other boys taking advantage of the ceremony and congratulating every girl on stage by kissing and hugging her. And a scene of Qadri sitting with the other parents, tears of pride falling down his cheeks. He points to his son and tells the middle-aged, appropriately dressed mature woman next to him, "that right there is my son" he then lowers his pointing hand to casually pinch the thigh of the woman, which shocks her in silence. While he

keeps his poker face as an intention to create a comedy scene out of harassment. We move on to a celebration dinner at a restaurant, which Qadri and his sons destroy completely because a hidden camera prank chooses them as victims to play on.

During the restaurant's cathartic destruction scene, Qadri receives a phone call informing him that he has been appointed as a minister for youth, which is a turning point in the film. After making the oath, Qadri talks with his boys at home regarding the "responsibility that comes with such a position" and how they must behave more responsibly now, given his status, which is admitting that their old ways were not responsible or respectful, to say the least. The following scenes all include Qadri's sons' misuse of their father's name and position. In a misuse of power, one of his sons is detained for public indecency with the bride we saw earlier. When Qadri comes to the police station, he finds the police officers in the cage while his son and the bride are sitting on the officer's desk before her husband, Bahaa, comes to pick her up silently and submissively, as always. Another of his sons beats up his friends in university and causes a public fight, ending up in the newspaper. Qadri expresses his disappointment and stresses their need to be more careful because of his position.

In a ministry meeting, Qadri meets Egypt's ambassador in Denmark, who turns out to be an old close friend of his. He introduces Qadri to his Danish wife, who gets bullied jokingly by Qadri for her resemblance to the coffee boy in their old neighborhood. The casting choice of the lady is interesting as she looks old and overweight, with modest baggy dresses and short boy hair. So, when Qadri's friend informs him that his sister-in-law, Anita, a professor at the university in Denmark, is coming to Egypt for tourism and research reasons and wishes to have an authentic experience, Qadri accepts having her as a guest in his house. Which is when things turn interesting in the film.

It is not until minute 42 of the film that we get our first glimpse of Anita, whom Nicole Saba plays. The second name in the film and our Lebanese video clip singer

who started her acting career in Egypt through this film and paved the way for other video clip singers to follow, as we have mentioned before. The camera pans up from the airplane stairs, where we get to see the attire of Anita a low waist camel-colored skirt, a tiger patterned crop top that shows a large amount of her abdomen, and finally, a tight leather choker on her neck. She has very defining eye makeup that has her blue-colored eyes pop, and her untied platin blonde hair cascades down her back and shoulders. In a comedy approach gone too far, and in order to exaggerate and showcase the hotness or desirability of Anita, we see the airport turn into havoc upon her arrival. First, with the police officer stamping his hand instead of her passport because he was too busy ogling her to focus on his job, and later with the crowds in the airplane where people who are expecting family members ditch them. A man divorces his bride, who is wearing a wedding dress in the airport, and more such actions only to follow Anita to the exit. The men acting goofy, fools, and speechless by the beauty of Anita turn into scary for anyone with common sense as they crowd around the car that she enters. However, Anita's reaction is, on the contrary, nothing but a silly smile and a blonde bombshell attitude where she plays dumb most of the time regarding the desiring men.

As Anita enters Qadri's house, his boys gather around her, introducing themselves while drooling over the blonde visitor whose beauty shocks even Qadri himself. He scolds his sons as they take Anita upstairs to her room with the sentence, "enough dogs, we are not in a bus," as if being on a bus is a free-pass ticket to ogling and harassing women. Nonetheless, as another comedy trial gone too far, we realize that all this time, Anita has been followed by tens of men on her way from the airport, whom all enter through the villa's open door and into the bedroom. We are able to identify many ethnicities and races through the few words or attires they use. Men who are security, captains, arrivals, and tourists are all gathered, drooling over Anita, who seems not to mind all the attention at all. And as Qadri kicks everyone out, his sons remain circling her from behind, smelling her and looking at her in desire in a clear reference to pornos. Qadri also kicks them out and stands close to Anita, asking her to

get comfortable and consider the house her own, when she suddenly starts to unbutton her skirt. Qadri puts his hands on the skirt's zipper and says jokingly, "I swear that this is our duty," as if being a good host. Anita insists on taking off her clothes, saying that she is tired and needs to sleep with her clothes off, to which Qadri answers that she can't because he is there and that he will leave to have her undress as she pleases.

Persistent on protecting Anita from his sons, we see Qadri taking a shift in protecting Anita's room, sitting on the staircase with a large wooden stick in his hands. Waking up from dozing off, he sees a head exit from the door crack of his sons' bedroom and reminds them that he said they are not allowed to exit. Anita exits her room in question of the noise and if there is a problem wearing short zebra patterned pajamas. Qadri assures her that all is good and asks her to go back to bed. The following day, Anita joins the already set breakfast table and the family wearing a sleeveless white tank top that shows her tattoos and a short pair of jeans shorts. Moreover, while he is sitting next to Qadri, informing him that she is planning to visit the Cairo library today, he notices something. Which ends up being that one of his sons sitting across from her is holding a small mirror from under the table to check out Anita's thighs. And when his father catches him, he confiscates the mirror calling him a dog, only to position the mirror on the table and adjust it at the perfect angle for him to check out Anita's cleavage. Anita seems unnoticing and nonchalant about the whole thing altogether.

We jump-cut to a tilt down of Anita wearing glasses and checking out a book titled "Practical Beekeeping" however, we are soon following her body's profile in a medium shot as we see that she is standing on a ladder that libraries have to reach the books, whereas, in the background, hundreds of men are standing ogling her backside. To create a comedy element, we see that the door of the national library is protected by black-wearing riot forces with shields and helmets as crowds of men are demonstrating the sentence "we want to read" while trying to enter the library. Anita's effect on young students does not only go this much, as when Mr. Qadri comes back home but he is

told by Badawi, their housekeeper and cook, that Anita is with the boys in her room, tutoring them. And when Qadri tries to break into the room, he sees that his sons are sitting on desks with pens and papers for notes and focusing hard on what Anita seems to be showing them on the small television on wheels, just like in schools. The film being a sex film. Anita expresses her astonishment "how come until this moment they didn't study sex." Qadri confiscates the film from the VCR machine and kicks his sons out while telling her to "please stay away from my children," to which she says they are not children anymore while Qadri insists that they are and leaves after a discussion on how sex studies are essential to learn from Anita's side, and how these things are natural and need no explanation according to Qadri. The confiscated film gets played in a ministry meeting of Qadri's by accident, where everyone in the meeting claps happily and unexplainably while he shamefully leaves.

The Anita impact on the household and the boys becomes very influential. We notice the house having flower vases in all its corners, the boys reading poetry, becoming calmer. They even refuse to get up from the table when they hear a crash sound and a security guard comes to inform them that someone hit their car – in a replay of the first scene to compare their difference in reacting to the same matter –. We are also seeing Badawi, the housekeeper, dressed in a feminine way for an unknown reason but to emphasize that the way everyone – except Qadri – started behaving is feminine because it is the opposite of their previous behaviors that are considered the masculine norm. And then, as if intending to seduce the only man she was unable to, Anita seems to grasp the attention of Qadri when he enters the house one day and gets told that Anita will be cooking them a Danish specialty for lunch. But before that, Anita is set to play sports in the middle of the big hall, and as the family is seated at the table, having a good view of the show-like workout she offers. Wearing tight black shorts and a top, Anita is bending, running, stretching, and kneeling as the camera sees her in long shots and medium shots. Actually in an interesting shot, see Anita bending down with her back to the family, with the camera showing us their

stares in the background as it is positioned between Anita's thighs as if to show that that is where she has them all at this point, and later the opposite way from the same position where we see her head between her legs as she apologizes for the lunch being late. Anita's Danish food is of a small portion, tiny, to say the least, and not very appetizing to look at. While the boys seem to enjoy it for Anita's sake and Qadri refuses to eat it and tries it only to dislike and spit it. Anita begs him to try it again from her hand, and as she feeds him with her hand, he accepts, swallowing the mouthful of the food, and we realize Anita is starting to seduce him.

On another occasion after that, we see Qadri coming back home to find tens of men gathering near his villa's garden and entrance, even on the tree, and we discover with him that all of this to take a glimpse of Anita sunbathing in a revealing pink bikini on the front porch. Qadri approaches Anita, letting her know that this all is not so suitable or acceptable in their culture, to have her silently without saying a word, point to her shoulders and back, and hand him a bottle of cream. Qadri accepts the offer of the upside-laying Anita, and spreads the cream on her back and shoulders, getting close to her barely covered bottom, only to go back up again, all while the camera follows his hand in closeup on Anita's back. We then see a montage of the boys and Anita spending time together, going out for car rides, eating, laughing, and having fun on different days and occasions to show the passage of time until we see a scene of Anita and the boys in the cinema watching an old movie. Furthermore, while Anita is fixated on watching an traditional Egyptian belly dancer in the scene shown on the screen, we see the boys fixated on watching her instead of the film.

The cinema scene inspires Anita to do what follows in a jump cut scene right after, where she casually barges into a ministry officials meeting, wearing a bright red belly dancing suit resembling that of the dancer in the film that they were watching in the cinema. After forcibly opening the door and passing security, she runs to minister Qadri, sits on the table with her thighs showing, and does the local ululation, which is making a sound with one's mouth to express joy. Something that local Egyptian women

do in festivities, and only says that this is "Anita Egyptian Style." We never see the embarrassing aftermath of Anita's spontaneous visit, yet, when Qadri comes home, we see that the villa's ground floor has been altered and decorated to look like an Egyptian typical nightclub. The boys, each sitting on a table with beer bottles and food, one of them even wearing gulf clothing, and just like customers, they are cheering for the show, which entails, Anita standing in a spotlight and belly dancing in the same red dancing outfit she wore earlier, with a very dark black kohl eye makeup and a bright red lipstick. The gulf costume-wearing son even goes up to the stage to spread money over Anita, a known thing men do in such places to impress the bellydancer or singer and show off wealth to the other attendees. When the music stops, he grabs Anita from the back and tries to direct her upstairs, and as she complies, we find the other brothers asking what he thinks he is doing, each claiming her as "his" or their own, basically as she idly stares while they hit each other. All until Qadri interferes to stop one of them from hitting the other with a glass bottle. He stands up after silently having sat back to watch everything without them even noticing his entrance and yells at them for trying to kill each other over a woman. Anita, objects over the way he is shouting, saying that "no one hits his children like this; this is savage behavior!" to which Qadri slaps her across the face and asks her to pack and leave.

Qadri, in what appears to be remorse, knocks on Anita's room to apologize for earlier. She asks him to enter the room where we see her lying on the bed with the dancing costume on the vanity, implying that she is naked under the red bed sheets that are covering her. Qadri expresses his regret telling her "I know it is not my right to hit you; I am sorry," to which she asks him to come to sit next to her and motions him to sit even closer when he does so. She then and in one of her most prolonged monologues in the film, says the following "this is the first time in my life that someone hits me, but you cannot imagine, it is a marvelous feeling. I like it when you hit me" Qadri hits her across the face again, to which she exclaims, "too hard! But I like it! You are a real man". Throughout this conversation, all the time, the sheet that's covering Anita's

breasts is falling, and the camera is angled in her OTS, and thus we only see Qadri's reaction as he tries to cover her up. Anita asks Qadri where his "woman" is. He tells her the story of how his wife passed away giving birth to their youngest son, and she says that she knows that she is asking about his girlfriend. Qadri says that he is a minister, and something like that is not acceptable, so Anita objects saying that even more reason to do so. Clinton had Monica as an example. She says that there is a day when people are completely liberated and naked in Denmark called "nudity day" and then stands up completely naked on the bed, as we can understand from the camera position now at the back of her knee to see the red sheet falling and Qadri's reaction. Qadri stands up with the sheet trying to cover Anita when she tells him about the beauty and liberation of being naked and how it is the best feeling in the world, given "humans are born naked." She then proceeds to ask him if she can kiss him. He says he cannot kiss her, and she says, not him kissing her; she is the one who wants to kiss him, so she does. The long kiss makes the viewer uncomfortable, especially due to the age gap between the two actors. Qadri then leaves, only to come back again and kiss Anita himself this time which initiates the start of their relationship.

The next day, Qadri is in his office holding the rose Anita gifted him that morning, expressing how much he would have liked to be normal, like a street sweeper, so he could be free to do as he pleases. Later that evening, we see Anita and Qadri in a nightclub partying. The two are dressed the way they are on the film's poster, which we analyzed earlier, after dancing and expressing their happiness and liberty over two glasses of juice. It is in the cab they are taking home when at a checkpoint, they are caught kissing. And when the officer gets them out of the cab and asks for their IDs which they do not have, he insists on taking them to the police station. The police officer makes fun of Qadri's attire, which is not suitable for his age, just like his arm candy who is referred to as a "cat" by the officer who gets the shock of his life when Qadri's assistant comes to bail him identifying him as the minister. After he knows who

Qadri is, the officer offers the keys to his office, that he says has a big bed where Qadri can "rest with the cat," an offer that Qadri refuses and leaves.

Throughout the duration of the secret relationship between Qadri and Anita, he becomes less engaged in his children's lives. His son loses a boxing match, and he only becomes aware of that when he asks about the markings on his son's face, whereas at the beginning of the film, we see him acting as the coach in his son's games. His son tells him that he never needed to be reminded of such events and that he would usually come himself. Qadri is saddened by this and asks where his eldest is, only to be told that he is in Anita's bedroom. Mahmoud, who was proposing to and getting rejected by Anita, is told that there's someone Egyptian in her life. His father asks him to leave the room and says nothing. Intended to find out who Anita's lover is, he follows her to find out that the said lover is his father and no one else. At home, there is a big confrontation scene between the sons and their father, who collapses at the harsh words he gets told by his children. Qadri, who is rushed to the hospital, survives the stroke he had had, and after a touching monologue by his son Mahmoud, wakes up and forgives him.

We later see the healed-up Qadri exiting the hospital with Anita and his children, then we see him resigning to his superior, saying that he "wants to live." Jump cut to Qadri holding Anita's hand in the airport, and another Jump cut to his sons rushing to follow him. The sons make it barely on time as Qadri and Anita are going up the airplane stairs. Touched by the gesture and reminded again of his deep love for his boys, Qadri apologizes to Anita, whom he says that he loves but he "can't live without those bastards." Qadri runs towards his children in a group hug as Anita collapses angrily in frustration at the steps on the ladder. A flashforward like the opening scene opens in a jump cut, this time not just with Qadri running with his boys, but with each of the boys is a wife and one or two little children all running together as the end credits roll.

4.2 *Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2014)*

Due to its popularity, and the controversy it has provoked and continues to provoke, as have been discussed and mentioned in previous chapters, it is crucial to focus primarily on the character analysis of the character of Rooh (soul), which is played by Haifa Wehbe or "the queen of seduction" as we have also mentioned and established before. In order to be able to analyze Rooh better, we must first explain the main plot and the storyline to understand and have a reference regarding the environment in which Rooh is supposed to exist in the realm of the film.

The story is an Egyptian take on the film of Malena, but in this film, Rooh is an undeniable beauty who lives in a slum-like neighborhood with her old and sick mother-in-law due to her beauty that causes her trouble and stares from the men of the area and results in hate and jealousy from the women of the area. Rooh, who has no family and who has been waiting for years for her husband to either come back or send her an invitation to go live with him in a Gulf country where he works, lives her life as a servant and prisoner under the power of her angry and bitter mother-in-law. And while a mechanic shop owner who is considered wealthy in the area has his eye on her and sets after her the area's pimp to recruit her for him, things get extremely dramatic with the pimp's younger son trying to protect her and his father with his prostitutes ruining her reputation and causing her mother in law to die. Her husband divorces her while abroad until finally; she is taken by force under the sight and witnessing of the whole area by the mechanic in a drama-filled scene leading to a bitter open finale.

The film opens up with a dream sequence of a seductive Rooh sitting on her vanity, where we have shots varying between closeups and extreme closeups of Rooh putting on lipstick, and kohl, fixing her hair, and looking in the mirror. Rooh, who is dressed in a short sleeping gown, is next sitting in a living room on the floor, eating watermelon while dripping it into her open cleavage with a huge focus on her bodily features with the camera that is zooming on her bosom covered with watermelon water

that she smears more in a trial to clean, she then proceeds to eat red bell peppers by opening one in half with her bare hands. We cut to Rooh now cooking in a very short black tight dress; she is moving in the kitchen on the tips of her toes as if she is a flying butterfly, she is opening the lid of the cooking pan on the stove, and we see her from behind all the vapor in a sexual way. Later, we cut to Rooh pouring a thick brown liquid on the floor that she sits on in order to cool it down; she then proceeds to use the substance to wax her legs, a commonly used method by Arab women for removing bodily hair that is referred to as sugaring since the dough is made of sugar mainly. The camera shows us Rooh's perfectly hairless and smooth legs with her slathering the sticky dough on. And finally, the nostalgic oriental music we have been listening to since the opening of the film stops suddenly, and we see Rooh entering a bedroom.

From her POV, we see a relatively young boy in his early teens lying on the bed in a manly manner, looking at her with lust. From the boy's POV, we see Rooh coming closer and kneeling a little down in a trial to approach the boy, to which we see an extreme closeup of her bosom that ends with a cut representing the end of the dream sequence, which we only realize is a dream when all of this cuts to a young boy that looks like he is around 13 or 14 years of age who seems to have been having this sexual dream of the 30+ looking-year-old Rooh as he wakes up sweaty and heavily breathing. The boy is the boy we saw in the dream sequence lying on the bed earlier.

After waking in his slum of a house with his many siblings on the floor, and his father and mother arguing about not wanting to close the door while having intercourse as he is able to see and hear from the cracked door, he leaves the house and walks into the night in the small alley that shows the area the film takes place in to be a slum-like area where he very masterfully follows a man enter a building and the house in the ground floor where the man meets a woman who seems to be having an affair with the man as she mentions her husband who is away, and as they are about to have intercourse, with the boy looking through the wooden horizontal shutters of the window like the voyeur that he is, a blind man (due to his sunglasses and movement) catches

him, causing noise and alarming the couple inside the room, and causing a dialogue between the woman who puts on a prayer wear before opening the window exclaiming what's going on as the man inside the room hides, and the blind man who we come to identify as Zakaria, and the boy as Sayed. We also understand that a form of friendship joins the two despite the age gap between them, given that Zakaria looks like he is in his late forties or even fifties. Zakaria and Sayed go to Zakaria's place later, where Sayed eyes a picture in black and white of a woman who looks like a belly dancer due to her standing on a stage with the attire. We then learn that her name is Sabah, and she is an old friend and crush of Zakaria, who used to be a trumpet player in her band. The subject of the conversation somehow brings Rooh up, and we get to learn that she was only married for two months before her husband left her to go to Kuwait and never really visited later or sent for her to go. The man is called a fool for leaving such a "lick of cream" alone like that.

Sayed leaves Zakaria's, but the boy's voyeuristic escapade does not end there that night, as he starts eyeing the ground-level house where Rooh and her sick mother-in-law inhabit, again through the wooden shutters. We see him following with his eyes the woman inside who is Rooh, who seems to be cleaning and mopping the floor vigorously, causing her feminine curves to jiggle and the boy to focus on that from his POV that, is explained with the camera, which zooms on her backside as she bends and on her open cleavage. A voice calls for her, which we then understand is her mother-in-law. He follows her movement window to window, where we see her now sitting on the ground with the old woman's feet in her face and a big bucket of hot water in between as she massages the feet of the grumpy woman who is smoking and coughing, asking her to finish cleaning and go to bed as they will go to call Tawfik – Rooh's husband – in the morning. The boy who was focusing on her showing thighs on the floor, as the camera language tells us, follows her through until she reaches her bedroom, where he has a special wooden piece which he removes and can clearly see Rooh on her bed in her tight nightgown laying there, sighing, and moving around. The

camera in the reappearing and recurring voyeurism sequences focus on the eyes of the boy through the window and focus at the same time on the body parts and feminine lines of the protagonist through the eyes of the boy where in a sense, the camera becomes his eyes and a representation to what he is seeing. There are zoom-ins and closeups on her thighs, breasts, and body lines as the camera pans slowly to show us her body, imitating the movement of the boy's eyes. Rooh then falls asleep, and Sayed closes the shutter collapsing after a long sigh and a smile of gratification near the window.

The following day opens with a sequence of lively Shaabi music; we see the neighborhood in all its colors and vibrancy, to which we add Rooh and her mother-in-law walking in the street from their house to the place where they will be doing the international phone call with Tawfik regarding money he sends them monthly. While walking in the street, Rooh is walking behind her mother-in-law and is very alarmed as she flutters her eyelashes with the number of looks and catcalling she receives. She is often called "honey" and "cream" by many men who also whistle and ogle at her. It is as if the whole neighborhood's men are awaiting her to exit the street to stare at her. Rooh, wearing a tight black midi dress, covering her head and arms with a black lace scarf, is eyed by women the same as men, however, in a jealous and despising manner. She hears women saying, "why do men like her? I don't understand," saying that Rooh is sneaky.

We then see Talaat, the "Jaguar" as he is known in the area, which he seems to be wealthier than its inhabitants probably because he owns a mechanic shop for fixing and selling car pieces. We also see Arafa, who we know is Sayed's father, and from a conversation between the two, we learn that Arafa is a pimp that brings Talaat women; however, Talaat wants Rooh. Arafa objects, saying that "all women are the same, but you only want this one" and says that he offered to bring her like a "tied chicken" to Talaat, yet the latter is the one who refuses and says he only wants her willingly. Arafa tries to approach the two women coming back home to strike up a conversation asking

about Tawfik and when he would be returning, only to have the mother-in-law scold him and Talaat as well as Rooh as she angrily enters the building cussing at this "dirty neighborhood."

Inside the house, the old lady and Rooh have a very misogynic conversation where the mother-in-law shouts that its enough and that Rooh should "cover up herself" as its "all because of you, if you walked normally then they wouldn't think that you're easy and approach you" Rooh defends herself "I did not do anything, I never even see the street" to which she is told to shut up and gather herself up waiting for her husband. Later that evening, we see Arafa bringing women to Talaat's rooftop, where he and a few men from the neighborhood stop the classical singer Um Kulthoum and change the channel on the small TV to a barely covered girl dancing in a sign showing their inside world and taste. One of the girls, who happens to be one of Arafa's prostitutes, is said to be marrying one of the men in the sitting the next day as it will be more "protection to her" from the government and the people of the neighborhood. We then see Rooh on her bed, laying down and watching an old black and white classical with a dreamy look on her face as a symbol of her purity and innocence.

The next day, the preparations for an open-air neighborhood wedding are going on. As Rooh is looking from the window at the people enjoying themselves at the big party, she is scolded by her mother-in-law, who forces her to stop doing that, close the window and enter her room to go to sleep and wait for her husband's return. Rooh complies, crying as she falls asleep. The wedding outside continues, and we even see Sayed harassing a woman in the wedding by humping against her from the back and pretending that it is by accident as everyone is dancing and drinking and smoking. In Rooh's dream, which we can understand from the change of coloring in the film, we see her not complying with her mother-in-law but instead fighting with her and answering back. Where she exposes herself, revealing a very tight undergarment under the robe that she opens to tell the old lady that she is not just any woman and that she is tired of her nagging and forbidding of everything. That she wishes for her husband

to be there to share moments with him as any couple would, and then she, in a very raw manner, flaunts her body telling the old lady that she has the "merchandise" which she can "check" in reference to herself as an object as well. She then tells the old lady to let her be and even die. In her dream sequence, she then proceeds to go outside in a pink, tight silk nightgown with a black lace opening in its mid-section. She walks barefooted across what looks like a podium yet is filled with scattered nut plates, ashtrays, and beer bottles as the heads and eyes of the men of the neighborhood eye her walk; she reaches the stage, and the song of the film as well as its promo song starts playing. Accompanying the singer Hakim in his song about how the love of flesh is not lasting, yet what lasts is the "beauty of soul," Rooh dances seductively and femininely with sadness and calmness on her features as the camera shows us her body movements that were mainly imitating a rippling sea or a snake, as well as the reactions of all the men of different ages, with familiar and unfamiliar faces all lusting over her. Rooh wakes up saddened and opens the drawer next to her to get out a photograph of her and her husband on their wedding day, to which we can hear a voiceover of him promising to send for her to go live with him in a couple of months. Rooh cries and hugs the picture in frustration.

The following day, there is a knock on the door of the house. Rooh opens to see two women, one being the bride, who also happens to be one of Arafa's prostitutes. The women ask Rooh to call for her mother-in-law as they require a word with her. And as Rooh leaves, the door cracked and calls for the old lady; the two women, as well as the groom, enter the house. The man removes his clothes, and the two ladies grab Rooh by the hair and cover up her mouth as they rapidly remove her dress, exposing her in her undergarments, and open up the window of the house that faces the street, screaming and shouting saying that they caught her with the man in bed. The man is sitting proud, telling his new bride to shut up as he is a man and it is fine, whereas Rooh is weeping on the floor, trying to cover herself up. Arafa then enters the house, and he and the prostitute wink as she retells the story to Rooh's mother-in-law, that starts having a

stroke after hearing about the scandal. We understand that it is a plan. The people are all either checking Rooh out or feeling happy about the scandal. Sayed enters and gives Rooh something to cover up with as they share a human moment through eye contact and gratitude. After Arafa tells them all to leave, Rooh's mother-in-law falls to the ground, dead, amid the crying of Rooh and Arafa telling her that he is a brother and that she shall worry about nothing from now on in a trial to seize the opportunity.

After the funeral, Sayed goes to Rooh to warn her to be cautious of his father, Arafa, and Talaat, as they do nothing for free and give her money to pay them back for the funeral expenses. Rooh then asks Sayed to accompany her to where she makes the phone calls with her husband as he has yet to reply, and he was only informed of the passing of his mother through a message she sent. Rooh complies when the two men show up to try and flaunt their new "friendship" with her when she gives them the money and kicks them out. Before accompanying Rooh, Sayed flaunts his "relationship" with her to the neighborhood boys. He lies and says that they are together as lovers and that he gets to kiss her on the lips, and that she does anything he asks her to do immediately. When they do not believe him, he says they shall witness that when he takes her for a walk later that day. Surely enough, he sticks his tongue out to the boys, who, in much disbelief, watch as Sayed and Rooh walk by. Tawfik does not answer again, and Rooh returns saddened with Sayed; however, this time, Talaat sees them. When he confronts Arafa about his son's actions, he claims it is part of his plan.

In order to give Rooh a new breath of air, Sayed takes Zakaria to visit her and to pay his condolences. There, Zakaria, even though blind, is taken aback by Rooh's voice and smell, which he says is "heavenly." He then suggests that the three of them visit his friend Sabah to get Rooh out of her sadness for real. They all visit Sabah, a mature lady in her late fifties or early sixties. She has a lot of makeup on and is wearing a lot of gold that makes noise when she moves. She says that after she quit dancing in the band, she opened her own restaurant and is satisfied with her life. She then compliments Rooh for her beauty and asks if she, too, is in the sector as she and

Zakaria, to which they answer her with a no. She takes Rooh to her bedroom and asks her why she is wearing black, and when Rooh says its because her mother-in-law passed away, Sabah mocks her innocence and tells her she should wear something else she used to have, which she is sure would suit Rooh. They also both learn that they both originate from Mansoura city, which comforts Rooh. After Rooh has changed into the tight burgundy dress, she helps Sabah with the food preparation in the kitchen, where they have a talk in which Sabah tells Rooh that she is extremely beautiful and can be in place for people's "desire and bad intentions." Thus, she should be stronger than this; otherwise, they will "eat" her alive. When returning home, Talaat is alarmed by the fact that Rooh is wearing red and going out, as he says angrily to Arafa.

Rooh's life changes drastically when Arafa, instead of her and in return for money that he gives to the government notifier, receives the paper of her divorce notification which her husband has already done from abroad. He runs to Talaat to tell him this is his chance and gets paid for taking the paper instead of her. Arafa then proceeds to knock on Rooh's door and namedrops Tawfik to even have Rooh open the door for him, only to enter and inform her that Tawfik turned out to be a very trashy human being who took her respect for him and protection of his honor and name in his absence as well as looking after his sick mom for nothing because he has indeed divorced her. As Rooh collapses on the couch, Arafa says that Talaat wants to check up on her as he has heard the bad news and leaves the two of them after Talaat enters and closes the door. Talaat, then, in the calmest and most endearing voice that he has, begs her to have him be her "backbone" and to protect her from everyone and everything. He then gets closer to caress the hair of the in-shock crying Rooh as he says that what is on his heart is on his tongue, meaning that he says what he feels, to which Rooh suddenly and in all her possible hostility stands up and takes her slippers raising them as she says "and for me, what's on my feet is in my hand" implying that she is willing to hit him with her slippers as she kicks him out. Rooh collapses to the ground sobbing, asking "why" repeatedly when Sayed, who has been lurking near the

staircase, knocks on the door, which she refuses to open until she hears his name. Rooh, still collapsed on the ground, opens the door and hugs Sayed in distress because while she sees him as the little boy he is, he sees her as the beautiful, desirable woman she is. However, after hesitation, he hugs her back and comforts her cries with his small hands, patting her back and caressing her hair.

Sayed leaves Rooh's house, running happily and freely as a bird, spreading his arms as one. He looks like he owns the world. Talaat that night asks for Sayed to sit with him; he even has his young assistant Osha (one of the boys Sayed teased earlier) bring Sayed something to drink and slaps him when he refuses to comply. Talaat asks him to get him closer to Rooh as he sees they have become friends, and he wishes to be her friend and help her; he also offers him money in return. Sayed refuses and says that Rooh is his own. He gets a hard beating from his father for upsetting Talaat, one of their primary sources of income. Sayed says he refuses to be a pimp as his father beats him even more for saying that.

The next day, Sabah, who is paying a visit to Rooh, and after listening to all that had happened, advises Rooh saying, "As long as you are strong, you are able to face the world. Do not allow them to provoke you, you provoke them!". Thus, Rooh taking Sabah's advice into account too literally, wears a sparkly white tight long-sleeved gallabiyah which is traditional to Egypt, to exit to the ground floor balcony to hang wet laundry, eyeing Talaat and Arafa, who are eying her and provokes them. It gets worse when Arafa approaches her and invites her to join a "small gathering" of his. Rooh insults Arafa without being direct and pretends to be speaking of the laundry that's "so dirty" until she calls him a pimp and shuts the window forcefully. Now pretty upset and offended, Arafa knocks on Rooh's door and threatens Rooh that if she does not come willingly, she shall come forcibly, leaving her afraid and worried behind the door as the realization of what she has done sinks in.

Sayed, having heard it all, reaches out to Zakaria for help since his father wants Rooh to join his prostitution circle and is now very upset due to her refusal. We cut to see Talaat waiting on the rooftop for Rooh to come, as per the intel that Arafa gave him. He even tells the other men that he had paid for their dates for the night so that they do not look into having what is his. We then see Rooh confused and distressed, wanting to exit but not sure. Zakaria and Sayed reach Rooh's place and try knocking, but they do not find her. They conclude that she might have gone to see Sabah. Arafa comes raging with anger, breaks the glass of Rooh's door, and threatens her as he is agitated now that she has not shown up, thinking she is hiding inside.

We find out that Rooh has gone to see Sabah and asks for her help. Sitting in Sabah's restaurant, Rooh is very worried, whereas Sabah has a peculiar look on her face. The singer in the place starts singing a song that's lyrics speak of humans being monsters and having treason as a norm for them and that they are not to be believed. Zakaria arrives and is relieved when he finds out that Rooh is with Sabah. Sabah tells Rooh, "From now on, you are under my protection," to which Zakaria says, "no, my protection." Sayed reaches the place and is also relieved to see Rooh, yet is unaware that he has been followed by Osha, who sees Rooh. Rooh takes Sabah to the side to have a word and asks her if she can lend Rooh 300 Egyptian pounds in order for her to leave all of this and go back to Mansoura, from where she shall send the money back to Sabah. Sabah agrees happily when a strange man appears and is seemingly in organization with Sabah, whom we come to learn as viewers was looking into pimping Rooh to the rich man. Sabah refers to the man as a very good customer and friend of hers and tells Rooh to sit with him as he is an important person of affluence. She even tells her how lucky she is that the man happened to be there when the man had just earlier told Sabah that he had come when she called for him and that she was right when he saw Rooh. Rooh, feeling the sketchiness of the situation but still trusting of Sabah, sits at the table next to the man who tries to have Rooh drink juice with his

hands, a money shot that Osha photographs sneakily and leaves before seeing Rooh shouting and pushing the man to leave with Sayed and Zakaria.

Entering the neighborhood, we realize that Osha has sent the photograph via Bluetooth to everyone as all men and women are teasing Rooh, calling her loose and a pretending prude. Talaat is upset and angered, given that he is rejected, while, according to the photo, Rooh is not rejecting other men. Arafa, having had enough, tells Talaat to prepare himself as this is his night. He goes on to Rooh and tells her that she is a woman who is okay with everyone but says no to them. Zakaria tries to protect Rooh but fails and gets pushed to the ground, and so does Sayed. Rooh is then told to prepare herself by Arafa, and when she says she shall kill herself. He tells her that this would upset the men who want her and cost him to lose money they could be making together. Outside, Sayed helps Zakaria stand up and takes the crying man to his house, where he admits that he is in love with Rooh, which angers Sayed since Rooh is "his."

Sayed, alongside the other boys from the neighborhood, prepare to protect Rooh by creating empty glass bottle torches and grenades. Osha discovers all of that and threatens to tell on them. Sayed convinces him to join them by reminding him how abusive Talaat is and that it is a shame to do that to Rooh. However, Osha is okay with everything that is to be done to Rooh until Sayed tells him to imagine that she is his sister, to which he pauses and agrees to help... The boys shout out that Osha is a man, and he gets excited to be part of the group and helps them make the grenades saying that whoever gets next to her shall die.

We cut to see Rooh packing in a hurry as she is scared and troubled. Zakaria visits her, begging for forgiveness for not being able to defend or protect her. He says that "not all people are like the bad people of the neighborhood." During that time, Arafa and Talaat are walking toward Rooh's house. Arafa hands Talaat a pill which he immediately swallows; it is implied that it is a Viagra pill or an ecstasy pill. When the two men reach the entrance of the building, they are surprised to see the boys with the

fire torches throwing the fire grenades toward the men and telling them to stay away from Rooh. The kids are soon beaten up harshly by the two men who order the other men of the neighborhood to give them a bastinado; the men comply, caning the soles of the boy's little feet mercilessly. We cut to Rooh inside the house, being told by Zakaria that he loves her, to which she exclaims, "I don't want to love or be loved! God take me!" Zakaria stops Rooh from wishing to die as it would kill him, while he wants nothing but her happiness. And during the conversation, the door is broken open, and the two men enter.

Arafa grabs Rooh by the hair, carries her to the bedroom, and lays her down on the bed, where he continuously slaps her across the face and beats her as she wails. We can hear Zakaria telling her from the outside not to be afraid and that he is with her, yet he cannot go forward a step without tripping due to his blindness. Talaat enters the bedroom, and Arafa leaves, locking the door behind him. Zakaria threatens Arafa that he shall kill him and calls him a pimp. There is a cut to the boys still getting bastinadoed and crying hard. Rooh is begging to be left alone as Zakaria is getting beaten up outside by Arafa in the living room. Talaat is trying to mount Rooh as she kicks and screams in a trial to push him off her; she even spits in his face and manages to slide away and crawl to the other side of the room, where he gets out a knife from his pocket, and pushes her to the wall behind her. Talaat is in what seems to be a trance; he is calm in a delusional way as he tells Rooh, "I love you Rooh; you are the most precious thing I have; I will get you all you want. I will protect you. Look, see the blood? You're hurt!" he points with the tip of the knife that he is gently running on Rooh's face to the blood running from her nose and lips due to the slaps she received from Arafa. Amid his sentence, Rooh kicks him and tries to escape. He pushes her to the ground, tears up her dress, bangs her head on the floor twice, tears all her clothes and bangs her head once more until she is incapable of fighting back, and proceeds to rape her as she lays idly.

Throughout the rape scene, Rooh sees people's faces and hears their sounds. Everyone who has hurt her or blamed her or said it was her fault, like her mother-in-

law and the area's women. She is submissive to whatever is going on as she stares emptily at the ceiling. Talaat leaves, having finished, and we see him exiting the room while zipping his pants and giving Arafah a large sum of money without saying a single word. Arafah takes the money eagerly and starts counting it immediately, says, "means you were satisfied," and follows Talaat out. We cut to the boys crawling, unable to stand up while crying on the floor, just like Rooh, who we also see crawling on the floor. Zakaria apologizes to Rooh, saying that for the first time in his life, he hates his blindness as the darkness was holding him down from aiding her. Rooh is barely able to stand up with blood on her face; she is constantly tripping and is obviously in shock as she has no expression on her face. She is using the assistance of her surroundings to help her stand up as she takes her small bag, which she has prepared, and puts on her torn-up clothes, a wide black gallabiyah that resembles a trench coat, and exits the house.

She is received outside by the women of the neighborhood, hitting her by pulling her hair and throwing her to the ground to fall hard, saying she should leave and that she is trash. Rooh is entirely silent; from her POV, we can see Talaat smoking shisha near his shop, witnessing what is happening without flinching. We see Arafah counting money, unaware of anything, other men staring and even making lustful movements toward the scene of Rooh, even in her condition. She manages to stand up and ignores everyone as she continues to walk; we can hear Sayed all during the events calling out for her and crying, unable to stand up. A lady even throws a bucket of water on Rooh as she passes, shouting, "let the neighborhood get clean" She keeps tripping yet walking on her way while the women call her "exposed and dirtying their honor." Sayed keeps calling out for her crying. As she reaches the corner of the way out of the neighborhood, we see the first expression on her face since the rape. Her eyes are looking for Sayed and keeping her away from leaving due to his cries. She stands there confused and heartbroken until we see a little girl coming to aid him in standing up. The girl is from the neighborhood, and we have seen her occasionally throughout the

film, looking at Sayed in admiration. She as well has green eyes and resembles a young version of Rooh. Sayed stands up and looks at Rooh while supported by the girl. Rooh now smiles slightly, a bittersweet smile, and we see tears falling down her face. She turns her head and walks towards the light that we are able to see is coming from behind the corner, which makes it a blind spot for us. "Halawet Rooh" shows up, and the film ends.

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes the application of Laura Mulvey's "Male Gaze" theory as a methodology for the two study cases, as well as a discussion regarding the two main characters, their comparison, and supported opinions. The findings of the general posters' analysis are also included.

After collecting all of the mentioned data and showcasing it, be it the tables and the character jobs included, be it the posters and the choice of attire in them according to the analysis, and finally, the two films this study focuses on, their detailed re-telling and play-by-play of the camera angles and movement, attire choices, and dialogue quotations.

In order to analyze the characters and the study case films better, there have been structured categories such as; the characters' background, behavior, and attire, its relation with other characters, the cinematic language and camera angles, and finally the misogyny, harassment, and violence in the films. After applying the male gaze theory there will be a discussion and commentary on the films' impact socially on the audiences.

5.1 Posters' Overview

The fact that they are used on the posters when they are a main cast or not shows that Lebanese artists had marketing power when it comes to the films they acted in. The posters were also able to allow us to see their importance in the size of the role, given only the main cast



gets to be on the poster and has audience attracting power. Finally, we were also able to see the similarities in the appearances chosen for the artists on the posters, especially compared to their Egyptian counterparts when it comes to attire, something that supports this study. Other posters are available in the Annexes p. 90 for a visual reference.

According to the common speech and Bourn Creative website, the color red symbolizes love, lust, sexuality, passion, heat, and desire. Studies have shown that red physically stimulates many of our primal human needs, and its literal impact can physically be seen in increased blood pressure, respiratory rates, and libido. Moreover, while leather is known as a fabric for its connotation regarding sexuality due to its skin-like feel and look, the color black is also a color that symbolizes mystery, sexuality, rebellion, evilness, and authority (Bourn, 2011). Furthermore, while it is arguable whether the color pallets in all the posters were executed artistically or with subliminal meanings behind them, the apparent meanings and messages sent through the recurrent and undeniable emphasis on these two colors with all that they convey are far from a coincidence. This is particularly interesting given the genre of the films, and despite being comedy or drama, they have followed the same pattern.

This establishes and re-enforces the fact that the singers are forced to be shown or perceived in a "certain" way to the audiences from the beginning of the film experience. Hence, before even entering the cinema or watching the film, the audience is "teased" with specific promises of how the females are going to be dressed and whatever that implies that their roles would be, in other words, objectifying the singer despite the nature of the film for clout.

5.2 Character Background, Behavior, and Attire

In *The Danish Experience* film, Anita, played by Lebanese Nicole Saba, speaks in accented English as well as a broken Arabic to show that she is a foreigner from Denmark. The character supposedly knows Arabic due to her interest in Egyptian culture, as per the account of her brother-in-law when he was convincing Qadri to have her as a houseguest during her stay. Nonetheless, for a professor in the university, Anita is young and disrespectful of the said culture she is so fascinated by, which is portrayed by her poor choice of suitable outfits or her reactions and interactions with the characters around her. She shows no respect or understanding of her surroundings on many occasions, even if for comedy, exaggerations such as raiding a ministry meeting in a skimpy outfit is something that no person in their sane mind would dare do.

Anita is one of three women we see in the film and the only woman with a dialogue longer than one sentence. We have no idea about the subject she supposedly teaches at a university back in Denmark. She has no backstory and no friends or memories to create any depth to her character. The choice of animalistic patterns, tight clothes, and leather clothes that show Anita's curvy form is also to be mentioned. The outfits are more about showing and less about covering, especially compared to the men's attire in the film, which consists of suits or casual baggy sportswear. This is something that Mulvey (1974) mentions in her study, given that "the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification." (Mulvey, 1974, p. 63).

In *Beauty of Soul* film, Rooh's only purpose in the film other than being objectified is improving her appearance and taking care of her mother-in-law and house chores, which fits with (Wood, 1994) as well as (Kangas et al., 2014) who argue that the behavioral role of women in films is often as "homemakers ... dependent on men, or as objects of male attention." This is true in the example of Rooh, whose protection is discussed in many scenes throughout the film. The male protection is not only offered to her by Zakaria, Sayed, and Talaat on many occasions yet also by Sabah, who has moved into her masculine energy due to her age and position but also, in the example of the prostitute getting married in order to be granted protection from people's chit chatting and the government. Although Rooh is the film's main character and is in almost all of its scenes, she does not have much dialogue, and in all of her scenes, she is dressed in a revealing manner. Her eyes are pretending innocence, and her attitude says otherwise. Choosing Haifa for such a role, given she is the "queen of seduction," has one meaning only, and it is to seduce the audience.

The character of Rooh is well-knowing for what she has and what she represents, just like its performer. We see that in the confrontation dream scene she has with her mother-in-law, where she shows off and says she is "not just any woman." Rooh is aware of her beauty and desirability, yet she behaves powerless in the face of everyone trying to get her. Moreover, ironically, when she tries to "provoke them," as she gets told by Sabah, she ends up literally doing so and luring them in a seductive manner, as her femininity is all that she owns.

Similar to the finding of Shapiro (2017), the two characters are both "isolated." Anita has no background story, and Rooh seemingly has no family or background as well. In the two films, and applicable to the two characters, Mulvey (1974) explains how in a typical storyline, the female character becomes the property of the male character, which in return allows the male viewer to own her as well. Anita and Rooh both get owned by the men in the film, willingly and forcibly alike, and the result remains the same, just like the results of the two characters' appearances on the screen

remain the same; their portrayers' beauty is the object where the two singers are not bearers of guilt but are a "perfect product, whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectators look." (Mulvey, 1974, p. 65).

Both characters could have been played by anyone other than the two Lebanese singers. However, the two Lebanese singers were cast due to the trickiness of the two roles when it comes to the Arab and mainly Egyptian society regarding such characters. It is also worth mentioning that while Saba was an addition to the film she stars in, Wehbe is the leading role and the film's star altogether. She is the power tool of selling tickets that the film has, and her body and "seductive" reputation is her tool in order to hold the film to the point it aims to be at and to get the attention it requires from viewers all around the Arab world.

5.3 Character's Relation with Other Characters

It is first worthy of mentioning that Anita of *The Danish Experience* is eye candy, or a mere fantasy created in the writer's mind and then shot through the eyes of the director. Both males, alongside the all-male cast, create the maximum amount of visual pleasure for their gaze and the gaze of the male audience as well as the filmmakers try to "place viewers in the mind of the male character and emphasize a woman as love or lust interest" (Frankel, 2014, p. 17).

Anita is nothing but a bearer of the look; she seeks the attention of the men and accepts it with compliance. However, even that makes her a homewrecker, a femme fatale, or a villain as she ruins the relationship between the brothers together and the brothers with their father by simply existing in the same space as them, just like a femme-fatale in a film noir; she is turned into a seductress evil almost-stepmom of a sort who tries to steal the father from his children after trying to corrupt them.

Whereas throughout the *Beauty of Soul* film, we see an empty overpowered character who has no attributes except her body, which everyone seems to desire or despise. The extremity in the level of cruelty that all the characters in the film have is very melodramatic. Furthermore, again, we see a film with very few female characters. The females are either old and mean or young and ugly while being jealous of Rooh, and finally, the only female who was kind to her also ends up wanting to use her. The only two men, Zakaria and Sayed, who ever looked out for her and helped her, to her unknowingness, desired her as well.

Anita and Rooh are both extremely and exaggeratedly desired by men. Anita seems not to be threatened by that, and Rooh seems embarrassed yet ignores it. Both characters, despite their different levels of education, given that Anita is supposedly a foreign Ph.D. holder whereas Rooh is most probably illiterate, are very coy and innocent to the interest men have towards them. Both characters dress inappropriately to their surroundings, be it Anita in Egypt or Rooh in the rural slum neighborhood.

5.4 Cinematic Language and Camera Angles

In the two films, the cameras dehumanize the characters of the two ladies. It shows them as a body only. Their naïve incapability to be sexy, even if unwillingly, and how they are projected is very porn-like in so many instances in both films. It is as if the films are a recreation of the males' fantasies, be it the writers, directors, actors, or viewers. The focus on the bodies with the camera movement and angles while stripping away any willpower or storyline the two characters have the potential of having proven, if anything, the hypothesis that this study was based on, which is targeted unfairness and specific sexualizing form of portrayal for these women. The otherization is too prevalent not to be noticed, and so is the targeted commodification and subjectification to the male gaze.

For example, throughout *The Danish Experience* film, we not only have little idea about who Anita is, but we also barely see the actress's facial expressions as they are not as important as her body and curves, which we see plenty of throughout the film. The camera intentionally tilts down and tilts up and takes mainly medium and long shots of the Anita character. The only close-ups of her are mainly of her body and skin; nonetheless, we get to see her face in close-up around three times throughout the film; when she first arrives, when she is dancing with the Arabic heavy makeup and belly dancer costume, and finally when she is upset that Qadri chose his children over her. Interestingly, a singer is cast in a film where she does not get to sing or perform at all, for that matter. She is supposedly cast to act. However, we see minimal conversations and very little attention or camera time of her face or expressions, yet, the camera captures her body from all angles and in all kinds of different outfits and attires.

In the *Beauty of Soul*, the director of the film uses the camera as a literal POV in many scenes, especially in those of the dreams and with Sayed peeping on Rooh. The camera objectifies Haifa, and Rooh, throughout the film as a character, is almost nowhere to be seen as all we can see is Haifa. The real character of Haifa shows up on many occasions, and that is one of them. The game of faked innocence and being aware of the power of her femininity yet pretending otherwise is her game and what she is known for, which is one of the main reasons she was cast for this film. Haifa here takes power, unlike Rooh, throughout the film, though, because she is very aware of what she is doing. While with Rooh, the POV of the camera makes her the bearer of the look, with Haifa playing the character, she is the owner of the look or its leader. She is not sexualized in real life as she is sexually empowered and liberated knowingly, yet, the audience is not to think much of this dynamic and becomes one with the peeping tom as they peep into the window with Sayed eyeing Haifa's body as he eyes Rooh's from the cinema halls or the comfort of their homes.

A simulation of the experience masterfully created by the director, which focuses on immensely imitating the movement of the act of eyeing someone. Mulvey (1974, p. 63) says that "Camera technology (as exemplified by deep focus in particular) and camera movements (determined by the action of the protagonist), combined with invisible editing (demanded by realism) all tend to blur the limits of screen space." Which is precisely how the technique of the directors goes throughout the film during which Haifa connotes "look-at-ed-ness." Mulvey (1974, p. 62) says that while the woman connotes the look-at-ed-ness, she "holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire" and that "mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative." She refers to the dance numbers in films here, which the film has in Rooh's dream sequence, which also happens to be the song of the film's promotion. Mulvey continues to discuss the matter, saying, "The presence of a woman is as indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of a storyline." As an argument that fits the dream sequence and explains the character's power.

Furthermore, to add depth to the story and humanize the rawness and extremity of the rape scene, there is a melodramatic ending with all the jump cuts of crying and desperate, helpless characters, all subjected to violence accompanied by sad music. Furthermore, finally, the open ending with Rooh walking towards the light, metaphorically or literally, is up to the imagination of the viewer, who might question why she did not do so sooner or why no one helped her while fully aware she is being raped inside, or why no police were involved in the matter, or how come, everyone, is evil in a whole neighborhood. However, the film's purpose is pure entertainment or scopophilia, which is disguised as a drama. It does its designated purpose to the maximum, and very much so that it caused itself to be banned from public display for doing so, which, if anything, gave the film more popularity and sparked more interest.

5.5 Misogyny, Harassment, and Violence

Saba, who plays Anita in *The Danish Experience*, looks and behaves most of the time like a Barbie doll with her blonde hair, blue eyes, and calm smile despite her situation. Being followed, mobbed, claimed, touched, or ogled by men raises no alarm on her face. Not even going to the police station. She has no expressions or character, so it is as though she has no feelings other than being an object of desire for the male characters in the film.

Just as Mulvey explains, Anita is not only subjected to the male gaze for pleasure, but she is also disciplined by the alpha male in the film, Qadri. She welcomes this discipline into becoming more gender-conformed with open arms when she expresses her liking of being hit by Qadri and how he is a "real man" for hitting her. A character that represents an extreme liberal western mentality throughout her attire, actions, and words, as well as ideas on sexual liberation, is suddenly submissive and accepting of being overpowered by an older male with power and wealth. The misogyny throughout the whole film is very alarming, in fact, from the bullying of Bahaa to objectifying the bride, to mentioning harassment in buses as if it is a norm, to actually harassing a mother at the graduation. The film does not fail to do all that in a comedy cloak, and although it is to be mentioned that the time that the film was produced did not have much political correctness, it is very alarming to see such concepts normalized. And we realize that, in fact, the choice of Saba had to do with her video clip fame perhaps, but primarily due to her accepting the role and looking like the perfect Barbie written on paper. The role required no acting or singing skills; it required the willingness to dress in a way that is not very conforming with the Arab society's standards, kissing the older lead role, and most importantly, being a subject of desire, something a Lebanese video clip singer would be familiar with, given their video clips were based on mainly showcasing their physical attributes like most of the MTV-style video clips during the early 2000s.

On the other hand, in the *Beauty of Soul's* case, The film was very controversial from the moment it was announced, to the posters it had, to the fact that a seemingly young boy was cast for the role of Sayed, to the violent rape scene. The many sexual innuendoes caused the film to be pulled out of theatres in Egypt (Alarabiya News, 2014).

The misogynistic film portrays all forms of manhandling and abuse. The film, from its first scene to its last, is a series of visual pleasure of the male gaze, especially created by the male gaze to fit the taste of the male gaze. The camera is the eye of the male gaze and the beholder of power. At the same time, Haifa is aware of the male gaze and looking into serving it the best way she possibly can, which has shifted the power dynamic in this example, yet the male gaze remains the same. Moreover, unlike Anita, who almost has no close-ups of her face, we see many close-ups and extreme close-ups of Rooh's face. The sizes of the roles of the two characters are different, yet the fact that their only reason for existence is visual pleasure is mutual. The two characters are desired by men and get beaten up by men.

Other than the close-ups difference, there are some established common ground in both films, such as the fact that the men see women as things, not as beings. Mulvey (1974) says that instinct "continues to exist as the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as an object." Harassments occur in both films by seemingly good characters like Qadri and Sayed.

5.6 Reality Vs. Comedy and Systematic Objectification

Although the two study case films are different in their genres, both films' misogynic jokes are made in a comedy frame. The comedy element here becomes a system of objectification in itself. The previously mentioned is all in no doubt, a fact and a proven one. Nevertheless, what remains here are a few hanging points that serve as either the aftermath of these applied methods in the industry or, at the very least,

open up a fundamental question regarding consent and the difference between being sexual and being sexualized where the line is blurred and even abused when it comes to our example of Lebanese female artists in the Egyptian cinema. The following is a final note yet also an open door and suggestion for further future studies.

In 2007 research titled "Adolescents' Exposure to a Sexualized Media Environment and Their Notions of Women as Sex Objects," which was performed by researchers from the University of Amsterdam, tried to determine the impact of visual and audio-visual material on the perception of male and female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 in depicting women as sexual objects. And while the study supports the hierarchal impact the material has on the perception of women as sexual objects in the mind of the adolescents exposed to sexualizing material, it also was able to prove that such an idea is similar despite the gender of the receptive adolescent. (J. Peter : P. M. Valkenburg, 2007). Moreover, this research, if anything, proves the aftermath point previously mentioned and wishes to discuss. As it has been proven scientifically by many studies, which the research I have mentioned in this paragraph supports, adolescents who are to be exposed to sexualization or exploitation of women in a visual or an audio-visual manner, tend to see women as sexual objects and to accept and even normalize this ideology despite their gender. Something that Egypt has been going through socially. Moreover, films that allowed such portrayals to take a more "explicit" visualization of the topic, like the films we have mentioned in this research, films that cast Lebanese female singers and performers in "controversial" roles with explicit wardrobe, storyline, camera angles, and even publicity stunts, sexualizing women to an audience that in return would do nothing but objectify them. Films that were mainly made to cater to the adolescents and the youth of that time who used to enjoy the artists' performances in videoclips and would form a ticket-selling power at the box office, the same adolescents who used to laugh and lust at the degrading, dismissing, and objectifying jokes and scenes that were normalized and casually placed in the films are now the same grownups after around 10 years or even more, living in

a country that was ranked 22 out of the 22 Arab countries in women rights and was named "Worst Place in the Middle East to Be a Woman" according to research ranking done by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, not to mention that 99.3% of Egyptian women have experienced sexual harassment at least once in their lives according to a 2013 UN Women study. (WILPF, 2014).

These disturbing numbers and statistics are nothing but a small sample of the pain that Egyptian women seem to be living on a daily due to the increasing amount of harassment and violence they have to go through. From the many reasons behind harassment, and other than the fact that it is an act of directed hate and violence against women in its basis, the fact that the generation that grew up watching harassment as joking material will undoubtedly take the matter lightly. In a patriarchal, conservative, misogynist, oriental society, it is not the most unexpected behavior. However, it does not make it any more acceptable, which is something the Egyptian youth, women's foundations, and social media support groups are trying to put an end to by initially raising awareness about it. And as social media and the internet can spread harassment news fast, one of the highlighted harassment incidents of the year 2019 – 2020 was what is known as "the New Year's Eve incident" or "the incident of the Mansoura girl" which is a group harassment and mobbing incident that happened to a young girl in the Mansoura city of Egypt while getting out of a beauty salon on new year's eve. A large group of men was alarmed by the alleged "short skirt" the girl was wearing and started gathering around, cutting the way, and attacking the girl, forcing her to stay locked in the beauty salon for hours nonstop until she was able to be accompanied by a few shielding men until she reached the car that helped her flee the location with as minor damage as possible. The incident was filmed by many bystanders and the attackers themselves, which struck significant controversy and rage on social media between supporters of the girl and condemners of her attire...

The notable thing in the incident is the fact that the scene of the girl trying to ride the car with the mobs harassing her is very similar if not identical to that of "Anita" from *The Danish Experience* as she was also trying to ride the car with the admiring mobs around her in the airport. The difference is that in real life, the mob's intentions are not as harmless as those on-screen, and neither are their actions. The difference is that while Anita was smiling all the time and ignoring the existence of the hungry eyes ogling her, the real girl had little time to smile while scared and crying, trying to protect herself and escape the eyes and hands of an angry, lustful, and deprived crowd.



The fact that this is just one example out of many, and the fact that a sentence like "enough, dogs, we are not in a bus" is said to the boys in *The Danish Experience* again while grouping around and eyeing Anita as if harassment is acceptable in public transportation or acceptable period. The fact that in that same film, uncountable misogynist jokes were made, and at least one direct act of sexual harassment (thigh pinching) was put in a comedy context and was played out as something funny and acceptable, even something an old, loving, father, and the minister would do to a random old respectable woman sitting next to him in the graduation ceremony of his son is a very alarming thing. Such scenes of "funny" pinching, slapping, scaring, and unwanted touching of women who are known or strangers to the characters in the films were and still are a prevalent motif and element in Egyptian comedy films, it is almost a trademark to some famous and

important box-office names for that matter, including Adel Emam from the old generation, and singer turned actor Tamer Hosny from the "new" generation. Hosny's films have had a substantial impact on the Egyptian and Arab box office -Tamer's latest film *Mesh Ana* (2021, Sarah Wafeeq), has been able to be the third highest earning Arab film ever with over 15 Million dollars during its showing time in Arab cinemas according to news sources from RT- starting from the *Omar and Salma* trilogy (2007, Akram Farid – 2009, Ahmed El Badry – 2012, Mohammed Sami) the romantic comedy films written by Hosny himself and starring him alongside Egyptian actress Mai Ezzeddine have more than one example in all of its parts about misogynist jokes, pinching women and eyeing their behinds, as well as women (other than the main co-star of course) being dressed provocatively and having sex scenes in a funny setting (two of which are Lebanese actresses; Lamitta Franjeh, and Maisara). The pinching harassment jokes are a pattern for Hosny or a trademark that we see again frequently in his film *Nour Einy* (2010, Wael Ehsan), also written by and starring him as the lead.

Two points must be mentioned here, though, and they are A. Maisara is half Egyptian and half Lebanese but is always cast as the villain or cheap, easy woman in comedy films. She played the role of a cheating wife in *Omar and Salma 2*, a prostitute in *El Sefara Fel Emara* (2005, Amr Arafa) with Adel Emam, and again in the popular comedy *Ellemby 8 Giga* (2010, Ashraf Fayek) as a few examples of many others. Furthermore, B. Tamer Hosny is one of the most popular and influential pop stars in the Arab world. The "King of the Generation," as he is nicknamed, has had massive popularity in everything he has done, whether in his singing or screenplay and acting career since 2004. He broke a world record for contributions by fans on a bulletin board in 2019 and held the World Guinness Record for that (GWR, 2019). When we see someone with such importance, popularity, and influential power over young adults and teenagers from both genders, wouldn't it be ironic that the idol they look up to takes part in harassment, stereotyping, toxic masculinity, and misogynist jokes and scenes? And how would it be possible for them not to be influenced into normalizing such

actions and processing such behaviors as cool or funny despite its lack of both? Although, and to be entirely fair, the toxic masculinity pattern and harassment or misogynist jokes are a recurring pattern in general in Egyptian films of our selected era (2000 onwards). Nonetheless, the Emam and Hosny examples are brought to light due to their strong popularity and specific association with this kind of "jokes" and scenes.

CONCLUSION

This study takes into account and applies the Laura Mulvey Male Gaze theory in a feminist discourse analysis frame to discuss the stigmatization of Lebanese video clip singers cast in Egyptian films. While the singers' acceptance of roles that are deemed now by Egyptian society risqué is considered understandable or somewhat expected, we are to realize that the demand for this happened due to the void that was created by the repentant actresses who, in the eighties and nineties had a negative impact on the industry by leaving it alongside the wave that was taking over the Egyptian society which other than the socio-religious change it was going through was also consumed by the availability and accessibility of the VCRs and the televisions. Nonetheless, the audience warmed up to cinema again only in the late nineties, and it was only family-oriented comedy films that set the pace for "clean cinema," a term that shaped and continues to shape the industry in Egypt despite a few exceptions.

In the 2000s, with the boom of video clip channels and their MTV-style video clips, many stars arose, especially from Lebanon, which is famous for exporting such art. The singers in the video clips were dressed in a sexualized manner. They were sexually empowered due to their accepting society, yet, to the audience, they were sexual content to be objectified and gazed upon. The singers getting offers in Egyptian cinema meant opening to a different career path and a larger audience, which worked out well for most of them. It even reached a point where certain films were primarily created to showcase a specific star, such as Haifa Wehbe playing the Rooh character. Instead of being just eye candy or cast for kissing scenes that Egyptian actresses would not do or were condemned if they did, some of the singers became box-office-selling names. Not only that, but their popularity among young adults meant that from the beginning, the singers were used on the posters of the films as well in a trial to promote it further, which is something we discussed in detail.

This research which confirmed that the Mulvey theory is still applicable in the cinema of Egypt until this day, started to address the strategic sexual exposure of non-Egyptian female singers and actresses in Egyptian cinema, ended up with a discussion on some of the many reasons that lead to this taking place, to begin with, be it religious, political or social reasons in the area. It also opens a whole new set of questions regarding the power women have over their exposure, how the conservative Arabic Egyptian society receives such exposures and what could the youth do with such material at hand in the means of its possible attributions to the rising harassment issues in Egypt.

It is worth noting that the frequency analysis made on the kind of roles and the jobs of characters that Lebanese women artists are cast for (see Table 12), shows an alarming rate in the type and nature of roles given the Lebanese singers in Egyptian cinema and proves a particular form of otherizing and sexualizing in the context related of the characters given and their identifying jobs, and the percentage of that in all the films.

In conclusion, this study is based on my reading of the films as an Arab woman on the instrumentalization of the Lebanese actress-turned-singers in the Egyptian film industry through sexualization and commercialization. The specific roles attributed to the actresses within the storyline of the films are deemed inappropriate by society, creating a stigma for the viewing audience, especially for the younger generations, whom might relate Lebanese women with inappropriateness. Nonetheless, further research regarding the possible impact this might have on the young audience could be a further follow-up subject.

One of the main aims this study had, was to form a small contribution to the Arab academic research and articles due to their limited number, especially in the cinema and film industry, which is something that formed an issue while looking for sources for this research itself. The films and cases that were portrayed in this study

could be further studied using different research methods to reach different results or to confirm the same findings, despite that being somewhat of a leap due to the nature of the method used, which harnesses the personal perspective and tonality of the researcher primarily. However, it is always encouraged to attribute more regarding such topics. It is also possible to use different samples than the ones chosen and to study them using the content analysis from a feminist perspective method represented in the Male Gaze theory, which is suggested, or any other method that the researcher sees fit.

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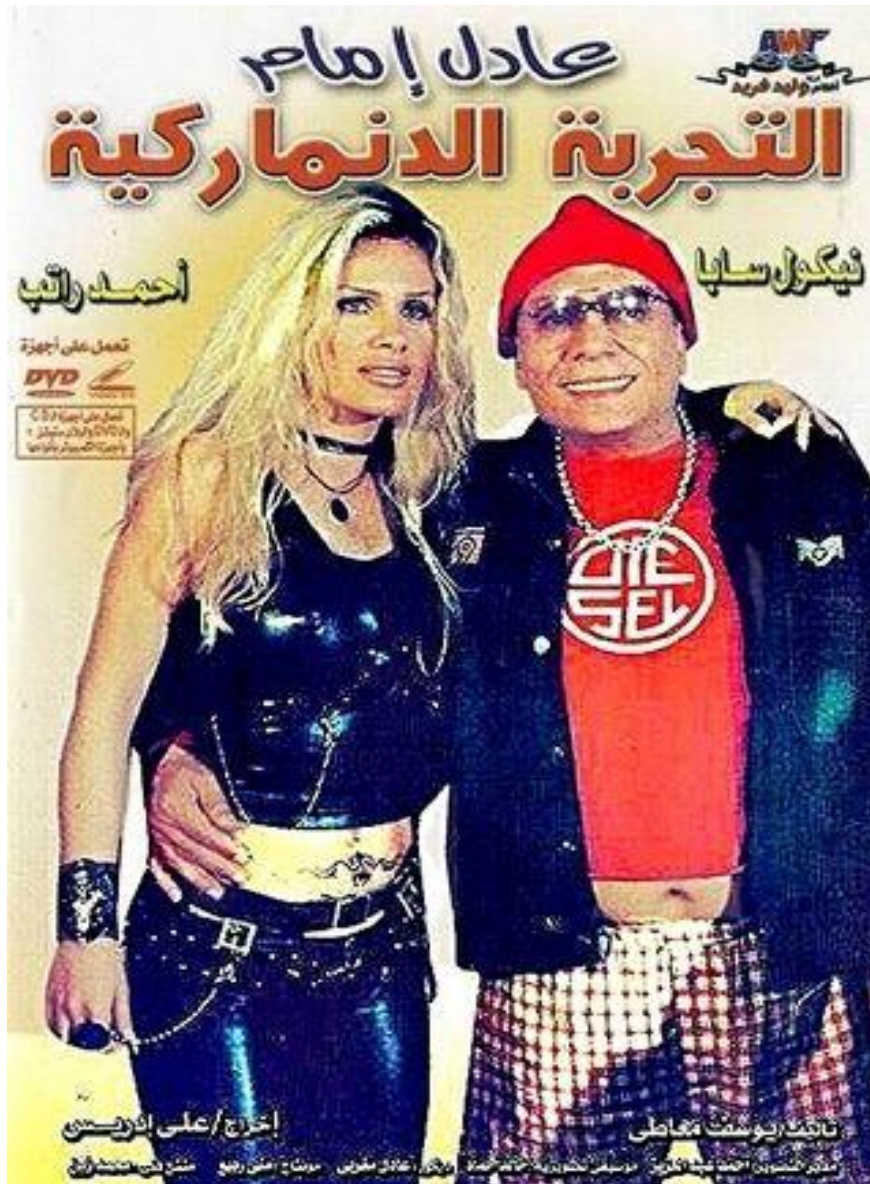
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ANNEXES



Appendix A

Altagroba Al Danimarkiya - The Danish Experience – (Ali Idriss, 2003)



Appendix C

Dr. Silicone (Ahmed Albadry, 2009)



Appendix E

Dokkan Shehata – Shehata’s Shop (Khaled Youssef, 2009)



Appendix F

Halawet Rooh – The Beauty of Rooh/Soul – (Sameh Abdel Aziz, 2014)

Malèna (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2000)



Appendix G

Ahmad Alfishawy's Facebook Post



Appendix H

Scenes from the Promo



Appendix I

Nems Bond – Weasel Bond – (Ahmed Albadry, 2008)



Appendix J

Hasal Kheir – It's Fine – (Ismail Farouk, 2012)



Appendix K

Asad w 4 Otatt – A Lion and 4 Cats – (Sameh Abdelaziz, 2007)