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The Impact of American Movies on Egyptian Cinema in 1950s and 1960s

Radi Abouelhassan

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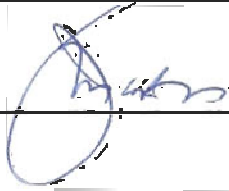
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Chairperson



**THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN MOVIES ON EGYPTIAN
CINEMA IN THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES**

BY

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**B.A, TEACHIGN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE,
SOUTH VALLEY UNIVERSITY, EGYPT, 2003**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my dear mother who always inspired me through her patience and blessed my steps through her prayers and supplication. To my brothers Ramadan, Abouelhassan and Barakat. To my sisters Fathya, Amal, Hanan, Karima and Sharifa..... You all are the inspiration for my progress.

اهداء

الى والدتى العزيزة التى دائماً ما الهمتنى بصبرها و
باركت خطواتى بدعاءها و صلواتها ,

إلى اخوتى,.....

رمضان و ابوالحسن وبركات.

إلى اخواتى,.....

فتحية و أمل و حنان و كريمة و شريفة.....

انتم الامل و الدافع للنجاح

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And finally, to my MOTHER and my family, your love is the greatest gift of all.

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ABSTRACT

The 1952 military coup in Egypt constituted the beginning of a new era in Egypt's history and pushed forward substantial societal, economic and political changes. These changes represent the fruits of the revolutionary regime's pro-modernization ideology. In their search for modernity, the Egyptian elite invested in cinema as well as other forms of media and tended to follow the models of western countries. The strong relation between the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser and the US, as well as the dominance of the American movies shown Egypt compared to other foreign cinematic industries at that time, directed the Egyptian elite toward Hollywood's model.

This paper illustrates how Egyptian cinema was influenced by Hollywood in two ways; first, how to negatively represent ethnic minorities for the sake of creating a sense of

national identity for the dominant race. Second, Egyptian cinema adopted certain American social values that were presented in Hollywood movies such as challenging gender roles in the family and promoting women's going out for work, for the sake of spreading modern ethics that would help overcome economic and social problems that Egypt was experiencing. To illustrate my argument, I have watched and theoretically analyzed over twenty Egyptian movies that were produced in the fifties and sixties and related them to western ethics that were presented in American movies.

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Introduction

The coup of July 1952 constituted a huge social and political change in Egyptian society. It transformed Egypt from a kingdom controlled by foreigners into a republic led by nationalists who showed interest in creating a distinct identity for the country and expressed care in the welfare of the common people. However, this change was achieved by “a relatively small class of petit-bourgeois nationalists [who], were united in their determination to win genuine political independence, modernize the economy and achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth” (Schochat 27). Consequently, the major institutions in the country remained in the hands of the elite minority. Being a vital economic, social and political factor, Egyptian cinema was controlled, possessed by, and reflected the interests of the bourgeoisie.

As a matter of fact, the elite saw in the revolution a chance to change Egypt into a developed country that would follow in the footsteps of the western nations. In other words, the elite wanted to modernize Egypt through embracing the model of the great Western countries. They themselves lived the life of the Western people and spoke the language of the western people; French was the most common language among the elite. America at that time was a growing power and had strong relations with the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. These two factors incited the elite to follow the American model in their search for modernization. Consequently, they managed to adopt and normalize the American lifestyle to the Egyptian people. To achieve that the Egyptian cinema, which was mainly controlled by the Egyptian elite, managed to follow the steps of the American movies that were produced at that time and before. In this context, the desire for modernization was the reason behind the adoption of others' cultures. It is modernity that usually functions as the moving force for the work of

“globalization.” In this respect, Anthony “Giddens sees globalization as the outcome of the dynamism of modernity which involves what he calls the disembedding of social relations in time-space distancing and the reflexive appropriation of knowledge.” (Nash, 65) For Giddens, the process of time-space distancing that is ignited by the desire for modernity makes possible the utilization of a certain merchandise, physical or abstract, in a time and a location that were different from when and where it was produced. Nash suggests that “In modernity, time and space are ‘emptied’; abstracted from particular social rhythms of life, they are represented by clocks and maps which allow them to be used independently of any particular social location” (65). In the context of modernity, what is local becomes international by the process of the disembedding that Giddens describes as “the lifting out of social relations from local context of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (21). Furthermore, the desire for modernity provides enough justification for deriving the social norms of a certain community as long as it is presented in a persuasive language and an inciting form. Modernity encompasses desire for change and that involves potential for revolutionizing what is known to be traditional; “In modernity, there can be no reliance on tradition, since everyday life is potentially subject to reason and can only be justified in the light of that consideration” (Nash, 65). In such a way, modernity¹ alienates the subject society from its traditions and even history because it aims to find solutions to existing economic and social problems.

¹ Based on Anthony Giddens’ analysis of modernity- that process of transforming the social life in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe - I use the term “modernity” to refer to the process of discontinuing the traditional social values.

In his study conducted on the cultural life of the Egyptian people in the sixties and seventies, Ahmed Higazi noted that before World War II there was much research and controversy among Egyptian intellectuals and national figures about what should be adopted and what should be rejected from the western culture that had been invading the society. However, after World War II, which was seven years before the military coup in Egypt, research on the national identity heritage stopped completely and all issues of society were studied and analyzed in terms of economic terms, and the financial inferiority was seen as the main problem that was striking the Egyptian society. Consequently, finding solutions to the financial problems in Egypt was argued to be the first priority for most intellectuals and national figures for years to come. Justified by claims of elevating the economic status of the Egyptian people, society was stricken by the severest wave of westernization of culture and social life. In the name of modernism and presenting modern culture to the common people, music and poetry were westernized in both form and content. More importantly, national industry was marginalized and the western products were given the first priority which enhanced the westernization of other social norms in the society. Generally speaking, the wide distribution of foreign products in under-developed societies has to be accompanied by the spread of certain cultural and social norms that belong to the foreign society, thus it will substitute the traditional norm of the underdeveloped society. Hijazi stated:

The underdeveloped society has to change its values, traditions and customs to match values and traditions of the foreign society that manufactured that product. Furthermore, the submitting a poor society to consume these foreign products before changing its traditions and values,

belittles these values and traditions. As time goes on, the recipient society will reject its own culture, values and long-standing traditions and more importantly will lose its identity and persona (Nahhas 98).²

To Hijazi, when underdeveloped societies consume products of other foreign superior countries, they are offered the traditional values of these societies along with their products. A struggle between these foreign values and the domestic ones is inevitable and the result will be "the triumph for the foreign values because they are the values of the powerful elite and because they are supported by national and international groups that wish to spread these values so they can control the economic institutions in the underdeveloped countries and commercialize their own consuming values" (Nahhas 99). In such a way, the motive for modernism can be purely economic and reflects the interests of the powerful elite who are willing to adopt the values and traditions of the developed western countries.

As commentators on the consequences of the July Revolution noted, western culture has been viewed by "the leaders of the revolution [who] could not rid themselves of the western conception of progress" (Amin 45), as the most valid path for modernity. Western culture was observed as the carrier of universally reliable values that were applicable to any society and were the main means for achieving the ideal way of living. The West was seen as the carrier of the "liberal humanist view of culture [that] was famously defined in the nineteenth century by Mathew Arnold as 'the best that has been thought and known' and was held to be the path of enlightenment and self-realization"

² This book is in Arabic and I have translated all quotes into English.

(Nash, 72). Although many intellectuals in the country at that time debated whether to advocate or reject the western way of life, "the revolution seemed to have made up its mind on what path to take, and that was undoubtedly, the Western path" (Amin, 46). More importantly, the revolution - its elite and intellectuals - did not put any effort in speculating about the status of Egyptian society in order to develop a new version of modernity that would be suitable for its cultural, economic and social circumstances. Commenting on Abdel Nasser's attitude regarding this issue, Galal Amin, the author of *Whatever Happened to the Egyptian Society* wrote "His aim was to be equal with the west, but not necessarily different from it" (46). Consequently, Abdel Nasser's imitation of the western societies was very superficial; it mimicked the form but completely ignored the content. Nasser's regime cared about building new schools, but it did not pay attention to whether the curricula was related to the culture and traditions of the people or was deviant from them and it showed interest in building factories, but it did not consider which products to manufacture. As a result, most of these developmental plans did more harm than benefit to the Egyptian society. Probably the most obvious damage they presented to Egyptian society was the imprudent plan to wipe out illiteracy; the outcome resulted in a flourishing of learning foreign languages such as French and English and minimizing the discreet study of Arabic. In addition, the plan ruined the status of Al-Azhar which was revered as the best university in the world for teaching Arabic and Islamic studies. Worthy-mentioning, the status of Al-Azhar as the top school in the Arabic and Islamic world was ruined as a result to Abdel Nasser's endeavor to make it a modern university that is equal to the western ones; he issues decisions to the add other branches of knowledge such as medicine, engineering, humanities and other scientific

departments in addition to the long-established Islamic studies and Arabic language fields.

This mix of what is called "secular sciences" with traditional studies created a new generation of graduates who suffered an "inferiority complex" as they experienced the gap between the development in the western societies and theirs. Consequently, as they became leaders in the different fields in society, they pushed the wheel of western-style modernity ahead. This post-revolution endeavor for modernity pushed the Egyptian society toward westernization more than any other movement of ruling that existed before. Galal Amin noted that "Although the Egyptian aristocracy prior to 1952, was a class keenly intent on assimilating the western way of life and borrowed the minutest details of its everyday life from the west, it had, in some aspects, adhered to tradition more vividly than the new classes which the July revolution came to serve" (48). The reason pre-revolution aristocrats adhered to Egyptian culture and tradition more than post-revolutionists is because the former did not feel inferior while dealing and utilizing the merchandise of the west while the latter did. More importantly, westernization before the revolution was restricted to the powerful elite, but; after the revolution it reached middle class as well as lower class citizens. Galal Amin attributes that difference to the new elite's desire to stay away from any manner that misrepresents them as backward while the pre-revolutionary elite's long-established status gave them the confidence enough not to worry about they were looked at. The difference between the old and new elites' weddings exemplify their attitude towards Arabic language and culture; while the former preferred famous Egyptian singer like Um Kolthoum and Mohamed Abdel

Wahhab, the latter held their weddings in five-star hotels where western music and dance prevailed.

Egyptian Cinema, Abdel Nasser and the Cold War Politics

By the end of World War II, the world entered a different era of power politics; one that would destabilize regimes across the developing world, support endless wars and threaten the world with nuclear disintegration. While neither the Soviet Union nor the United States ever fired a direct missile toward each other in order to further capitalism's or communism's philosophical perspectives, it was the war of intellectual influence what Joseph Nye calls "soft power" that would define and drive conflict until its end in 1989. The US emerged victorious in the seemingly never ending battle for the hearts and minds of the Soviets and at the end of the day it was not American military mite that brought the Soviet Union to its knees but likes of John Wayne and Hollywood and the Voice of America. Both parties realized that it was power of Ideas and alliances that would determine the scenario of the final scene in the battle.

President Gamal Abdel Nasser had co-operative relations with both the US and the Soviets because he wanted to keep a balanced relation with the two rival powers within the dynamics of the cold war politics. In fact, the revolutionary regime had sought assistance from the US before they turned to the Soviets and that is because the relation between US officials and the free officers had started before the coup when "secret meetings between the free officers and US-representatives had taken place before the military seized power in July 1952" (Jankowski 49). Furthermore, there were frequent official and unofficial visits and political discussions between Revolution Command

Council (RCC) and the US Ambassador Jefferson Caffery who occasionally referred to the former as “My Boys”.

Nasser’s co-operation with the US was primarily based on his need for arms to strengthen his power and to guarantee Egyptian army’s loyalty to the new regime. Consequently, “a request for U.S aid was formally made in Prime Minister Najib’s note of November 10, 1952, in which he also indicated Egyptian willingness to participate in regional defense agreements subsequent to the evacuation of the British military from Egypt.” (Jankowski 50) Yet, a deal of arms assistance between the US and Egypt failed in late 1952 because of pressures from both England that feared Egypt would use these arms against English troops in the Canal area and from supporters of Israel in the US who feared that this deal would negatively affect the balance between Israeli and Egyptian armies. Although the US- Egyptian negotiations concerning arms deal did not end with that last failure, it failed by the end of the 1954 as a result to Egypt’s refusal to sign the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) that required an American military supervision over the administration of the military aid. In return to the MDAP, the US State Department “was projecting up to \$ 20 million in economic and another \$ 20 million in military aid.” (Jankowski 52), but Nasser was expecting an assistance package that would be about \$ 100 million. Finally, on November 6, 1954, Egypt and the US agreed on a financial package of economic assistance with \$ 40 million and concluded negotiations about military assistance in December 1954 after Egypt made it clear that signing the MDAP is “politically impossible”.

US co-operation with Egypt evolved primarily around the former’s desire to have the latter sign an agreement that came to be the Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO).

This organization had previously indicated a pro-western connotation which incited the revolutionary regime's rejection. As a result the name had been modified to indicate an Arabic initiative towards a multi-lateral defense organization that would incorporate both western and Arab allies.

Since the beginning of the negotiation, Nasser's regime was willing to play to the Soviet's card in order to urge the US to maintain co-operative relations with Egypt; "Nasser told Ambassador Caffery that the Egyptian military was urging him to seek arms from the Soviet Union in case U.S. military aid was not forthcoming." (Jankowski 50) Later on, the ultimate failure of military assistance deal between the US and Egypt provoked the revolutionary regime to adopt a neutral position between the US-led western camp and communist eastern one. By neutralism Nasser meant to openly co-operate with all powers as long the sovereignty of Egypt is preserved. By neutralism, "Egypt wanted to receive all economic and military aid given to the West's allies (e.g., Turkey) without undertaking the responsibilities of the Western alliance system." (Dekmejian 111) Another factor that accelerated Nasser's turn towards neutralism was the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 which was based on the alliance between Iraq and the pro-western Turkey. Viewing the Baghdad Pact as a western scheme to alienate Egypt, Nasser worked to create an Arab-led military defense front as an alternative to allying with western powers. Furthermore, Nasser worked to associate Egypt with the emerging non-alignment movement that incorporated neutralist states which met at Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. Hrair Dekmejian, the author of *Egypt Under Nasser*, argue that Nasser's neutral ideology took a "positive" turn after the Bandung conference and the most notable of its results is the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. Worthy

mentioning, in spite of his crediting the Syrians for initiating the neutralism doctrine, Nasser viewed himself as the pioneer of Non-alignment Movement.

I have previously mentioned that Nasser's regime was willing to play the Soviet's card to incite the US to maintain better relations with Egypt. A direct military and economic co-operation between Egypt and the Soviets took place after Egypt's adoption of neutral creed as a result to the failure of the military assistance deal with the US. Dekmejian stated that "After mid-1955, Nassir's neutralist policy acquired a more pro-Soviet (anti-Western) orientation as the USSR began to extend generous amounts of military (September 1955), diplomatic (1956 Suez War), and economic (Aswan) assistance." (113) In such a way, Abdel Nasser managed to keep a balanced relation with the two great powers and could benefit from both.

Although it does not deny the anti-imperialist vision of the revolutionary regime, the economic agreement between the revolutionary regime and the US as well as the search for a military one, as James Jankowski points out, indicates the former's awareness of the necessity of holding mutual co-operation with the great western powers in general and the US in particular in order to maintain legitimate control over the country and the region. This point is very significant for the thesis of this research in the sense that it indicates that the Nasser regime did not oppose co-operating with the great powers if that supports the general mission of the revolution. Here, I argue that the revolutionary regime was open to follow the steps of Hollywood movies in a way that would help their mission; they meant through adopting the cinematic American model to create a sense of national identity for the Egyptian people and to modernize Egyptian society in a way that would promote progress and achieve economic and financial independence.

In their pursuit of modernization and creating a sense of national identity for Egyptians, the revolutionary elite preferred Hollywood model to any other cinematic production for more than one reason. As I have mentioned earlier, the relation between the US and the Free Officers began before the coup and it maintained consistency until the end of the 1954 when Egypt turned to the Soviet for a military assistance after negotiations with the US proved an ultimate failure. In fact, the strong relations between the US and Egypt furthered not only assuming Hollywood model but also advocated superiority for the number of American movies that were broadcast in Egypt at that time over other foreign cinematic companies. Hussein Y. Amin noted:

From 1965 to 1969, the Egyptian cinema market imported 89.7 percent of all films shown in movie theatres. The United States was the main source of films projected in Egypt during this specific period of time, representing 64.5 percent of all foreign films imported. ... Some experts stated that this increase in importation of films from the U.S. was because of the strong relationship between Egypt and the U.S at that time.
(Kamalipour 322)

Furthermore, there is an important linguistic factor determined which camp's cinematic model to be followed; English was, and still is, spoken in Egypt more than any other foreign language. Consequently, a choice was to be made whether to follow American or British cinematic model. And here, the overwhelming power of Hollywood over British cinema stands as the main factor that directed Egyptian elite to follow the former's steps. In fact, British cinema itself imitated Hollywood in the first half the twentieth century as Hollywood movies were more dominant in England than British ones; "in 1925 some 10

per cent of films exhibited in British cinemas were British; by 1926 this had dropped to 5 per cent. The bulk of films shown were, of course, from the US.” (Turner 166)

My Thesis

While searching for modernity, the Egyptian elite who invested in the cinematic industry were influenced by the American lifestyle in general and the American movies in particular. In this paper, I will trace the impact of American cinema on the Egyptian movies that were produced in the fifties and sixties in two areas; how to create a subordinated "Other" for the sake of forming a national identity and how the latter borrowed lifestyle of the former represented in gender roles and family structure, love and sex before or outside marriage, and the American ways of clothing and entertainment. The paper is mainly about adopting the American vision of film industry by Egyptian film-makers and consequently, I will refer to the ideals of the former only when it is necessary for the sake of the argument. For example, I will give a detailed analysis on how blacks were stereotyped in American movies to assist my argument that the Egyptian cinema meant to subordinate the black Nubians. On the other hand, I will ignore referring to the American way of life based on the premise that it is clear to the reader how Americans live and how they dress, and because American cinema did not do more than reflecting the ideals of its society.

For this paper, I have watched and theoretically analyzed the content of over twenty Egyptian movies that were produced in the fifties and sixties while depended in analyzing the American movies' treatment of the two areas under study, on literature that has been written on American cinema and how it dealt with these issues prior to World War II. The reason I chose works that dealt with American movies prior to World War II is

because it makes more sense to me to look for the already-created image of how American cinema presented these issues; it would not be appropriate to trace the impact of certain American movies on Egyptian ones that were released at the same time. That is because American movies that were produced in the thirties and forties were already in the Egyptian market in the fifties and sixties. For instance, I attribute the depiction of the independent woman in Egyptian movies in the fifties to the independent image of American women that appeared in the American movies during the 1930s and World War II.

The selection of the movies was based on their availability as well as their suitability for the purpose of the project. Furthermore, I chose movies that represented the entire era under study; some of the movies that I have watched were released in the early fifties, while others were released in the late sixties. More importantly, the way I dealt with the Egyptian movies that I watched varied according to what I saw as most beneficial to the project; sometimes I outlined the plot without any reference to specific scenes; at other times I analyzed specific scenes or sequences without paying any attention to the narrative of the movie; occasionally I did both.

Chapter One

The American movies and Egyptian cinema

In their search for creating a national unity and a sense of national identity, the Egyptian elite that emerged after the revolution of 1952 used cinema in two different ways; first they adopted the American lifestyle hoping it would create a better understanding of the self and would free people from ideas that hindered their innovative skills. Second, following the American version of nationalism, they tried to define the Egyptian self in terms of its differences from other minorities that existed in society.

Nationalism and the Creation of “Others”

One of the aspects of the impact of American movies on the Egyptian cinema of the fifties and sixties is the way the latter expressed nationalism. In addition to the well-recognized ways of expressing Nationalism such as commemorating national major events and patriot national figures, and highlighting national resources, Egyptian cinema defined nationalism in terms of differences between the majority Arabs and the other minorities that existed in the Egyptian society at that time. There existed Greeks, black Sudanese and black Nubians in addition to Jews who came from different ethnicities and constituted a remarkable part of the social and financial fabric of the country for a long time. Inspired by the American movies, the Egyptian film industry, I argue, followed the American "subtle example of the construction of a national culture formed in opposition to its Others although, usually in this case, the Others inhabited the same territory without being included in the nation-Toni Morrison's analysis of white American culture as dependent on the subordination of black Americans is slavery.” (Nash 74) More importantly, these "negative or positive depictions cannot necessarily be regarded as an

indicator of the degree of integration or equality that the group in question enjoys" (Shafik 24), rather they constitute a mere reflection of how the moviemakers wanted it to be represented. Europeans who lived in Egypt, for example, were more powerful than most Arab Egyptians, but they were always represented as naïve and powerless characters that held minor positions such as barmen and waiters. Till today, Europeans, such as Greeks, Armenian, and Turks, who live in Egypt, run successful businesses and most of them own houses in rich neighborhoods in Alexandria and other major cities. More importantly, all minor ethnicities were excluded completely from playing major roles in Egyptian movies at that time; they always came to serve as side objects to non-black characters and contributed nothing to the development of the narrative.

African-Americans in Hollywood movies

Hollywood tended from the very beginning to create political "Others" for the sake of political and economic gains for the elite. The depiction of blacks in Hollywood was no exception; it was influenced by political and economic motifs rather than the individual's perception of blackness or whiteness. Hollywood's treatment of race came to shape a way of understanding and it normalized a certain image of what it meant to be black and what it meant to be white, instead of simply reflecting the mobilization of blacks who were transforming American society. In other words, interests of the elite presented blacks in Hollywood movies as they wanted them to be seen not as they were. Ed Guerrero noted:

By examining the depiction of slaves and slavery over the continuum of Hollywood's plantation genre, we confront a number of issues about the creation and ideological functions of these representations, narrative,

and images, persistent so long after the abortion of slavery itself and the collapse of the antebellum South. (10)

In their pursuit of subordinating Blacks, the narratives of the early Hollywood movies did not mean to represent the authentic persona of the black character, and consequently, they used the stereotypical persona of the antebellum black slaves as the ideal image of blackness. Ed Guerrero noted: "*The Birth of a Nation* presents a detailed and convincing presentation of everyday life that conforms to ideas about the benevolence of the plantation and the slavery already common in literary tradition" (16). In such a way, Hollywood was looking for justification for silencing the black figures who were strongly mobilizing for emancipating their race. As Guerrero noted, in subordinating blacks, Hollywood was inspired by nineteenth century American literature that portrayed blacks as inferior for both a political reason to hinder the human rights movements that was getting stronger in the south, and for a psychological reason to secure the image of the white male as the protector of white womanhood after the former's image as the provider for the his family had been challenged throughout the Post-bellum South. One of the most common images of blacks seen in the early Hollywood cinema was the black mammy who appeared in most of the movies of the slave south. The image of the black mammy represented the passive black object while other images presented blacks as active subjects that constituted a threat to whites; in *The Birth of a Nation* the white woman threw herself off a cliff to prevent being raped by drunken black men.

With the emergence of sound in cinema in 1929 which coincided with the Great Depression crisis, a new image of the satisfied slave started to appear; slaves in the movies of the thirties were represented as happy characters who enjoyed entertaining

their masters. During that time, many of the musicals included black slaves who sang and danced for the entertainment of their masters. Guerrero noted that in almost all these films the plantation was represented as a place of relaxation for masters and slaves as well. Movies from the thirties, with this new image of blacks, were seen as an escapist tool that tended to soften the crisis by drawing mythical histories which helped in creating a national unity based on racial supremacy of the whites over blacks. Stepin Fetchit and Willie Best are two characters who appeared at that time and became synonymous with the negative stereotypes of lazy African-Americans. In their movies, Stepin Fetchit and Willie Best scrounged the image of the antebellum slave south and mixed it with the concept that slavery is satisfying for both blacks and whites in order to draw common people's attention away from the national crisis that the country was experiencing. Furthermore, Hollywood depended on very elegant mise-en-scene to draw an esthetic picture for the Old South mansions based on the fascinating power of the aristocrats and enchantment of the slaves. Guerrero refers to *Dixiana* (1939) and *Mississippi* (1935) as examples of development of the image of the blacks in Hollywood. The two movies meant to present the American people, struggling through the great depression, to the inner life of the aristocrats in order to help them escape their real situation. More importantly, black characters were used as silent items that added to the elegance of the life of the powerful aristocrats. In this context blacks were presented as tractable servants who cared only about managing their function as servants.

The psychoanalytical approach intrigued by Sigmund Freud is very helpful in understanding what was happening; blacks constitute the castrated object that is seen as the source of fear for the white male who is afraid of being deprived of his power. In

Freud's theory, the male is afraid of the female because of the latter's lack of the phallus which represents power. Consequently, it is the lack of power of the blacks, who represent the castrated female object in Freud's analysis, which reminds the whites, who represent the powerful male in Freud's analysis, of the potential that they can be castrated (deprived of their power) as well. Controlling the castrated black object is used as the means of escape by whites; blacks are depicted as biologically inferior servants who can not speak for themselves and are only there to please their powerful white masters. The significance of subrogating blacks here is to draw a comparison between them and their white masters; blacks cannot control their fate, so they can not dream of a better future while whites are powerful masters who are worthy to face challenges.

Although some early Hollywood movies like *Jezbel* differentiated between the behavior of upper and lower class whites, others like *The Birth of a Nation* created alliances between all classes of whites against "the insurgent free blacks." In these movies the negative stereotype of blacks did not differentiate between the slaves of the antebellum, the devoted slaves of the plantations, or the free blacks of the Reconstruction. For example, the image of black slaves is utilized by movies like *Gone with the Wind* to emphasize the class hierarchy within blacks themselves. Unlike other slaves in that movie, the black mammy has three cups of drink with her master and they discussed the circumstances of the plantation legislature while no whites other than the high-class masters were shown on the screen. Of course, classes did exist among blacks as well as whites; as Malcolm X stated, there were two kinds of Negro: the field Negro and the house one. Malcolm X said that the house Negro led a better life than the field did although the latter were the majority. The significance of the development of the

depiction of blacks having different classes is to emphasize the sense of unity among whites and the notion that class division in society had nothing to do with blackness or whiteness as blacks themselves had intra-classes.

The outbreak of war in Europe and the rise of fascism made it a must for the United States to become directly involved in an anti-racist war that resulted in an abrupt decline for the plantation genre that had subordinated blacks for the previous years. The war contributed to that downturn of the genre because "The U.S. government had to appeal to national unity, find a way to motivate the 1 million blacks it had drafted to fight, and face its ubiquitous racist ideology at home" (Guerrero 27). The plantation genre declined partly because it was not appropriate for the U.S. to become involved in a war against racism while its cinema was full of negative stereotypical images of blacks, and partly because it wanted the support of the blacks themselves. At the end of war, new optimistic audiences had come into sight. The newly-emerging generation did not need an escapist cinematic ideology; instead they were looking for a cinema that would address socio-economic problems that now existed. However, that does not mean that the plantation genre disappeared completely; it re-emerged but it was not as sharp as it was prior to the war. The most remarkable movies that deserve to be mentioned here are *Song of the South* (1946) that drove the rage of the blacks who strongly protested it and *The Foxes of Harrow*. These movies were strongly condemned by blacks especially after the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. This protest resulted in a radical change of the portrayal of slaves in American movies by the end of the sixties.

Actually, it was not only blacks who were stereotyped in American movies, as "hundreds of Hollywood westerns turned history on its head by making the Native

Americans appear to be intruders on what was originally their land, and provided a paradigmatic perspective through which to view the whole of the non-white world” (Braudy, 881). In fact going through the stereotyping of others in Hollywood movies is beyond the scope of this study and the reason I am giving that special attention to the depiction of African-Americans is because I believe that is the primary stereotype that inspired the Egyptian cinema to stereotype others for the sake of creating a sense of national identity.

Benedict Anderson’s analysis on nationalism is helpful to understand how Egyptian cinema tried to create a sense of national identity to the Egyptian people through denigrating other minor communities in the society. Anderson defined nationalism as “an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (Anderson 6) To Anderson, nationalism is ‘limited’ because it is bounded by certain borders that encompass only adherents to this national identity and exclude others. In such a way, Egyptian cinema in Nasser’s Egypt worked to enhance a finite sense of nationalism based on an imagined sense of unity among Egyptians³- that sense of unity among Egyptians was meant to be created through seeing themselves different to others who lived in Egypt such as Nubians and Europeans. Furthermore, Egyptian cinema at that time developed its own tools to formulate a sense of national unity among Egyptians; it utilized spoken Arabic language of Europeans and Nubians to magnify their inferiority to Egyptians who spoke sound Arabic, it attributed disgraceful moral values to Jews to

³ In fact some minorities that were stereotyped by Egyptian cinema at that time such as Nubians, Jews, and Europeans were Egyptian citizens but I am using the word “Egyptians” to refer to the majority of Egyptians outside these minor groups. Egyptians that I am referring to are those who lived in Egypt before the Islamic conquest and later on became Muslims and assimilated with the invading Arabs who migrated to Egypt from the different Arab countries.

signify the idealism of Muslim Egyptian's behavior, and it related minor jobs to blacks and Europeans to exemplify the elevated and honorable status of Egyptians. In such a way, Egyptian sound Arabic compared European's and blacks' broken one, and their sound morals compared to Jewish people's shameful actions, functioned as the Holly texts and sacred languages that constituted the core for older versions of imagined communities in Anderson's analysis.

The Depiction of the “Other” in the Egyptian Cinema

Blacks, although not recognized as a separate race among the common people, the Egyptian movies of the fifties and the sixties depicted them as an inferior race that always came to serve as supplementary characters or antagonists next to the Arab protagonists. In subordinating black people, Egyptian cinema was following the path of Hollywood that "has played a significant, if colonizing, role in shaping all other narrative cinema languages and formal conventions, and its most successful features are arguably its most influential in this regard" (Guerrero, 4). The Egyptian cinema was following the steps of Hollywood's ideology of "racial domination" that normalized the white race while depicting the black one as a substandard other. In his analysis of the African-American representation in American movies, Ed Guerrero used Freud's theory of dreams to analyze the subordination of the blacks in Hollywood; negative representation of blacks is a direct result to repression of the power that the dreamer sees as a mere imagination while the film maker sees as the mere entertainment. The same thing can be said about the Egyptian movies' treatment of blacks as well as other minorities; all minor groups were depicted as a different “Other” which is utilized as a comic object that ignites feelings of fear because of its lack of power. More importantly, the agenda for American

movies' subordination of all minorities including blacks can be interpreted in terms of political interests that shaped the emergence and the development of this subordination. The Egyptian cinema, I argue, subordinated blacks for a political reason that is based on the clash that happened between the black Nubians and the regime when Abdel Nasser took over their land in order to build the High Dam. On the other hand, subordination of other minorities in Egyptian cinema like Eastern European and Jews was a mere imitation of subordinating others in Hollywood.

The black "Other" is presented in many of the Egyptian movies of the fifties and sixties and is presented in different contexts the most common among which is the passive "other" that can be seen in the silent obedient servant and talkative doorman. The movie *The Land /Al Ard* directed by Yossuf Shahin in 1961 presents a unique picture of blacks in which they are presented as active "other" for the purpose of opposing the negative depiction for the sake of national unity. In *Al-Ard*, nationalism is represented in people's attitude towards the corrupt pre-revolutionary elite who control the irrigation system while ignoring the welfare of the poor. When talking about people's duty toward standing against injustice, Mohamed Abu Sweelam (Mahmoud El Miligi) reminded his fellow citizens of what the Egyptian mob had achieved throughout history; he referred to their support for Saad Zaghloul, the leader of the revolution of 1919, and he praised their revolts against the English colonization. The movie also follows the wave of other Egyptian movies as it uses the differences between Egyptian and Nubian ethnicities to emphasize that feeling of nationalism within the Egyptian society; it depicts Nubian blacks to be the Hajjana (Mounted soldiers) soldiers that were sent by the oppressor *Basha* (a title that modifies noble wealthy individuals before the revolution and used be

gained from the government in exchange for money) to terrify the villagers after they revolt against the construction of a railway that would destroy the peasants' farmlands. During a conversation with the leader of the black soldiers, sergeant Abdalla, Abu Sweelam attacks him and tells him that they are mere tools that are used against their fellow people. At the end of the movie a paradigm shift comes to exist when that Nubian sergeant kills the oppressor officer and shakes hands with Mohamed Abu Sweelam as a sign of blessing people's revolt against the oppressor elite. This scene is preceded by another one that draws an analogy between the villagers' situation and the destruction of the land of the Nubian in Southern Egypt due to the building of the High Dam by Gamal Abdel Nasser; The Nubian suggests that the people should surrender to their oppressor if the other option is to die. Abu Sweelam states that building the High Dam was for the welfare of all Egyptians including the Nubians themselves. These two scenes together constitute Shahine's perception of what is required to achieve the national unity Egyptians need to appreciate each other and try to reach the hands of mutual understanding and forgiveness among all indigenous races. In an interview in New York City in the late nineteen nineties, Shahine stated that a common theme he meant to stress in most of his movies was to look for the position of the "Other" in people's life. This theme is quite clear here as he presents a counter-representation of blackness by suggesting that excessive ignorance of the indigenous that is seen as an "Other" can be injurious to the fabric of the national unity. Here, the Nubian, because of the feeling of being alienated, is allying with the enemies and advocates that the common Egyptian people should surrender to their oppressor because his own people did the same thing with the aggressive treatment that they had to endure. However, this movie as well as

some other Shahine movies fell into the trap of the subordinating blacks as slaves or servants, but the difference here is that instead of depicting them as passive objects, he presents them as dangerous tools that can be used against the national interest.

In fact, this movie, as well as others like *Siraa Fil Wadi/ A Strife in the Valley*, represents the peasants (*Fallahi*) genre that appeared after the military coup and claimed to reflect the life of the Egyptian farmers who lived on the banks of the Nile. This genre is an imitation of the plantation genre that existed in the American cinema in the thirties and after World War II. While the American version emerged in order to drive the American society's attention away from the difficulty of the present by creating the imaginative ideal of the past, it served the opposite in the Egyptian society as it meant to exemplify the enjoyable realities of the present - the consequences of the blessed revolution of the free officers - by commemorating the tribulations of the dark past. More importantly, blacks in what I call the Egyptian peasant genre did not serve any significant part in the narrative or the purpose of the genre as a whole; except in this movie, they always appear as passive servants who talk and act but contribute nothing to the development of the narrative.

Furthermore, the soldiers who appear in this movie are depicted as happy people who lead a better life than most indigenous people of the village; the financial situation of businessmen in the village is improved drastically after the coming of these black soldiers. A scene shows the soldiers surrounding Sheikh Hassouna as he sells meat to them; then Hassouna explains to one of the villagers how his financial situation got way better because now he is selling meat for the first time in his life. The next scene shows a woman from the village who comes to buy some meat, but the butcher pushes her away

preferring to sell the meat to the black soldiers who transact in money, not items like the indigenous villagers. Then the head of the soldiers, Sergeant Abdall, gives money to the butcher and asks him give the woman whatever she wants. This depiction of the happy black servants in Egyptian movies is an imitation of how American movies represented blacks who preferred slavery to freedom as in the movie *The Birth of a Nation* that "features staples of that antebellum mythology as devoted house servants who prefer slavery to freedom and a strong, loyal mammy who knocked down two Yankee guards to help her white master escape Reconstruction justice" (Guerrero 15). Furthermore, in a scene from the movie *Jezbel* the white gentleman Prez offers to have a drink with his servant called Uncle Cato, the latter refuses because he considers that as "a violation of the convention between master and slave" (Guerrero 25). The importance of such misleading representations is to minimize or show as unreal the bad consequences of racial discrimination; in the case of Egypt the representation of satisfied blacks supports the idea that is stated by Abu Sweelam when he tells the black soldier that building the High Dam was beneficial for everybody including Nubians themselves.

A significant factor that is based on the subordination of the black "Other" in the movie and that contributes to implementing the elite modernist agenda is the feeling of self-satisfaction and appreciation of the regime that it creates for the peasant in particular and non-black Egyptians in general when they compare themselves to the subordinated black servants. The significance of this feeling is that it gathers masses to support the developmental plans designed by the revolutionary elite. Bottomore argues:

The success of the various elites in bringing about rapid economic growth depends, therefore, to a very large extent upon their success in arousing

popular enthusiasm, and upon the extent of support which they can get from major social classes such as the poorer peasants and the industrial workers. (102)

To Bottomore, elites usually put into practice certain activities, parties, social organization, or like in the case of Egypt, pass laws that would satisfy the masses and urge them to heartily support the national cause.

Furthermore, the character of Uncle Abdu the doorman, Uncle Abdu the servant and Uncle Abdu the cook are analogies of the character of Uncle Remus, which dominated the image of the blacks in American movies. Worth mentioning the title "Uncle" was used by the Whites when addressing the elderly blacks and it is considered contemptuous. As a result, the image of the doorman called Abdu appeared in many Egyptian movies of the fifties and sixties; almost all servants who appeared in the movies of this period were blacks and occasionally they are referred to as Uncle Abdu. It appears in the movie *The Empty Pillow*, which I will mention later. There it presents an image for the talkative nosy doorman who knows who passes by the street and at what time. It appears in *Sahibat il Isma* directed by Hasan El sifi and released in 1956 as the silent servant who just takes care about fulfilling his job. In the movie *al Ikhtiar/ The Choice* by Youssef Chahine (1970), the black man plays the role of the servant and the waiter in a coffee shop.

In the comedy movie *Habib Hayati/ The love of my life* Mamdouh (Abdel Salam Al Nabulsi) after losing the wealth he has inherited from his father, he looks for a job and is auditioned for the part of a beggar in an effort to become an actor. The director tells

him that he does not look like a beggar and consequently, he orders to paint him in black. The idea of blackface here is more influential than projecting a black person to a beggar, servant or a doorman because it is presented in the context of who would more present a convincing lower class persona; this scene is stating that a black-faced person is more likely to play the role than a light-skinned one. In addition to suggesting how blacks should be viewed, the movie is implying what whites should not be; it states it is not appropriate to see a light-skinned person as a beggar. In fact, there is no racial hierarchy in Egypt based on skin color, but the black “other” has been created by the Egyptian cinema for the sake of constructing a sense of national unity among the non-black Arab Egyptians.

It was not only blacks who were stereotyped in the Egyptian cinema for the sake of the formation of the Egyptian identity; other minorities like Jews and Christians were subjected to this ideological subordination. Jews, for instance, were always depicted as either stingy people who would blackmail others for financial interest or corrupt people who would always work in sinful places like bars. The Movie *Chohen, Morkos and Hassan / Chohen, Morqus and Hassan* 1954, included three characters: the Muslim Hassan, the Christian Murqus and the Jewish Cohen. The Jewish Cohen (Stephan Rusty) was the leading character for the scheme led by the three of them to blackmail the naïve kind-hearted employee Abbas (Hassan Faye) to take over his inherited wealth. The three characters receive the news of Abbas's unexpected wealth before he himself knows about it; consequently they prepare a scheme to illegally incarcerate his possessions by signing a contract with him that he would work for them conditioned that he would pay them a huge fine if decided to quit doing his job. When Abbas finds out about his inheritance,

he proposes to resign, but they remind him of his contract with three of them and ask him for the fine. He decides to keep working for them but acts in a way that would ruin the reputation of the store so they would fire him. Although the movie means to explicitly propagate a national unity by depicting an intriguing comic co-operation between three characters representing the three main religions of the country, it presents the Muslim Abbas as the only kind-hearted persona of the main characters in the movie. The movie also supports long existing stereotypes of the adherents of the three religions; the Muslim Hassan seems to be good at financial transactions, the Christian Murqus appears to be well-acquainted with the everyday life of the society while the Jewish is presented as a person who knows how to successfully manage ins and outs of the law of the country. Furthermore, because he is occasionally called Khawaja (foreigner), "Cohen's cinematic status seems to reflect a growing public readiness to consider Jews as not only non-Muslims but also non-Arab. And of course the latter that has the more crucial implications for detaching them from the newly configured Egyptian nation" (Shafik 34).

An explicit criticism of the character of the Jewish people was in the movie *Akher Shakawa /The Most of Naughtiness* that depicts a Jewish father called Abu Rachel (Stephan Rusty), using his daughters to usurp his three young, single male neighbors. The comic narrative of the movie is based on the naïve character of the three singles and the greedy character of the Jewish Abu Rachel, who uses his daughter Rachel (Victoria Cohen) to blackmail one of the three young men called Ahmed (Hassan Yusuf). Abu Rachel receives a baby boy from a family who ask him to nanny the child for a certain amount of money. Then he asks his daughter to pretend she is in love with Ahmed and convince him that she became pregnant after he got drunk and had sex with her without

her knowledge the previous year. Consequently, she brings the baby boy that her father is paid to take care of and hands him to Ahmed who has to be responsible for his (fake) son. As a result, the Jewish Abu Rachel manages to get paid for taking care of the son while he passes the responsibility of the care of the child to someone else.

In a very comic sequence, the Jewish Abu Rachel knows that the three single men have bought a duck that they will slaughter, cook and eat for dinner, so he goes to them to offer that his wife will cook for them and they all can come to have dinner in his house. The reverse shot shows two of the young men having dinner with Abu Rachel and his family in the latter's house. There, Abu Rachel divides the duck that the three men have bought among himself and his own family while the two guests eat nothing and go home hungry. Another very interesting scene in the movie is when Ahmed goes to the house of his Jewish neighbor, Abu Rachel; the latter offers him a pen as a gift and he accepts it. Then Abu Rachel tells him that he has bought it for eighteen Egyptian pounds, but he will give it to Ahmed for fourteen pounds only.

The strongest criticism of the Jews was in the movie *Aldakheel/ The Stranger* with the protagonist Al khawaga Zaki Zaki Zaki (Mahmoud Al Miligi) who referred to the Zionist colonization of Palestine. The narrative of the movie is about two villages that lived in peace next to each other for so long and were connected by a bridge between them. While they were getting ready to celebrate the marriage of the daughter of the mayor of the first village to the son of the mayor of the second, a rounding clothes-seller comes to the village and faints. The villagers carry the stranger to the house of the mayor where he stays a number of days and later asks the mayor to call on his daughter to come to visit and take care of him until he feels better. During his short stay there, the stranger

convinces the mayor of the village to give him and his daughter an old storage for the provision of the village to clean it and live there. It does not take the daughter of the stranger very long to tempt the son of the mayor and convince him to give them five acres that surround the provision storage. Very slowly, the provision storage turned to a whore brothel where the stranger uses his daughter's beauty to blackmail the peasants and take their land. The villagers do not know what is going on until the day comes when the stranger comes with the documents that proves that he should take over most of the land of the villagers and then they decide that the stranger should be forced to leave the village. Consequently, they prepare to fight against him and against his supporters.

The movie is an obvious metaphor for the Zionist occupation of the land of Palestine and it is simply suggesting the only solution is to force the colonizers to leave Jerusalem by any means necessary. The two villages are symbols to the Arab countries, and the bridge between them is a reference to the bond that exists between Arabs and which is known as Arab Nationalism or Pan-Arabism. The evolutionary regime viewed Pan-Arabism as an important a requirement for achieving Arab Nationalism; to Abdel Nasser, “without the goal (or at a minimum, the aspiration) of Arab political unity, Arab nationalism would be a creed without a purpose, indeed without a meaning.” (Dawisha 2) Pan-Arabism in the movie is also represented by the existence of the market in one village and the existence of grain mill in the other.

What is more significant here is that the narrative of the movie, the same as the narrative of *AKhir Shakawa*, is based on the long-standing stereotype of the Jews as stingy and as usurers who do not feel the shame using the bodies of their women to blackmail others. Zaki, the name of the Jewish protagonist means smart while the name

of his daughter *Fitna* means temptation or dispute. Both of these names have significance to the narrative of the movie; the Jewish man is "smart/Zaki" as manages to control the country successfully by using his daughter as a "Fitna/temptation".

Furthermore, the movie included the Jews and Zionists in the same package and that is not historically correct. The Jews have been living in Arab countries like Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Iraq for hundreds of years while the Zionists are the immigrants that the movie can relate to somehow. The danger of such a mix of realities becomes more clear at the end of the movie that propagates the exclusion of the foreigners by force is taken into account. Whether the movie is calling for the exclusion of Palestinian Jews only or from the whole region is not clear and consequently, confusion among the common people is very possible. Especially, the movie presents them as a threat that uses its intelligence and beauty of their women to take over possessions of others. .

The Copts, Egyptian Christians, were generally excluded from the Egyptian movies except for a limited number of characters. For instance Issa Al-Awam (Salah Zul Fakkar) in the *Saladin the Victorious* (1963) by Youssif Chahine, was presented without any reference to his religious practices. Issa Al-'Awam's inclusion "is a major importance to formulating a secular nation of Arabism in the film" (Shafik, 43).

Also, the movie *Al Fursan Al-Thalatha / The Three Knights* (1962) presents an old Turkish lady as rich and stingy who visits the house of the protagonist, Tahir Abdul Zahir (Ismail Yassin), who is the editor of the newspaper called "Good Morals" to complain about her noisy neighbors. The Turkish lady was mocked because of her silly personality as she complains about superficial things; her only grievance was she could not sleep because of her noisy neighbors and she wants the editor of the journal to include

an article about her suffering. She is also mocked because of her broken Arabic language; she used the masculine pronouns for feminine and used feminine pronouns for masculine ones.

El sitat ma ye'rafoosh yekdebo / Women Do Not Know How to Tell Lies (1954) presents an old Greek lady called Marika as the lady who lends kids to others for money. Again the ethnicity of the foreigner is known from the broken Arabic she speaks. The movie presents a comic narrative evolving around Lila (Shadia) who wants to convince her husband Kamal (Shukri Sarhan) to come back to his house by pretending that she has delivered a baby. She asks her cousin Noah (Ismael Yassin) to find a baby that can be borrowed for money. The foreigner Marika whom he borrows the kids from is depicted as a betrayal character who takes the kids from their parents promising she will take care of them; instead she lends them to others for the sake of money.

Also, Foreigners (*Khawagas*) are always depicted as barmen, smugglers and cheaters; Khawaja bigo in the movie *Malik El Betrool / King of Oil* (1962) is a barman who chats with the fooled rejected proposed husband Tyseer (Abdul Munem Ibrahim). Most barmen who appeared in the Egyptian movies in the fifties and sixties were *Khawajas*, and Arabs played that role in few movies. In such a way, Egyptian cinema adopted Hollywood's practiced that Eugene Franklin Wong referred to as role segregation which means "the ways in which non-white actors are, by virtue of their race, ineligible for certain kinds of roles, while white actors are able to move "horizontally" into even those roles racially defined as black, Asian, Native American, or Chicano." (Hill 163)

In *The King of Oil*, the foreigner barman is depicted as a corrupt man who lies to Abdel Munem Ibrahim and tells him that he has heard the story of the oil that was discovered in the field of Hassuna (Ismail Yassin). In addition the barman devises a scheme for Tyseer to help him control the wealth of Hassuna who is expected to be rich because of the oil that has been discovered.

The same stereotypical character appears in the movie *Isamel Yasin Fi Mustashfa Al Majannen / Ismael Yasin in the Mental Hospital* as a crazy person in the mental hospital to which Hassuna (Isamel Yassin) is taken because of an intriguing scheme. As usual, the naïve simple-minded character of the *Khawaga* comes to serve the comic narrative of the movie through his broken Arabic and childish actions. Khwaga Beego draws a line on the ground thinking that it is a rope and tells Hassuna that he can walk on it. Later on, he wastes hundreds of pages because, while trying to write a letter to his friends, he encounters a word that he does not know how to write. Of course, this action is justified that he was a mad person in the hospital, but all other characters that accompany him there, played other roles in other movies that portrayed insane personalities; the fact that Khawaga Beego always appeared as the simple-minded naïve person is what is more significant here.

This image of Eastern European assimilative characters who have appeared in Egyptian movies is an imitation of the American white Irish and Italian American stereotypes who are often depicted as "simple-minded, working-class man who spoke in broken English and who often wore a bushy moustache" (Benshoff, 61). This image appeared in many films of the fifties and sixties in comic narratives in which the "Other" is seen as a primitive naïve object.

Chapter Two

Egyptian movies and the Americanization of Egyptian society

Challenging Gender Roles in America

In the fifties and sixties, American society was experiencing huge changes in female consciousness of the family structure and gender roles. Although feminists have been active in the US Since the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, a collective appreciation of feminism has been emerged in the fifties due to women's going out to work in the Great Depression era and World War II. Female perception of feminism has also been strengthened by the movies that were produced in the thirties and forties.

During the Great Depression era in the 1930s and the time of World War II, female movies were produced mainly for female audience. In these movies "The female stars generally played strong, sacrificial mother, wholesome girls, assertive career women, or threatened or insane wives." (Johnston 175) The most common representation of active women during the 1940s was the maternal drama such as John Ford's film *Grapes of Wrath* (1945) in which Ma Joad (Jane Darwell) through her strong matriarch which had been the symbol of female strength since the Great depression, held her family together and "assumed power reluctantly, acting out of an emergency situation." (Johnson 175) *Grapes of Wrath* presented the commonly repeated image of powerful women in female movies of the forties as successful characters who give up their positions for the sake of others. These movies advocated the idea that women are not only capable of achieving success without being dependent on men but also through their independence they can benefit men themselves. Although these movies did not deny women the ability to

maintain leadership and independent success, they implied that the point of weakness for women is their femininity; they always prefer to sacrifice their success for the sake of others. Commenting on *Mildred Pierce* (1945), Carolyn Johnston wrote: “The mother achieves financial success through sheer determination, first as a waitress, then as an owner of a restaurant. Both of her husbands are portrayed as unable to be successful breadwinners.” (176) In spite of financial achievements, the mother Crawford chooses to give up her independence and leave with her first husband because of the trauma she experiences when her daughter kills her first husband. In other words “her ultimate trap is not her dependence on a man but over-mothering her daughter. A tension between female achievement and femininity is played out in many films of the period.” (Johnston 176) Worthy-mentioning, women’s going out for work was seen a necessity by the government that enhanced it strongly by motivating women in the newspapers and on the Radio. Women at that time held a lot of kinds of work that used to be perceived as men jobs; they worked as “spot and torch welders, hydraulic press operators, shell loaders, taxi drivers, football coaches, barbers, bus drivers, bellhops, crane operators, ferry command pilots, along with numerous other traditionally male posts.” (Johnston 177) As a matter of fact, there was a significant rise in the proportion of working women during World War II; it increased from 25 to 36 percent which constitutes more increase than the previous four decades. Johnston states that “from April 1940 to August 1943, an additional 4.4 million women entered the labor force, 3 million more than formerly. Some 1.3 million were in agriculture, and the rest in manufacturing, clerical work, and the profession.” (180)

On the other hand, women's going out for work created a threat to the American masculinity that feared women would challenge them in the work place and rebel against traditional gender roles in society. Consequently, a number of the movies that were produced in the forties granted women the right to work outside their homes only if they are capable of fulfilling the duties at home as well. These movies reflected the feeling of anxiety that American society was experiencing during and after the war; there was a lot of tension between the working women who got used to self-dependence and their husbands who viewed women's going out for work as a temporary adjustment required by social instability during the years of the war. As a result, movies that were produced in the fifties revived the historical image of the submissive dependent housewife. However, this image has been challenged by feminists during the fifties and sixties; the most popular feminist book that dealt with this the issue of women liberation at time was *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan in 1963.

The Nasser Regime and Liberating Women

In their pursuit of modernism, the revolutionary regime in Egypt followed the steps of the social development that was going on in the American society regarding family structure and gender roles by challenging certain social ethics that have existed in society for hundreds of years such as arranged marriage and male dominance in the family. This change was strengthened when the government adopted the socialist ideology that "human nature is not an invariable, permanent set of psychological characteristics. The psychological characteristics of human beings are rather a product of specific historical circumstances, of a set of production relations, and of class-bound ideologies" (Abdel Kader, 106). Consequently, socialist governments believed in the possibility of creating

better socially developed men and women if their psychological circumstances could be improved. Although Karl Marx did not explicitly consider women emancipation as part of his social project, other socialist figures such as Friedrich Engels believed that the only means for achieving comprehensive emancipation for women is through “the abolishing of private property and the coming of socialism (Abel Kader 106) Furthermore, socialism and feminism throughout feminism history especially in the United States and England always had supportive relationships based on the fact that socialism advocates equality.

As a result, The Abdel Nasser administration sponsored many programs to achieve that, including raising the educational and work qualifications for women. After adopting the socialist ideology, the country showed interest in equality between men and women. Soha Abdel Kader in her book *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society* noted:

The leaders of the revolutionary government explicitly recognized the problem of female emancipation in the National Charter of 1962 that stated, woman must be regarded as equal to man and she must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impede her free movement, so that she may play a constructive and profoundly important part in shaping the life of the country. (109)

In such a way, the Nasser regime meant to bring to the fore the status of Egyptian women for national progressive reasons. Worth mentioning, the government’s endeavor to “emancipate” women, especially in terms of educational opportunities, started earlier than 1960s; it was in 1956 that all schools had been nationalized and brought under the supervision of the Ministry of Education which offered free education and guaranteed

equal opportunities for both men and women. Abdel Kader noted that escalating educational opportunities for women was partly the result of feminist activism that started a long time before the revolution, in addition to the government's desire to modernize society. She added that the most notable contribution of the revolution to the educational status of women was improving the concept that education is required for women; the newly-designed curricula aimed at providing men and women with the same skills required for work in the different fields.

In addition to implementing the educational opportunities for women and “in line with the ideology that ‘socialism’ requires the participation of men and women side by side in building the new society, the revolutionary government made conscious efforts to increase the participation of women in the labor force” (Abdel Kader, 112.) The government offered men and women equal opportunities in the marketplace without discrimination; they developed a grade system that controlled promotion according to education, length of service, job performance without paying any attention to sex.

Worth mentioning, the restructuring of the role women played in Abdel Nasser's Egypt was not an accidental change that happened abruptly; it was the result of a long feminist struggle that had started as early as the nineteenth century. The feminist movements in Egypt were lead by individuals who studied in the west and presented their ideas in books. The author of *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman*, Qassim Amin (1863- 1908), studied in France, and was one of the feminist leaders. Other individuals who inspired the feminist movement in Egypt are Huda Sharawai (1879-1947), and Safia Zagloul (1878-1946) who called on women to taking off their veils after she did it herself. (Discussing the history and development of the feminist movement in

Egypt is beyond the scope of this study). What is more important here is that throughout their long struggle, feminist activists have never achieved as much as what they could during the time of Abdel Nasser who included their organizations in the Socialist Union and granted them institutionalized privileges. Referring to the contributions of the Nasser regime to the feminist welfare, Ghada Hashem Tallami in her book *The Mobilization of Muslim Women in Egypt* noted:

A new female leadership had to be recruited, and labor legislation protecting the rights of working women had to be enacted. These areas became the focus of the new regime. A new female leadership was found among the ranks of university women belonging to the same lower-middle layer of society as the Free Officers. (19)

As a result, in 1962 Dr. Hikmat Abu Zeid, a feminist activist, was inaugurated the head of the Ministry of the Social Welfare, a government division that managed a significant interest in women's affairs. . In 1963 the Ministry organized a general women's conference to discuss female work-related issues.

Egyptian Cinema and Liberating Women

To me it is clear, that Egyptian movies that were produced in the fifties and sixties were inspired by image of the independent woman that emerged in the thirties and forties in American cinema. The reasons the Egyptian elites favored this independent image is to advocate the image of the successful woman that is able to stand beside the man to develop the country. The regime admired that image of the American woman that was able to not only survive the social instability in crisis times but also implemented overcoming these crises. The revolutionary regime viewed the dependency and

passiveness as not valid any more to be the default role for women at the time when the country needed the contribution of every individual, men and women.

The movie *Tahya El Regalla /Long live Men* produced in 1954 challenges the common gender roles in the Egyptian family by advocating that women's education and going out to the job market could solve financial problems that Egyptian families usually encounter. They often experienced problems maintaining their jobs or finding new ones.

In the scene right after they signed the contract to work as dancers in a theater, the two main female characters arrive home to find their jobless husbands pacing back and forth in the apartment because their wives are late. The husbands oppose the idea that their wives are looking for a job before discussing with them the type of work they are looking for; Ahmed says that he will never accept that his wife goes out to work as long as he is still alive. Their wives reply that this society is changing and it is becoming very common for women to go out to work, and women can even hold venerable positions such as physicians and lawyers. Later, after the husbands' acceptance of the fact that their wives are going out to work, the wives help their husbands to work with them in the same theater. The movie is offering a revolution against the common norms that "the wife is bound to obey her husband, unless compliance with his wishes might cause her physical injury" (Patai, 109). It is suggesting that psychological and social injuries resulting from subordinating women are more injurious than physical ones and consequently, women should be granted the right to revolt against these norms when necessary. In fact, the change that the Nasser regime brought to the society is clear when it compared to earlier situation. El-Azhar University in Egypt issued a verdict in early 1952 stating that:

(1) Women should not go about outside their homes; (2) women should preserve their chastity and reputation and should not be a temptation to men; (3) women should not attend public functions because their emotions overcome their reason; (4) women are created for one function, to become mothers (Patai 113).

However, the regime in 1955 eliminated the Shari'a, Islamic law, and substituted it with a national law which gave women more freedom to work and mix with men in public places.

Furthermore, the narrative states that the males' objection to their wives going out to work is because of the formers' concern that the latter will be in trouble because of their sex. In addition, it refutes this assumption by presenting two young women who work in a place where people go for the sake of lust but they are still able to maintain their chastity. More importantly, the movie is suggesting that offering women enough education will help to overcome this kind of problem as women will be able to get respectable jobs and help their husbands without creating this kind of fear. In fact, the revolutionary government's ideology aimed at promoting education among Egyptian women in order to help them have better careers were very fruitful; the most notable change to the female labor force in the fifties and sixties was that "the educational level of working women increased and was even higher than the educational level of men. Almost 15 % of working held university degree, and these working women accounted for virtually all growth in female employment" (Abdel Kader, 113).

More importantly, the movie follows the American movies of the forties in suggesting that women can support themselves and benefit their families financially, but they still

have to be dependent on men emotionally. The two successful women in the movie go through severe feelings of jealousy when they find out about a relationship between their husbands and two dancers. The women understand their husbands get into these illegal relationships as a result to their wives' neglect of them. Consequently, they intrigue a scheme to maintain their husbands back and the movie ends when they promise they would pay more attention to the needs of their homes and their husbands.

The movie *Azzawag Ala Attarika Al hadithat/ Marriage According To The Modern Style* directed by Salah Karim in 1968, represents an explicit challenge to the old tradition of gender roles in Egyptian family. At the beginning of the movie Noha's father (Mohamed Reda) seems very protective toward his daughters as he does not like the idea that girls should go out on a camping trip with boys. But his little daughter Filfila (Inas Abdalla) tells him that this tradition existed when women were not educated and that is why their parents always worried about them. But being educated, women are now more able to be involved in everyday life activities and more entitled to carry responsibilities and fulfill tasks that used to be restricted to men. In this way, the movie is suggesting that women and men should share the same responsibilities and have the same rights; the most explicit issues that the movie presents are that women have the right to go out and work and that men have to help women in their housework.

From the very beginning of the movie, Noha (Soad Hosni) is portrayed as the organizer of the camping trip and she appears to be the most responsible person among all of them. Furthermore, when all campers reach the beach, Noha suggests that they should divide tasks. The young men respond that women should be responsible for cooking and cleaning while men should be there to enjoy their time only. Women

respond that this is the time of equality; men and women are expected to share rights and responsibilities. While discussing the issue, the men leave abruptly to go swimming, expecting the girls would cook for them. Subsequently, the girls prepare food enough only for themselves, challenging men to show their steadfastness in their belief that men are superior to women. Finally, both sides agree that they would play a soccer game and whoever loses will be responsible for serving the other party.

The old school is represented in Noha's father who advocates the traditional gender roles that were common in the Egyptian society and which the movie deconstructs as well. The relationship between Noha's father and his wife is very indicative of the movie's message regarding old-fashioned people; Noha's mother holds a passive position regarding all the issues that the family goes through. She does not have a say in her daughter's marriage, she follows her husband's decisions, instead. Also, in the scene when the car of the old-fashioned people is chasing the car which the modern educated people are driving includes a comparison between Noha as a representative of the new generation and her mother who stands for the traditional way of thinking. Noha's mother is sitting in the back seat of the car and busy with peeling an orange for her little daughter while, simultaneously, her elder daughter Noha is driving the other car in front of them. This scene indicates that it is the time for women, who used to be perceived as passive participants in life's journeys, to share leadership once they are qualified to do so.

The Nasser regime challenged the family structure not only by offering women better educational opportunities that would enable them to find good job opportunities outside their houses, but also by deconstructing the cultural mode of conducting marriage.

The Egyptian movies that were produced in the fifties and sixties served that purpose strongly; they favored the American style marriage to the traditional arranged one that was very common among Egyptian people. In fact there were slight differences between the traditions of conducting marriage between Christians and Muslims, but since most the narratives of the Egyptian movies that were produced at that time were about Muslims characters, I will refer briefly to the ethics of marriage among Muslims only.

Marriage in Muslim societies in general and in Egypt in particular takes place through the agreement between the two sides; usually the family of the male courts the girl through a formal visit paid by the former to the latter. Regarding marriage among Muslims families in Egypt, Raphael Patai in his book *Women in the Modern World* noted that:

Women have limited freedom in selecting a husband, but a man is limited only by immaturity, fifteen being generally agreed to be the age of maturity. A woman cannot be forced into marriage if she is a virgin. However, she must heed the advice of the male relative who is responsible for her, ordinarily her father or any male relative on her father's side who is *in loco parentis*. (108)

Worth mentioning Patai added that the deterrents of accepting or rejecting a husband are membership in Islam, economic status, occupation and personality. For a male's proposal to be accepted he has to be a member of Islam but he does not have to be a descendent of a Muslim family. However, the case is different for men; a man can marry a woman who belongs to "the people of the book", Christians and Jews. As for economic consideration, the man has to be able to pay the bride a dowry and should be able to

provide her with a good life similar or better than the life she is accustomed to. Occupants constitutes a very important deterrent in accepting a man's proposal for marriage; fathers-in-law prefer men who hold positions higher than theirs hoping they would raise the status of their daughters. Men holding government positions, I add, are preferred to those who do not because it is believed that government jobs guarantee a more consistent way of living than jobs in the private sector.

The movie *Alwisada El Khalia/ The Empty Pillow*, released: December 20, 1957, directed by: Salah Abu Yousef condemned the arranged marriage by representing it as a threat to the happiness that originates from marriage based on mutual love. It is arranged marriage that turned the anticipated joy of the two lovers Salah (Abdel Halim Hafez) and Samiha (Lubna Abdel Aziz) into severe suffering. After falling in love with each other, Samiha has to separate from Salah because she gets engaged to a successful physician called Fouad Azmi (Omar Hariri). Samiha does not like Dr Fouad but she has to accept to marry him partly because she does not find a valid excuse that would convince her parents to reject his proposal and partly because Salah's parents refuse to help him propose to her. The suffering of Salah begins and becomes more severe as he realizes that Samiha's marriage is inevitable. The sequence of tragic events starts with the scene when Salah sees his beloved Samiha as she goes out with her rich fiancé Dr Fouad Azmi (Omar Hariri) represents the suffering of the heart-broken lovers. When he arrives at home, Salah locks himself in his bedroom unable to talk to anybody or even sleep, especially when he recalls the passionate look he saw in Samiha's eyes when she saw him. Samiha, on the other hand, is suffering because she has to satisfy the wish of her parents and she still has to struggle to forget her first love.

Later one, when his mother shows him several photographs of women that he can propose to, Salah tells her that this is not the right way for people to marry. He explains he does not prefer this way of marriage lest he proposes to someone who is in love with someone else but who cannot tell her parents because of economic circumstances. Because of his personal experience, he condemns arranged marriage that is based upon family relations because it most likely will shatter the dreams of couples who are in love with each other.

In spite of his marriage to a lady who loves him, Salah prefers to sleep in another room so he can keep an empty pillow on which he sees the image of his first love, Samiha. To convince his wife to accept that, he tells her that he has read an article stating that mutual love between couples decreases if they sleep in the same room. Even after more than two years of their separation, Salah does not seem to care about his wife as much as he cares about Samiha, and Samiha, on the other hand, does not seem to be able to forget Salah completely.

The movie *Azzawag Ala Attarika Al hadithat/ Marriage According To The Modern Style* directed by Salah Karim in 1968, represents an explicit challenge to the old tradition of arranged marriage and advocates love based marriages. The movie, with its comical narrative, advocates love marriage sought by the young cousins Noha (Soad Hosni) and Ahmed (Hassan Yusuf) against arranged marriage intrigued between Noha's father and a rich contractor Kamil Kamal Al Kamil (Abdul Munem Ibrahim). Kamal's name, if translated literally, means "complete completion the most complete" contributes to both the comical narrative and rebellious message of the movie; it sarcastically condemns the socially constructed old tradition that a person like Kamal - because of his

financial status -is thought to be the most perfect husband. Kamil courts Noha in spite of the fact she has never seen him or talked to him. More importantly, the fact that Kamal insists on courting Noha even after he knows that she is in a mutual love relationship with Ahmed indicates that arranged marriage is based on arrogance as he believes that he is more deserving to marry her because he leads a successful career and manages a huge wealth while Ahmed is still an undergraduate student. Furthermore, the narrative indicates that arranged marriage is based on greed as well because the family, too, accepts Kamal's proposal because he is rich and leads a successful career and that is primarily what they see as a requirement for a successful marriage. This way of thinking is represented as "Old Fashion" as stated by Ahmed and the Noha's grandfather while marriage based on mutual love is presented as the natural outcome to the progress of life and the struggle between what is old and what is modern. In the final sequence of the movie this struggle is described by the grandfather as the law of nature that will never come to an end. The struggle between the old and the modern is represented in the scene in which the two cars carrying the two different schools of thought are chasing each other. After Noha and Ahmed decide to marry and force their parents to accept the fact that they are married, they go to meet the Sheikh who will conduct the marriage. As they see their parents coming in Kamal's car to stop the marriage, they take the Sheikh's car and try to escape but they are chased by Kamal's car until they all arrive the police station. All over the comic scene the car led by the old-fashioned people is following the car of open-minded educated people trying to hinder the consequences of modernity that are seen as inevitable.

Noha's perspective on old traditions is representative of the movie's message; Noha states that socially constructed traditions and customs are human-made products which are based on cultural ways of thinking that have emerged due to certain circumstances, so they should be changed with the development of society while practices based on religion only should be respected. The movie refutes the myth of the arranged marriage as a religious requirement when a Muslim sheik and a Christian priest appear in the narrative towards the end of the movie. The Muslim sheikh is presented as the certified figure who is in charge of conducting the marriage while the Christian priest appears as his friend who comes from the south of Egypt to visit him. In the last scene both religious representatives bless the marriage between Ahmed and Noha and oppose the marriage between Noha and the wealthy man whom she does not like, indicating that the old way of thinking is baseless because it is not related to religious practices.

This last scene suggests that the two main religions of the country should not be an obstacle in the ways of modernity when it comes to dealing with norms of marriage and gender roles in the family.

Noha puts her ideas into practice in her reaction to the wealthy Kamal's proposal; she says that she is not going to marry until she finishes her school and she would not marry anybody other than a person with whom she shares mutual love and understanding. Noha, who explicitly challenges the existing cultural practices, believes that marriage is as a project that has to be based on mutual understanding while arranged marriage practices are baseless. The older way of thinking, on the other hand, is presented by her father who considers arranging marriage for his daughter like selling a goat; when he explains to his father the situation of the two young men who are courting Noha. To

prove his point that he should marry his daughter to Kamal, Noha's father asks his father what he would do if he has a goat and someone offered to buy it for five Egyptian pounds while another person offered to buy it for ten. This is how the movie depicts marriage as perceived by "old-fashioned" Egyptian parents; to them marriage is a commercial deal and their daughters are mere property, a goat in Noha's case, to be sold to whoever pays more.

If fact, the struggle between marriages based on mutual love and arranged marriages is one of the most common themes of the movies of the fifties and sixties. Sometimes, the preference of love marriage is the main message of the movie and sometimes it appears as a sub-plot next to the main one. Anyways, whether it is the main message or it is just a side issue, it has always been treated seriously. Although, *Malik El Birtol/ King of Oil* presents that struggle as a side issue, it strongly criticizes arranged marriage and suggests a revolution against it; when the rich man's daughter escapes getting married to her cousin with whom she does not share feelings of mutual love, Hassuna's mother tells her that she has done something nobody else has done before. She then replies that she does not care; she would rather die than marry somebody she does not like.

The movie *Bint El Hawa / the Daughter of Love* represents love marriage as a powerful force that is able to overcome restrictions of the social strata and can triumph over marriage based on financial benefits. The narrative of the movie evolves around the Nanosa (Tahya Karyoka) the dancer who gives birth to a daughter from an illicit relationship with a man who neglects her after he finds out that she is pregnant. As a result, Nannos chooses to be a dancer who has relationships with wealthy men in order to

gain enough money to support her daughter, Zozo (Fatin Hamama), and educate her so that she can be independent and will not have to surrender to temptations due to lack of financial support. Nannosa hides her real career from her beloved daughter and sends her to live alone claiming that she herself is married to a man other than Zozo's father. During a summer vacation Zozo meets an educated young man from a wealthy family and they both love each other and agree on marriage. Interestingly enough, the young man turns out to be the son to the wealthy man called Refaat El Shirbini (Yusuf Wahbi) with whom Nanosa has been involved illegally for a long time. The struggle starts between the son and his father who does not seem to accept the marriage at the beginning but later surrenders to the wish of his only son.

The scene in which Fouad is discussing the issue of his marriage with his father is very indicative in the context of the struggle between love marriage and the marriage based on mutual financial interest. Fouad tells his father that he is in love with a girl he admires while his father tries to convince him to marry his cousin whom his mother has engaged for him because the girl is an orphan and she has inherited a relatively huge fortune. The father tells his son that from his own experience he believes that love based on interest has proven successful; he himself married his wife (Fouad's mother) without even seeing her before marriage, but the marriage was successful because there was a mutual benefit involved. He goes on to describe that "modern marriage" is a mere sensual admiration based on temporary lust and it will come to an end as soon the lust is gone. The conversation takes a more seriously critical turn when Fouad reveals to his father the identity of Zozo. There, the father mocks his son as the latter tells him that he does not know the name of Zozo's father and consequently, the spectators anticipate an inevitable

failure in the son's mission. The father, claiming that he does not want his son to be the first victim of the revolution against traditions, strongly opposed the marriage and tried heartily to stop it; he threatened to deprive his son from inheritance and offered Nanoosa five thousand Egyptian pounds to convince her daughter to give up and to refuse the marriage. After Zozo attempts suicide, the father accepts the marriage on the condition that the couples stay away for a while and that Nanoosa should not reveal to the public her relationship to her daughter. The movie ends in a climactic change in the characters of Nanoosa and Refaa Al Shirbini; Nanoosa repents and gives her money to the poor and Refaat decides to stay with his faithful wife whom he has neglected for a long time. The change in the character of Refaat reaches its most dramatic when he decides to name his grand daughter after Nanoosa, because he has witnessed the death of Zozo's mother before the latter arrives from her journey to Europe.

The movie appeals to the common people because it presents a solution to the class-based divisions in the society. The narrative attracts the spectator's identification with protagonist Zozo by presenting her as the innocent damsel who is subjected to the social injustice she is not responsible for. Spectators unconsciously see themselves in the character of Nanoosa and her daughter as they stand for the entire lower class that has the ambition to move upward in the social strata. In such a way, the movie is trying to convince the people of the necessity of modernism as a potential solution to the economic and social problems that the society is experiencing. Also, it implies that it is a prerequisite for "modernism as a social, political, and economic force is that we can and must leave the past behind, look to the future and put our trust in progress to resolve the conflicts and problems that have dogged our ancestors" (Wayne, 109).

A more serious issue that Egyptian movies of that time borrowed from American movies is presenting and sometimes normalizing the premarital love and sex relations. More importantly, Egyptian movies, in addition to presenting that issue as an existing reality, justified it as the result of different aspects of deprivation.

The Movie *Bi'r Al-Hirman/ The Will of Deprivation 1969* suggests that sex outside marriage is a natural result of emotional deprivation and psychological suffering attributed to the lack of legal intercourse. The movie presented the protagonist Nahid (Soad Hosni) as a persona who unconsciously identifies with her mother (Mirvat) and unconsciously goes out dressed like a prostitute intending to have sex with people she does not know. The movie introduces Nahid who lives with both her parents who are separated but prefer to stay together for their daughter's well-being. Her father has previously suspected his wife of cheating with her previous classmate in college, so he decides to divorce her. Because of Nahid's need for her mother, he allows the mother to stay with them but refuses to treat her as a wife. In her childhood, Nahid repeatedly sees a terrible dream in which her father is throwing her mother into a well while her mother is crying, but nobody answers. As she grows up, Nahid suffers a repeated headache that drives her to see a physician who realizes that the illness is psychological not physical and, consequently, he sends her to a psychiatrist. At the same time, she realizes that she forgets a lot of events and realizes that certain things that she sees in her dreams have footprints in her real life; after having sex with a painter one night, she goes home very tired and wakes up late in the morning complaining of the same repeated headache, she goes to see the physician who notices that there is paint on her body. At this moment, the spectator realizes that the whore who goes at night to have sex with different people is

Nahid herself, but she does that unconsciously. As the substitute character, Mirvat, goes to seduce the psychiatrist in his office, and he helps her gain consciousness and remember her real personality, she is astonished at why she is there at that time and so seductively dressed.

Finally, the psychiatrist explains that because Nahid felt sorry for her deprived mother, she identified with her by creating a substitute character that borrowed the mother's name and compensated for the kinds of things that she was deprived of. The psychiatrist also explains that the well that Nahid saw in her dreams, and in which her father threw her mother, was the well of deprivation. The substitute character Mirvat hates the real character Nahid and tries to ruin her life because the former sees the latter as the reason behind her mother's suffering as the mother preferred to stay with them and was deprived of love because of her desire to be close to her daughter. Another reason why Mirvat hates Nahid is because she knows that Nahid goes to see a psychiatrist because she wants to kill Mirvat. The psychiatrist explains that feeling as a fear of Nahid's recovery which will result in the disappearance of the character of Mirvat which means throwing Nahid into the well of deprivation in which her mother had already thrown her.

A similar movie that dealt with the issue of sex outside marriage, or to be more accurate without marriage is *Makan Lel Hub / a Place for Love* that was released in 1968 and directed by Said Marzou. Unlike, *The Well of Deprivation*, this movie attributes sex outside marriage to social problems that may strike an entire sector of the society, not just

a limited number of families. It attributes it to the economic and emotional deprivation that most middle class citizens have been going through because of the Suez War.⁴

The first scene in the movie that comes before the title sequence, manages to captivate the spectators' identification by showing a flash back to the female protagonist's suffering when she witnesses the murder of her mother and family in the Suez War 1956. In such a way, the movie accepts (Soad Hosni) and her friend Ahmed (Noor El Sherif), whom she accompanies from this first scene, as oppressed not oppressors. When the female protagonist whose name in the movie is not mentioned at all and whose role is played by Soad Hosni meets, the Male protagonist, Ahmed (Noor El Sherif) at the beginning of the movie she asks him for directions to Al Tahrir, an area in Cairo where the American University in Cairo exists now. The word *Tahrir* (which literally means 'liberation') along with the bloody introduction to the movie, and the fact she is from Suez, provokes the spectator to expect a political movie in which the two characters exert extraordinary efforts in their pursuit of liberation. Furthermore, the flashback scene in which she is crying for her dying mother is repeated over and over throughout the movie especially when she is making love; to remind the spectator of her being oppressed seeking liberation.

To the spectators' surprise, as well as to ours, the movie does not include any patriotic content except in challenging the ethics of the society that does not allow lovers to stay nights together. As the narrative of the movie develops, the two newly-met

⁴ The Suez War refers to Israeli attacks on Sinai Peninsula located in the north east of Egypt on 29 October 1956. The attacks took place as a response to Egypt's purchase of weapon from the Soviet Union. The Israeli attacks on Sinai were accompanied by simultaneous Attacks on Port Said by Anglo-French troops a response to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal.

characters walk around in the streets in Cairo and because they do not have enough money to go to a park, they decide to get into a building which is under construction. There, dreaming they are living in a nice house of their own; they stay the night together and have sex. While they are making love, the camera closes in on a page of the newspapers on which they are laying and that shows “no censorship on freedom” while other pages include news about wars and US massive budget for military preparation. The mix in the same scene between real international, military and political events with the page that shows ‘No censorship on freedom’, implies that social, political and economic instability go side by side with deprivation which could be cured by granting freedom to the people.

As I mentioned earlier, the first sequence in the movie urges the spectator to expect a patriot struggle in the path of liberation. However, the only struggle that takes place in the movie is between Ahmed the night watchman who guards the building in which they have stayed the night. The fight takes place after the guard follows them when he finds out about their presence in the building that he has been watching the whole night. This fight represents the struggle between freedom and censorship that ends up with the former hitting the latter on the head. When Ahmed hits the guard on his head, the latter faints. When the female protagonist asks what he is going to do if the man recovers Ahmed responds that he may make him faint again. This indicates that Ahmed did not kill censorship represented in the watchman completely for the sake of getting rid of it so he can spread corruption; he just acts according to the circumstances that require censorship to ignore certain social acts that emerge because of emotional, social and economic instability. Furthermore, the censorship that the movie deals with does not have

to be the state's institutionalized one; it can be individuals' conscience that Sigmund Freud calls the "super ego" and that blames individuals when they slip.

In *Abi Fawq Al Shagara/ My Father on the Tree* directed by Hussein Kamal and released in 1969 attributes love and sex outside marriage to a different kind of deprivation. It presents it as the result of the restrictions that conservative families impose on their sons and daughters regarding the boundaries of their mutual relationship during the time of engagement. Adel (Abdul Halim Hafiz) is engaged to Amal (Mirvat Amin) who prefers to surrender to her parents' teachings regarding her being strict in her relationship with her fiancé. Consequently, and after long endeavors to convince her to talk to him about their love and their future life, Adel gives up and decides to escape her and all the classmates, and go to a belly dancer called Fardous (Nadia Lotfi). She offers him the love that he needs and encourages him to stay with her.

More importantly, the movie argues that it is not only young men because of their immaturity who fall into the trap of love and sex outside marriage, supposedly mature fathers can yield to temptation if they themselves lack love in their own houses. When Adel's father, Abdul Hameed (Emad Hamdi) goes to Alexandria to rescue his only son from the hands of the prostitute, he himself falls in love with another prostitute called Mahasin (Nabila El Sayed) as she offers him love and joy.

Egyptian movies of the fifties and sixties meant to sell the American lifestyle to the Egyptian people. The American lifestyle appeared in the Egyptian movies in more than one aspect; an effective aspect is beautifying the lifestyle of the elite to the common people. More importantly, the lifestyle of the elite and higher class Egyptians was an imitation of the American one; rich Egyptians who appear in Egyptian movies resemble

Americans in the way they dress, the way they eat and even the language they speak. Furthermore, when it happens in Egyptian movies that a person moves upward in the social hierarchy, s/he always changes his/her lifestyle to resemble the American way of life. That can be seen in movies like *The Daughter of Love* in which Nanosa changes her lifestyle as she becomes rich and becomes close to the high-class families. That, also, can be seen in *The Empty Pillow* in which Salah Americanizes his lifestyle as well.

Sometimes because of the explicit tension that existed between Nasser's administration and American politics in the region, I argue, the Egyptian movie makers preferred to avoid explicitly mentioning America as a place to vacation and referred to Europe. . Even social norms that were more wide-spread in the Americas, such as Tango dance, were sometimes presented as European.

The movie *Isha'at Hub/ A Love Lie* argues that in order for young men to attract the attention of the girls they want to marry, they should have previous relationships with other women. Furthermore, the movie is stating that being a successful hard-working man is not enough to gain the heart of the woman he loves. The protagonist Hussein (Omar El Sherif) is in love with his cousin Samiha (Soad Hosni) who does not reciprocate his love and prefers to be with her maternal cousin Lucy (Ihsan Sherif). His uncle Abdul Kader (Yusuf Wahbi), who prefers him to Lucy, tells him that he has to make certain changes to his character in order to appeal to his daughter, Samiha. The narrative advocates that even being good looking is not enough as Hussein is rejected even after he changes his appearance and tries to yield to his cousin and her friends. Furthermore, the narrative draws a contrast between the attitude of young women towards Hussein and Lucy; they

always make fun of Hussein, while they challenge each other to gain Lucy's attention because the latter knows the different kinds of western dance.

As a result, Abdul Kader plots a scheme to help direct his daughter's attention to his cousin Hussein; he manages to spread the news that Hussein is in a relationship with the Egyptian actress Hind Rustom who is famous for her beauty and sexual appeal. As gossip about that love relationship spreads in the city, Hussein, unlike before the scheme, receives hundreds of phone calls from the most beautiful girls in the city, he attracts the attention of the female employees in the city and more importantly he attracts the attention of Samiha and all of her friends. The narrative develops and at the end Hussein marries his beloved cousin.

Other than presenting pre-marital relations as a prerequisite for having successful love relationships, the movie tries to normalize non-traditional practices such as mixing between both sexes in public places and at work. The movie shows men and women as co-workers, and women, although they are supposed to be middle-class citizens, spend most of time wearing and fixing their makeup. Men and women in the movie appeared together everywhere; in the nightclub, the swimming pool and the sports club.

Among the other non-traditional practices that movie advocates is the unlimited freedom in the relationship granted to couples before marriage. In a scene, Lucy tries to kiss his cousin Samiha and when Abdel Kader shows his refusal, his wife tells him that there is no problem since they are engaged. Then the only rejection that Abdel Kader shows is that they are not formally engaged yet. Throughout the whole movie, Lucy is accompanying the girls and dancing with them based on the assumption that he would get married to Samiha.

The movie *Shabab Majnoon Geddan / Very Crazy Youths* produced in 1967 and directed by Niazi Moustafa sells the American lifestyle to the Egyptian spectator in a very comic narrative. The protagonists of the movie called The Crazy Boys are four musicians who play western music in a nightclub on the beach of Alexandria. The three young men and their fourth, who is a girl disguised as a man, are liked by everybody on the beach especially girls who fall in love with and chase them from one place to another. Furthermore, all girls who appear in the movie are dressed either in swimsuits or miniskirts all the time and they always dance on the beach or night clubs.

The movie meant to yield to the Egyptian youth as it represents a means to overcome economic and social problems. It meant to convince them with adopting the American lifestyle they can find the recognition they seek and will be able to manage a career for living. The movie successfully manages to maintain the youth spectator identification by presenting the four characters of the musical team as middle or lower class students to work in the summer to make the money required for their school. More importantly, the fact that none of the characters who appear in the movie seem to belong to the high-class elite normalizes the sense that the American lifestyle, which is represented in the American- style music and dance and short dresses, is already spread among all classes of society.

Among the aspects of the American lifestyles that are presented to the Egyptian people are the short skirts worn by women in most of the movies of the fifties and sixties. Almost all movies that were released in that period represented high-class and educated middle-class women wearing skirts. Not a few of these movies, such as *Love of the Female Teenagers*, try to normalize wearing mini-skirts among school girls including

female college students. Furthermore, there is large number of actresses who appeared in the movies of this era who were famous for wearing mini-skirts,; among them Nahid Sherif, Mirvat Amin, Nahid Yousri, and Soad Hosni. More importantly, wearing mini-skirts was a very unique feature that appeared for the first time in the movies of this era and disappeared after that. Furthermore, most actresses who wore mini-skirts in the movies of this era, had to wear more normal clothes in the seventies and later on because wearing mini-skirts was not very acceptable.

The Veil or *Hijab* disappeared completely from the Egyptian cinema of Abdel Nasser's Egypt. From my own experience, the veil is the most common dress among all Muslim middle class and lower class families regardless of the region where they live. However, the Veil appeared in these movies only in times of funerals. In fact, the veil is acceptable among all families of the Egyptian society; men and women, based on the religious teachings, and families encourage their daughters to wear them as soon as they reach puberty. More importantly, the Egyptian society rejected and still rejects the calls of the feminists like Qassim Amin who considers veil a non-religious act that tend to isolate women and hinder their progress.

The movie the *Malik Il-Bitrool/ king of Oil* directed by Hassan Etl Seefi, presents the American lifestyle that is presented to the people as the result of the Egyptian people's desire, not because it is imposed on them. Hassona's sister excitedly tells the daughter of the mansion owner, the young lady who dresses in a western style, "*will you stay with us? Will you make me wear make up? Will you show me how to put on high-heel shoes?*" That shows the middle and lower class Egyptian fascination with the American lifestyle and their will to absorb it if they find those who teach them how to.

The movie *Hub El Murahikat /Love of the Female Teenagers* tries to normalize wearing mini-skirts by showing it as a natural result of the development of the society. As Doctor Hamdi shows his friends Doctor Mushin - who is a teacher at the university where the former's daughter is going to study- his objection the girls wearing short skirts, the latter tell him that this is the modern fashion that suits the time when they were born and which they have to deal with and accept. When the father mentions that he does not want his daughter to be like the girls whom he has encountered when he first walked into the university, Dr Muhsin tells him that she has to dress like them, deal with and co-operate with them, but the most important factor is that she should know how to choose good friends.

The movie also represents the struggle between generations; the father is trying to bring up his children and control them the same way he was brought up and controlled by his parents. The narrative of the movie implies that new generations cannot be controlled in the same ways old ones were and that it is the responsibility of parents to understand that and deal with it appropriately. The conservative father, Doctor Hamid, is repeatedly called regressive because he cares too much about his daughter; he does not want her to interact with boys at the university, he insists that she should live in the female-student dormitory so that she can be under constant supervision, and he fights against male students who try to introduce themselves to his daughter. In such a way, the movie is presenting the ideas of mixing boys and girls at schools as a progressive vision that means to deal with the natural development of the society.

Parents' conservative points of view regarding the lifestyle that girls should lead come from the fear that their daughters will ruin their reputations. In most Arab societies including Egypt, people believe that:

Girls must be exceedingly careful to gossip. Repeated dating with young men is interpreted as serious interest, and, ordinarily, before long, it is expected that a declaration be made either personally, or, in more conservative circles, through the families. If the affair does not lead to a proposal, the girl's subsequent eligibility may be severely damaged by the suspicion of her loss of virginity, and the presumption of other defects.

(Patai 120)

Furthermore, according to the movie's narrative, if parents insist on imposing their own way of thinking on their children, the consequences will be inevitably regrettable. In a scene, when Dr Hamid disagrees with Dr Muhsin that parents should grant their young sons and daughters the freedom to take care of their own affairs, a young girl walks in, talks on the phone to young man whom she loves, and agrees with him they should marry without their parents knowing since the latter do not accept the marriage. The message of the whole sequence is that if parents do not appreciate their sons' and daughters' way of thinking, they will end up being alienated from decision-making in the life of their children.

The movie emphasizes that girls' independence in making choices about the way they want to lead their lives is important in order for them to develop maturity and gain social and interpersonal skills. The girls will never develop these skills if they are kept under a key and lock and key in their houses. In one scene, after Mirvat goes through a

problem with one of her colleagues, she tells her father and his friend Doctor Muhsin that from her short-time experience in Cairo, she has learnt what was not possible for her parents to teach her in years. In such a way, the movie is suggesting that parents should submit to wishes of their daughters if they want to decide for themselves in issues that relate to their lives. Thus, it is challenging the tradition that “the undisputed head of the individual family is the father. He is treated with respect and deference, and even the grown-up and married sons submit to his authority” (Lichtenstadter 385) Furthermore, this movie as well as most Egyptian movies that were released in the fifties and sixties marginalizes presenting cultural values that emphasized elevating the status of parents such kissing their hands upon greeting them that was very common in middle-class Egyptian families. More importantly, the movie in its pursuit of granting more freedom to Egyptian girls, marginalizes the role of the father in the lives of their daughters; the movie explicitly advocates the idea that a girl should be given the get engaged without her parents permission. The movie presents Mirvat as a girl that chooses a revered husband in order to suggest that if girls are brought up appropriately by their parents, they would be able to choose husbands for themselves and then parents should not interfere in the decision-taking. In 1952 commenting on the father-daughter relationship in the Egyptian family, Illse Lichtenstadter wrote:

Until a girl is married, she is entirely dependent on her father; he has the duty, which he tries to carry out to be best of his ability, to provide for her, to find a suitable husband, and to give her appropriate dowry. In consequence, the daughter is deeply attached to her father and expresses her love by caring for his needs and by being attentive to his desires and

wishes. (386)

Worthy mentioning, Lichtenstadter noticed that girls' attitude and obedience toward their parents is completely voluntary and spontaneous unlike what one might think.

In addition, the movie suggests that parents' anxiety about the actions of their children is baseless and that they are usually concerned about the youngsters' behavior because they are controlled by prejudice and the false assumption that their children do not respect the common morals and values of the sound mind. This idea is clearly presented in the scene when Doctor Hamid misunderstands his little daughter when he hears her using romantic expressions as she calls on her pet cat into to come in the house. As he hears and sees his little daughter inviting the cat, he thinks she is inviting a boy into the house because she tells the cat not to be afraid as everybody in the house is asleep and because the cat is hiding behind the door. Consequently, he holds his shoes and gets ready to beat up his daughter. Finally, he realizes that she is calling on her cat as soon as it walks in.

More importantly, the movie presents a comparison between the impacts of two different attitudes of two different families on their children. Mirvat, who is brought up by a caring father, always acts maturely and feels responsible for her actions while Nahid whose mother lives with Nahid's step father and does not bother spending some time with her, falls into the tricks of the spoiled young men and the result is that she ruins her and her brother's future. In such a way, it is not whether girls should be allowed go to school by themselves or not, is be the primary issues that should preoccupy the minds of parents; they should be more concerned about preparing their daughters to be able to resist the temptations of the society instead.

In order to challenge Doctor Hamid's stubborn attitude towards modernism and the transformation of the society, the movie puts him in similar positions where he is misunderstood and oppressed. The movie is attributing Doctor Hamid's stand against modernism to his ignorance of its reality; he understands things according to their outer appearance paying no attention to the circumstances that control them. Consequently, it was necessary that he goes through certain situations when he is misunderstood in order for him think twice before he judges others. In one scene, he tries to grab his daughter toward him and accidentally, he puts his hand on the thigh of another girl instead. Interestingly enough, there are two journalists covering the first day of school celebrations and they take a picture of him and publish it on the paper. Later on, his daughter moves out of the dormitory and consequently, she sends him her address via mail. Unfortunately, she wrote the wrong address and as a result, her father goes to a whore house, by mistake, where he is arrested and again his scandal is published in the newspaper. The third time, when he finds one of his daughter's friends hiding behind the curtain in his house and being surprised, Doctor Hamid holds her hands. At this moment, his conservative friends walk in to find him holding the girl's hands and because she is wearing micro-skirt, they decide to fire him from their morals and discipline organization.

In addition to selling the American lifestyle in the form of the way of dressing unrestricted inter-gender interaction, the movie is normalizing the absorption of the American culture in the form of the American music that has been played on more than one occasion in the movie. In one occasion, Doctor Hamid goes home to find his children and their friends dancing American style and singing American songs. Again,

and like most Egyptian movies in the fifties and sixties, *Love of the Female Teenagers* is suggesting the spread and the acceptance of the American music among the middle-class young men and women. Other movies that refer to the same issue are *The Empty Pillow*, in which the singer accompanies the rock music that emerged in the USA in the forties and fifties with Arabic words that students study in elementary school which suggests the possibility of the adaptation the American music with familiar Arabic words. The same adaptation is repeated in *Bint El Hawa* where the Tango dance song includes American music and Arabic words.

Conclusion

The military coup of 1952 is considered one of the most important events in the history of modern Egypt. The revolution is very significant not only because it put an end to a long history of foreign colonization of the country that is considered the heart of the Arab world, but also because it innovated a new era of the relations between Egypt and western countries in general and the US in particular. The co-operation between the US and Egypt paved the way for a cultural border-crossing that included because of the Egypt elite's desire to modernize the country, implementing a radical transformation to the ethics and values of the Egyptian society.

In order to gain power, the Nasser regime tended to adopt the American ideals that they thought would positively develop the country's ambitions. In order to do so, the regime utilized the media in general and cinema in particular to plant within the Egyptian people the core consciousness required to implement this change. The elite utilized the media in two different ways that served the same previously mentioned target. First, they used it to create a sense of unique nationalism and a sense of superiority based on the belittling of the "Other" and which is a mere imitation of the American version of creating political "Others" for the sake of creating the sense of identity. Second, they used the cinema to normalize the "developed" American lifestyle hoping this borrowed way of life that would emancipate the minds of the Egyptian people in a way that would develop their ways of thinking.

More importantly, by imposing the ideals of a foreign culture on a society that is under restructuring, the Egyptian movies resulted in an identity crisis that the common people had to endure. People were to choose between the new ideas that were presented to them by the people they trusted, i.e. President Abdel Nasser and his regime, or their

traditions and values that they had lived with for years. Some people accepted the American values as the only savior to the economic and social problems that society was experiencing and as a hope for a better future inspired by the American example. Others refused it and sometimes they produced a counter media such as the movie *The Mummy* that was released in 1969 by Ali Abu Shadi and summarized the identity crisis that plagued the Egyptian society. The movies addressed the problem of the Egyptian people who were alienated from their history: The movie presents an Egyptian man who sells artifacts from the nation's historical monuments and because he is not able to read the language of his history and failure to realize of the value of these artifacts, chooses to sell them for the cheapest prices. Furthermore, the choice of standard Arabic has a remarkable significance here because in many of the Egyptian movies of this era, the Arabic language, as well as other features of the Egyptian identity, is given the extreme minimum of interest. .

In fact, most of changes that happened to the Egyptian society in the last fifty years, which Galal Amin summarized in his book *Whatever Happened to Egyptians: Changes in Egyptian society from 1950 to the Present*, can be partially attributed to the influence of the cinema on the people. Changes can be seen in the family values, such as parents-children relationship, husband-wife relations and the perception of gender roles in society. Changes can be seen in the mix between both sexes in the universities and even at schools and in the streets; it can be seen in the dresses and means of entertainment, more importantly, it can be seen in the ideas that control the way of thinking of Egyptian youths.

As a matter of fact, there is still a lot to be done in the research on the impact of the cultural relations that existed between Egypt and The US in the different eras of modern history in general and in the time of Abdel Nasser in particular. Theoretically speaking, one can anticipate that cinema is not the only organization that was impacted by the bilateral relations between Egypt and the US. Also, it is very important to conduct more detailed research on the consequences of showing American movies that carry American ideas in the Egyptian theaters and on the consequences of the Egyptian movies that adopt American ideas on the Egyptian society throughout the last fifty years.

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