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**The Thesis Committee for Hazem Fahmy
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Over at the Dracula Place:
Transnational Cult Cinema and Class Critique in Mohamed Shebl's
Anyab

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Charles Ramirez Berg, Supervisor

Blake Atwood, Co-Supervisor

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To Mama and Baba, always.

This thesis would not have been possible without Summer, my rock.

Abstract

Over at the Dracula Place:
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Anyab

Hazem Fahmy, MA/MA

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Supervisor: Charles Ramirez Berg, Blake Atwood

Using cult cinema studies, remake studies and camp theory, this project analyzes Mohamed Shebl's musical debut film, *Anyab* (1981)—a remake of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975)—to examine the cultural politics of early 1980s Egypt. Integrating the literature on cult as well as remade films with that on the cultural history of Egypt following the economic liberalization policies of the 1970s, this thesis seeks to nuance our understanding of the relationship between Egyptian cinema and class. Moreover, I aim to contribute to the literatures on cult and camp studies by demonstrating their applicability in the understudied Egyptian context.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: *Where Are all the Middle-Eastern Disco Vampires Now?*

Egyptian cinema has been, for decades, consistently accused of “plagiarizing” or otherwise “ripping-off” Hollywood. But of all the American films that have been remade into “Egyptianized” versions, perhaps few stand out from the rest as starkly as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), which was remade in 1981 as Mohamed Shebl’s musical debut film, *Anyab (Fangs)*. An unabashed remake of the Jim Sharman camp-cult classic, *Anyab* is a similarly intertextual film whose multidimensional narrative and aesthetic demand repetitive viewings in order to be thoroughly comprehended, let alone appreciated.¹ Following roughly the same plot and character archetypes of its source material, the film transplants *Rocky Horror*’s story and setting to an Egyptian context, replacing Dr. Frank-N-Furter with Dracula, and the overt queerness of the original text with didactic, satirical class commentary. Though the vast majority of the cast were by no means prominent celebrities, neither in their heyday nor in the decades since, two notable exceptions occur: the iconic musician Ahmed Adawiya, who plays Dracula, and the prominent director Hassan el-Imam, who plays the Narrator, the equivalent of *Rocky Horror*’s Criminologist.

As an homage to a host of genre and B-movies, the convoluted plot of *Rocky Horror* is a pastiche of tropes from horror, science-fiction and cult cinema. The story is narrated by a criminologist who introduces the audience to the newly engaged—“innocent”—couple, Brad and Janet (Barry Bostwick and Susan Sarandon). Stranded on the side of an

Ohio road on a cold and rainy night due to a flat tire, they notice a nearby castle, which they approach looking for a telephone. There, they find a group of curious and flamboyant guests holding the “Annual Transylvanian Convention,” a bizarre event headed by the mad-scientist Dr. Frank-N-Furter (Tim Curry). Things only get stranger from there as Frank reveals that the “monster” he has been building is an extremely fit man named Rocky. After a brief celebration in honor of Frank’s success, Brad and Janet are separated and Frank appears in each’s room disguised as the other in order to sleep with them. Later, Janet wanders the castle only to find Rocky and become intimate with him. Frank catches them and becomes violently jealous of their relationship. Soon after, he petrifies his guests with the “Sonic Transducer” gun, dresses them up in cabaret outfits, and has them sing a musical number with him. It is then that the other residents of the castle reveal that they are actually aliens and that they are leaving earth without Frank. After killing him, they launch the castle into space, leaving the couple behind.

Much like Brad and Janet—the couple we follow through the bizarre events of *Rocky Horror*—Ali el-Haggar and Mona Gabr’s Ali and Mona begin their story in what has been described as “the fairy-tale Kingdom of Normal.”² The opening number of the film establishes them as a typical bourgeoisie couple of the period, set to marry as soon as Ali is able to secure an apartment. And similarly to *Rocky Horror*, the plot kicks into gear with the breakdown of their car on a dark and stormy night in which the only thing visible is a gauche mansion to which they head. Upon entering the gothic building to ask for help, they find themselves caught up in a bizarre world of “foreigners” headed by a lustful fiend who quickly proves himself to be the real star of the film.

Beginning with what I will refer to as the “vampire montage”—a lengthy sequence of vignettes in which Adawiya portrays various blue-collar workers “exploiting” the young bourgeoisie couple—the second act of *Anyab* digresses from the events of *Rocky Horror*, most probably due to the impossibility of recreating the original’s sexually charged scenes within Egyptian cinema’s censorship apparatus. That said, the film remains tonally consistent with the original film’s ethos of campy pastiche. The songs are entirely new, in Arabic and on their own share virtually nothing with the original’s. However, their narrative utility and placement within the film is analogous to those in *Rocky Horror*, particularly with regards to expositional numbers such as those that introduce the couple and the “villain.” Evidently, Shebl had no reservations about the film’s indebtedness to the original as there is a scene in which a character appears wearing a *Rocky Horror* t-shirt.

The final act of *Anyab* shares a few narrative beats with that of *Rocky Horror*, but follows its own narrative and thematic logic. Just like Frank-N-Furter did with Janet, Dracula does attempt to seduce Mona, but she is completely resistant to his advances. Another significant change from the original is that Dracula’s assistant is also vying for Mona’s affection and the two fight over her. With the help of Shalaf, a hunchbacked man who resembles the original’s Riff-Raff, Ali and Mona open all the curtains in the mansion, thus killing the vampires by exposing them to sunlight. They then escape, though we do not learn exactly where they go. Before the credits roll, the narrator addresses the audience one last time before taking off his mask and revealing himself to be none other than Dracula.

Though fans of Egyptian genre cinema tend to be familiar with Shebl's films, his life and work remain relatively underexplored in academic and critical writings on Egyptian cinema. As much as one's biography is never fully sufficient as an explanation of their work, Shebl's decision to remake *Rocky Horror* into the transnational, bourgeoisie satirizing musical that is *Anyab* is clearly inseparable from his own life experience, particularly his intimate relationship with Anglo-American film and music culture. Born in Cairo in 1949 to a well-off family, his father was a career diplomat who served several ambassadorship positions across East and South-East Asia. Having accompanied his father on many of his travels abroad, Shebl was known to be invested in learning about global languages and cultures, and in 1976 earned an MA from Moscow University in Chinese and Russian. He then went on to study directing at the New York Film Academy in Manhattan, where he directed a nonfiction short film titled *A Day in the Life of New York*.

Upon his return to Cairo, Shebl began an eclectic career in which he worked across various sectors of film and media. After directing *Anyab* in 1981, he had a six-year hiatus from narrative feature filmmaking after which he wrote and directed three additional horror films: *The Spell* (1987), *Nightmare* (1989) and *Balsatour's Romance & Revenge* (1992). Though he is mostly known for these films, Shebl's work in media was far-reaching. In addition to directing a 12-part documentary series about the legendary Egyptian director Youssef Chahine and writing film criticism for publications like *Kol el-Nas* and *Ahram Weekly*, Shebl was also involved in the nascent Egyptian rock-and-roll scene, both working as an announcer in the European Broadcast in Cairo for an English-language program about the history of rock music as well as being the manager of a Beatles-style rock band called

The Mass.³ Shebl died in 1996 from liver complications. Though notable Egyptian filmmakers, such as Chahine, contributed to his obituary, he remained a largely unnoticed figure in the landscape of Egyptian cinema. This is inseparable from the fact the film genre he most worked in, and was most well-known for, was horror; one of the least popular genres throughout the history of Egyptian cinema.

Though Shebl's filmography is by and large unique in the history of Egyptian film, *Anyab* is exceptionally so. Much like *Rocky Horror*, *Anyab* refutes the categories of any single genre, blending elements of horror, comedy and musicals with a consistently campy sensibility. Because of that, and despite its similarly clear indebtedness to the craft and aesthetics of horror cinema, it is also less of a bona fide horror film and more of a parodic homage to the genre. Still, it remains fruitful to analyze *Anyab* through the lens of the horror genre, particularly when considering its politics. As Robin Wood has stated, the horror film of all genres is the one that responds most clearly and directly way to sociocultural anxieties "because central to it is the actual dramatization of the dual concept of the repressed/the Other, in the figure of the Monster." As such, "happy" endings in which the monster is destroyed and/or banished—like that of *Anyab*'s, in which the couple kills the vampire and escapes the mansion—can be loaded and/or problematic in their own right, "typically signifying the restoration of repression."⁴ Barry Langford echoes this analysis, arguing that the ideology of horror, on the one hand, "unmasks latent unspeakable desires in (white⁵, patriarchal, bourgeois) society," thus revealing "the inadequacy and hypocrisy of the culture that demands such repression." On the other, horror also "identifies its protagonist(s) and through them the audience with a project of re-suppression" in which

“containment and restoration of the *status quo ante*” is achieved through “the violent elimination of deviance and disturbance—the destruction of the ‘monster’.”⁶ Mainstream filmic horror thus always risks an act of repression.

But given the deeply intertextual nature of *Anyab*, as well as its juggling of several genres, traditions and modes, it is crucial that any analysis of the film’s ideology be rooted in a comprehensive understanding of its position within Egyptian cinema and culture at the time, as well as its status as a remake of *Rocky Horror*. *Anyab* can also be understood as an example of accented cinema given its capacity for “deterritorialization.”⁷ The film is neither wholly a product of its British-American influences, nor is it completely legible within the traditions of Egyptian cinema. It is thus the goal of this thesis to lay the theoretical and analytic contextual groundwork through which we may understand the rich and vastly intertextual themes of *Anyab*. By drawing from subfields such as remake studies and cult cinema studies, theoretical traditions such as camp, and the cultural history of the Egyptian 1970s and 1980s, I aim to contextualize *Anyab* as a hybridized work of class critique at the crossroads of Egyptian and American cinema.

***Anyab* as a (Mistheorized) Transnational Text**

Where *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* sharply diverge is not so much in their generic construction as in their paratextual contexts. Whereas the former was released in an Anglo-American filmscape in which American studio B-movies and British exploitation films—such as those produced Hammer Films—had yielded cult followings for decades, *Anyab* was initially released to an audience that generally had little to no exposure to the kinds of genre films referenced in “Science Fiction/Double Feature,” *Rocky Horror*’s opening

number. As a result, the vast majority of fantastical elements in *Anyab* have neither a significant nor notable precedent in Egyptian cinema, but are, instead heavily borrowed from Anglo-American genre films, most obviously the vampire film. In fact, the history and legacy of the vampire film looms over both films—arguably as much on *Rocky Horror*, despite the fact that it does not feature an explicitly named vampire. For starters, vampires are often queer-coded. The expressionist protagonist of F.W. Murnau’s classic *Nosferatu*, for example, is a figure of “repressed homosexuality” and an obvious ancestor of Frank-N-Furter.⁸ In turn, Frank-N-Furter can be understood “as a kind of camp tragic icon” in that he creates as much as he destroys.⁹ While Adawiya’s performance is clearly far more indebted to the latter, his Dracula is nonetheless still in lineage with the Anglo-American vampire film.

Egyptian cinema, of course, does have its own rich history and legacy of genre. Though most of the Egyptian films that have circulated in the west have tended to conform to normative expectations of Third World realist and/or arthouse drama, Egyptian cinema has a long tradition of popular genre filmmaking. As the only cinema in the region to have had a classical “studio” system analogous to that of Hollywood, the Egyptian film industry has similarly relied on genres, not to mention a star system, throughout its history in its production and distribution of films. In addition to genres that emerged due to the influence of Hollywood (such as the musical, the noir/thriller, the melodrama, and the romantic-comedy), local genres unique to Egyptian cinema such as the rural drama and the belly dance film also exist.

The period in which *Anyab* was released, the early 1980s, is particularly significant for the evolution of genre in Egyptian cinema. In contrast to the primacy of commercial genres such as the romantic-comedy and the thriller in the 1970s, early 1980s Egyptian cinema saw an emphasis on sober dramas that highlighted the everyday struggles of middle-class urban Egyptians. The informal movement that would come to be known as New Realist cinema would prove to be highly influential throughout the decade, particularly in its criticism of Egyptian society following the *infitah* (Open Door) policy, which was enacted by President Anwar el-Sadat the previous decade, transforming the Egyptian economy from Nasserite socialism to free market capitalism.

Despite the proliferation of diverse genres throughout the history of Egyptian cinema, there has never been an Egyptian equivalent to the American B-movie. Egyptian cinema has certainly (and continues to) produce discursive distinctions between “high” and “low” films and it is by no means uncommon for fans as well as filmmakers to find comedy in the dated elements of older genre films. That said, *Anyab*—unlike *Rocky Horror*—had no Egyptian legacy of B-movies to which it may be either a parody or an homage. Hence the film remains, till this day, difficult to both read and understand for the vast majority of Egyptian critics and scholars who have encountered as they have little to no framework through which to discuss its aesthetic and generic qualities.

Given this aforementioned general dearth of Egyptian horror films, *Anyab* received little critical or commercial attention in the decades since its initial release, and did not become known outside of Egypt in any remotely significant capacity until its screening at the Fantastic Film Festival in Austin, Texas in 2017. Though the film had been

commercially screened in the US at least once before, in a small theater in Brooklyn known as the Spectacle, it was its circulation in the genre festival circuit following Fantastic Fest which gave it a minor reputation in the west among fans of cult and genre cinema. As such, *Anyab* followed a somewhat similar path to that of its source text as it was released in Egypt to sparse critical attention and abject commercial failure, only to have a cultic afterlife later—though by no means as prominent or as dedicated as that of *Rocky Horror*'s.

Genre Circuits and *Anyab*'s (Mis)Reception

Whereas American critics and festival goers would, decades later, recognize the film's recycling of plot points and tropes from *Rocky Horror*, few Egyptian critics—to this day—understand *Anyab* as a remake of the British-American original. This is not necessarily surprising since *Rocky Horror* has never had a mainstream commercial theatrical release in Egypt nor has it developed a visible Egyptian cult following the same ways it has elsewhere outside the US. There is no recorded mention of how Shebl himself was able to see the film, let alone become such an avid fan, though one assumes he must have done so during his time as a film student in New York.

There were, of course, some Egyptian critics who were aware, at least to some degree, of the source text and thus evaluated *Anyab* in relation to the original, but most did not even seem to be aware of the existence of *Rocky Horror* and so were confused by *Anyab*'s pastiche of genres, interpreting the text more as an experimental film rather than a performative spectacle of camp. Additionally, seeing that it also flopped at the box office, *Anyab* is often dismissed—if not flat out ignored—within the larger schemata of Egyptian film historiography. If it is ever mentioned, it is usually as an “oddity” which cannot be put

into conversation with its contemporaries. The film thus remains trapped between Egyptian discourses that do not recognize it as a *Rocky Horror* remake and Anglo-American discourses which do not engage with its native film industry. A central goal of this thesis is to alleviate *Anyab*'s erasure and mistheorization; a second is to demonstrate the film's rich potential for elucidating a range of issues and themes concerning Egyptian cinema in the early 1980s.

Anyab has been occasionally referenced in scholarly research, yet is rarely, if ever, the focus of adequate scrutiny. A book chapter by Mark Allen Peterson, for example, cites the film as an example of the "*afrit*"¹⁰ in Egyptian cinema.¹¹ The supernatural elements of the film were of less interest to both popular and academic Egyptian critics. Mohamed Badr-el-Din praised the film and Shebl's direction for possessing a vision "without commercial impulses," lamenting how it was "fought by the censors" only to be pulled quickly and completely from exhibition. Moreover, he praises the ways in which the film "exposes the extent to which exploitation is present in society, from handymen and taxi drivers to the ruler's palace." Badr-el-Din also argues that the film's representation of Dracula was code for "the ruler of the land" which is primarily why he believes the film worried the authorities.¹² Echoing this sentiment, Ahmed Hussein similarly praises the film for depicting "how global capitalism transformed the merchant, the taxi drivers, and greedy doctors into terrifying vampires."¹³ But this was not a universal opinion. Despite acknowledging its charged sociopolitical context and post-*infatih* commentary, critics like Abdallah Ghoneim dismissed the film as an "artistically trivial" one which used "bad actors, a naïve story and primitive audiovisual effects which mock the very craft of

filmmaking.”¹⁴ Given that most Egyptian critics did not understand that *Anyab* was attempting to emulate the shock value of *Rocky Horror*, such critiques were inevitable.

Anyab’s relationship to the original film was occasionally significant to Egyptian critics’ analysis. Ali Abdel-Mohsen, for instance, rejects the view of *Anyab* as a remake, arguing that it “can be more accurately described as a movie made by a guy who’s seen ‘*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*’ and really wants you to know it.” He expands on his criticism of the film in discussing the vampire montage, mocking such scenes’ didacticism and lack of subtlety.¹⁵ Maha ElNabawi takes a more sympathetic approach to the film, describing it as a “kitsch and novel masterpiece of an overlooked fleeting moment in Egyptian music history: Arabic glam-rock.”¹⁶ Placing the film within the genealogy of popular Egyptian music of the era, she states:

It captures a perfect musical moment in Egyptian history when electric guitars, keyboards and drum machines entered the market, making that sweet 1970s-into-1980s retro sound of groovy delirium accessible. The film acts as a welcoming exhibition space for these new instruments that would eventually—despite the fears of those with high-brow tastes—dominate the soundscape of the 1980s.¹⁷

She concludes by musing that the banquet scene, in which some of the vampires drink their own blood as well as that of their friends, is perhaps “another comment on consumerism and the strained social-economic landscape of Sadat’s open-door policy.”¹⁸ Regardless of Egyptian critics’ perspective on the film’s aesthetic and generic elements, there seems to have been a consensus regarding its unambiguous relationship to the cultural politics of its era.

Western critics and bloggers, despite generally displaying no familiarity whatsoever with the sociopolitical context of the *infatih*, tended to be as enamored with the film's themes as with its ostensibly bizarre aesthetics. In its coverage of the film, the blog *Bands About Movies* raved: "Who knew that an Egyptian musical about vampires would instead be a think piece on consumerism?" before adding "I've also never seen a movie where a dance sequence ends with a real chicken being killed and bleeding all over the floor."¹⁹ In the Alamo Drafthouse's promotional release for the film's screening at the festival, *Anyab* was described as an "oddity...running commentary on the social situation in Egypt," digging "deep within 80's political geography to find interesting and universal statements to pass on." The statement emphasized the recognizability of the "basic framework" of *Rocky Horror* to the presumed American viewer, but also promotes the film for going "full tilt mad in its adaptation by throwing in every reference to vampire lore filtered through an Egyptian sensibility." In this way, the attractiveness of the "unmissable" film for the festivalgoer was located in its ability to be simultaneously recognizable and foreign.²⁰ *Birth Movies Death*, a film magazine owned by the Alamo Drafthouse, covered *Anyab* similarly, describing it as a "photostat" of *Rocky Horror* that "stops dead in its tracks to make sure we understand that the vampire metaphor is really about capitalism."²¹ But beyond the politics of the film, western critics' interest remained fixed on the seemingly bizarre and densely intertextual aesthetics of the film. Writers such as Bleeding Skull's Annie Choi paid particular attention to the film's "electrofunk"²² soundtrack, arguing that if it "were on vinyl, hipsters from Portland to Brooklyn would spin it at their DJ nights."²³

Shebl's use of British-American sonic motifs, such as the themes of *The Pink Panther*, *The Munsters* and the James Bond films, was also widely noted.²⁴

Of course, there were misinterpretations of *Anyab*'s relationship to *Rocky Horror* among American critics as well. Writing for *Daily Grindhouse*, Mike Vanderbilt argues that "the film isn't about counter culture and an acceptance of a queer lifestyle, but rather a critique of the older generation sucking the life out of the young...represented by literal vampires."²⁵ This characterization seems to be rooted in the author's misunderstanding of Shebl's agency in the omission of *Rocky Horror*'s explicit sexual content from *Anyab*. They thus frame this omission as the decision of a conservative director and fail to recognize the fact that the strictness of the Egyptian censorship apparatus would not have allowed any explicitly sexual, let alone queer, content in the film. While *Neon Harbor*'s video essay on *Anyab* displays a better understanding of this issue, as it correctly notes that *Rocky Horror*'s satirization of "middle class taboos about sexuality" would have been "untouchable in an Egyptian film," the essay also mischaracterizes the protagonists as "working class heroes" suffering from fears of "financial instability kindled by Egypt's recent foray into Capitalism."²⁶ An Egyptian viewer, on the other hand, would easily recognize—particularly from the house and neighborhood in which the opening number takes place—that the couple is, at the very least, comfortably middle, if not upper-middle, class.

That said, a few western critics did seem to understand *Anyab*'s potential as a counter-hegemonic example of Egyptian and/or Arab genre-filmmaking. In a brief write-up in *Brooklyn Magazine*, Giovanni Vimercati correctly noted that "Arab cinema tends to

be seen under the restrictive lenses of social realism and be framed by the projected tropes of naturalism,” before praising the Spectacle Theater’s choice to screen it as a dispelling of “this orientalist stereotype.”²⁷ In fact, perhaps no US-based outlet has demonstrated a better understanding of *Anyab*’s background as the Spectacle Theater in its promotional release for the film’s screening. Subverting the essentialist lens through which American film programming often treats politics in Egyptian and/or Arab cinema, the release begins with a humorous question: “The Arab Spring and aftermath has yielded an accompanying wave of essential social realist film documents. But where, you ask, are all the Middle Eastern disco vampires now?” The Spectacle Theater release otherwise displayed an acute awareness of *Anyab*’s potential to provide an “essential window into a rarely seen side of Arabic cinema.” Dubbing the film an “ultra-camp triumph” the release praises the film for its pastiche of cultic aesthetics (“black magic, singing vampires in spangles, Egyptian pop cameos...” and so forth) before giving equal attention to its “postmodern tangent...into social commentary to prove the existence of the ordinary ‘vampires of Egyptian society.’” The promotional release also paid particular attention to Shebl himself, praising the “iconoclastic” filmmaker for being a “glorious outlier in the Egyptian film world” and lamenting that his “one-man war to jump-start the Egyptian horror film industry” never really came to fruition.²⁸

The Methodology of Reading *Anyab*

This project began with this question: how does centering the reading of *Anyab* as a remake of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* alter our understanding of its position within the landscape of the Egyptian film industry of the early 1980s? Given the centrality of

Rocky Horror to the plot, themes and aesthetics of *Anyab*, I believe that any study and/or reading of the film must begin with such a comparative approach, especially since it has scarcely been performed in previous analyses of the film. Moreover, since Egyptian cinema itself has no equivalent tradition of the B-movie, any serious textual reading of the film must consider its aesthetic nods to *Rocky Horror* as well as the treasure trove of genre films which inspired it.

I intend to approach these questions by centering first and foremost the text of *Anyab*, paying particular attention to the syncretic aspects of its audiovisual craft. Drawing from adaptation studies, cult and camp cinema studies as well as genre theory, the textual analysis of this project aims to contextualize the thematic and ideological workings of *Anyab* within the cultural-historical context of the post-*infitah* malaise of the early 1980s. Specifically, my reading argues that Shebl sought to position the film *against* his contemporaries’—namely those associated with the New Realist movement—bourgeoisie framework of *infitah* critique. In other words, this project seeks to understand how Mohamed Shebl utilized the aesthetic and thematic qualities of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in *Anyab* to comment on both Egyptian cinema and society in the early 1980s.

With the exception of Viola Shafik, virtually no anglophone academic has covered *Anyab* in any significant shape or form. Writing in her seminal monograph, *Popular Egyptian Cinema*, Shafik argues that *Anyab* is a classist text given its casting of the popular folk singer Ahmed Adawiya as the film’s villain, Dracula.²⁹ A popular musician before transitioning to acting, Adawiya’s music and persona caused a stir in public discourse due to its perceived “vulgarity” and circulation outside official channels of music distribution.

‘Adawiya himself, through his star persona and the arc of his career, was intimately linked to the *infitah*, as his music could not have even circulated without the emergence of unofficial music distribution methods born out of the deregulation of the 1970s.³⁰

For many commentators, Adawiya was “synonymous with trivial art (*al-fann al-habit*),”³¹ and discourses around triviality were intimately related to those around “meaninglessness.” Such terms were “often attributed to songs or films straddling the boundaries between sober ‘high art’ that seeks to invoke the classical heritage and ‘folk art’ derived from the premodern local Egyptian tradition.”³² Thus despite being immensely popular by the time he was cast in *Anyab*, Adawiya was by no means a figure without controversy, particularly among upper-class Egyptians, and any reading of the film must read his casting along such lines. That said, I argue that Shafik mistheroizes the film by failing to account for its status as a remake of *Rocky Horror*. Instead, Shafik states that *Anyab* is “inspired” by *Rocky Horror*, a mislabel that prevents adequate analysis of the former as a conscious remake of the latter.³³ I argue that, in mischaracterizing *Anyab* as anything but a remake of *Rocky Horror*, critics like Shafik misunderstand Shebl’s transfiguration of the original’s mockery of American bourgeoisie sensibilities into an Egyptian context.

As such, my reading of *Anyab*—its aesthetics and class politics—will begin through the lens of adaptation. Specifically, I will be looking to two common tropes in Egyptian cinema: those of *iqtibas* (adaptation) and *tamseer* (Egyptianization). While it is often used neutrally to signify that a film has been adapted and/or remade from a different source, *iqtibas* is just as often used pejoratively as a critique of foreign—particularly American—

influence on Egyptian film. My general approach to this topic builds off of Walter Armbrust's cautionary statement in *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. As he puts it: To interpret Egyptian popular culture either as a straightforward imitation of the West or, conversely, as cryptic resistance to hegemonic power, would...lead one to misunderstand the character of the art. A concern with Egypt's relationship to the West is one of the defining characteristics of Egyptian popular culture, yet blind adoption of Western culture has never been an unambiguous or uncontested feature of modern Egypt.³⁴

As Egyptian cinema has a long legacy of adapting and/or remaking Hollywood films, this project will pay particular attention to how *Anyab* fits into this tradition and discourse of remaking, using Mahmoud Qassem's seminal work, *Iqtibas in Egyptian Cinema*, which postulates that an adapted and/or remade Egyptian film's success is always linked to the degree to which it is perceived to be an "authentic" reimagining of its original text.³⁵ My focus on Qassem is due to the lack of work on film adaptations and/or remakes outside of the context of Euro-American cinema. Remake studies remains a nascent subfield within film and media studies and some of the more prominent scholars and writers within it, such as Thomas M. Leitch and Constance Verevis, have scarcely paid attention to the remaking of films outside of Europe and the US. Beyond critical aesthetic, linguistic and cultural differences between Euro-American cinemas and an industry such as Egypt's, this western-centric scholarship can be particularly difficult to adapt to my research given the stark differences in copyright laws between these nations.

Scholarship within remake studies tends to be closely connected to media industry studies and as such pays significant attention to the legal and industrial frameworks through

which remakes are commissioned, produced, and then distributed. These frameworks are often unproductive when looking at a film industry such as Egypt's in which Hollywood has little to no control over its intellectual property. In addition to the rampant media piracy that has existed in Egypt since media piracy became possible on a mainstream, individual level, Egyptian film and television production companies, as was the case with *Anyab*, commonly poach copyrighted American material with virtually no legal consequences. As such, remake studies' tendency to focus on "official" studio-approved remakes proves unproductive for a reading of a film like *Anyab* which had no official approval from 20th Century Fox as a remake of *Rocky Horror*.

That said, much of the basic frameworks of remake studies remain, of course, highly beneficial to my analysis of *Anyab*. A particularly indispensable monograph was Lauren Rosewarne's *Why We Remake: The Politics, Economics and Emotions of Film and TV Remakes*. Despite her focusing primarily on American film and television, Rosewarne's work proved critical to my research given its focus on developing a taxonomy for different kinds of media remakes. Her fourth and fifth chapters in which she theorizes "Americanized" and "creative" remakes respectively, were particularly helpful in developing my framework for *Anyab* as both an *Egyptianized* and a creative remake. Whereas the former chapter presents a theoretical model through which to understand the impulse to remake films from a "foreign" national context into one's own and is thus directly complementary to Qassem's work on *tamseer*, the latter unpacks the creative and aesthetic relationship(s) between remakes and their source texts; a central point in my analysis of *Anyab*.

Of course, there are also monographs within remake studies which do look outside of western cinemas, the most notable of them being Iain R. Smith's *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. Though Smith does not address Egyptian cinema in particular, the theory and methodology he uses for Turkey, India and the Philippines remains highly relevant to my study of *Anyab*, particularly since "Turkification" and "Indianization" are also common terms in his analysis. As unique as *Anyab* may seem, it must be considered within the larger context of global cinemas' tendencies to remake and adapt from Hollywood. In addition to the pertinence of considering in my analysis of *Anyab* general tendencies in the production and circulation of films remade from American properties in cinema cultures such as Egypt's, Smith's research is highly relevant to my study given his focus on remakes of American genre films, particularly superhero movies, in these countries. As he has outlined, "theories of globalisation often position American culture as a hegemonic global force which dominates over local traditions." Yet there is often insufficient effort directed at understanding "precisely what happens when these American products are appropriated and reworked by other cultures," a process that has occurred in virtually every popular national cinema throughout the twentieth century.³⁶

This thesis seeks to contribute to remake studies by expanding on the work of scholars such as Rosewarne and Smith and the hitherto unexamined cinematic context of Egypt. By linking the discourses of authenticity and creativity in Rosewarne to the transnational perspective of Smith, my study of *Anyab* is poised to aid in a more robust theorization of the processes through which American films are remade around the world.

The *Infitah* and *Anyab*'s Cultural Critique

Given my intention to locate *Anyab* within the history of the post-*infitah* cultural commentary that was so prevalent in Egyptian cinema throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, I will also be looking to the literature on the cultural politics of the period. The *infitah* can be broadly understood as one part of a series of decisions by the Sadat regime to move Egypt away from the Soviet bloc towards the American sphere during the Cold War.³⁷ Referring to the Egyptian government's switch from Nasserite socialism to free market capitalism under Anwar el-Sadat, the *infitah* marked a major shift in the political, economic, social, and cultural lives of Egyptians, particularly as it allowed certain sectors and classes to thrive while others languished. The *infitah* allowed for the rise of a new "comprador bourgeoisie"³⁸ that was able to amass "fortunes in a short time span" due to rampant deregulation and corruption.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, nothing resembling a public consensus on ethics and/or efficacy of the *iniftah* was ever reached.

Given how far-reaching the impact of the *infitah* was on Egyptian politics, economics, culture and society, scholarship on the topic is as wide as it is diverse and much of it has been conducted by political scientists and economists. As I am primarily concerned with the cultural impact of the *infitah* on Egyptian cinema, and culture at large, I will primarily look to cultural and intellectual historians who have worked on the period, paying particular attention to work which documents the cultural class tensions brought about by the monumental change in state policy. More specifically, I will look to work that analyzes the post-*iniftah* discourse which criticized both the policy and the so-called "fat cat" class that emerged because of it.

Scholars such as Relli Shechter have been particularly helpful to my analysis. Observing the fierce opposition to what Beattie called the “comprador bourgeoisie” class, Shechter argues that the *infitah* triggered a shift in the class-consciousness of the *effendiya* class, the bourgeoisie middle-class which rose to prominence as a direct result of the policies of the Nasserist state over the decades prior. The rapid ascendance of the nouveau-riche *infitahi* was perceived as a direct threat on not just the livelihood, but the very identity and existence of the *effendi*, whose initially political-economic opposition to the *infitah* quickly turned into a cultural one.⁴⁰ Anti-*infitah* discourse quickly spilled over into the arts and permuted the reception of virtually every major artist who emerged in that era including, of course, Ahmed Adawiya.

It would not take long for the cinema to be similarly affected by this anti-*infitahi* rhetoric; a perspective that was predominantly represented by the filmmakers of the so-called New Realism movement. Notable names include Mohamed Khan and Atef el-Tayeb, whose films explored “social problems related to the urban lower-middle class, such as the housing crisis, migrant workers, and political abuses.”⁴¹ Fiercely critical of the *infitah*, as well as of the classes that emerged because of it, these filmmakers’ work is an aesthetic and thematic far cry from those of Shebl’s filmography.⁴² This is primarily evident in their emphasis on sober dramatic performances and opposition to the flashy techniques of 1970s musicals and romantic-comedies.

Though *Anyab* and Shebl’s later films too possessed an “implicit criticism of Sadat’s Open Door economic policy” which made them “as much concerned with the social order of [their] time as with modernity,”⁴³ I vehemently disagree with Shafik’s argument

that *Anyab* sought to critique the *infitahi* classes in the same way the New Realist films did. Returning to the subject of Adawiya's casting, Shafik argues that the decision to put him in the role of the villain sought to appease the kind of *effendiya* audience who would have been opposed to what Adawiya's career represented. However, I would argue that *Anyab*'s treatment of Adawiya is a blatantly self-aware satire of the New Realists' depiction, and understanding, of the so-called "fat cat" class that emerged out of the *iniftah*.

In casting as a villain an artist whose career would not have been possible before the *iniftah*, Shebl initially seems to be making a case against Adawiya that would be in line with mainstream bourgeoisie criticism against the singers' "vulgarity." Yet, in emphasizing the "foreignness" of the Dracula character, while also contrasting the dark-skinned Adawiya with two light-skinned leads, Shebl delivers a characterization that can only be interpreted as ironic. It highlights the absurdity of the bourgeoisie *effendiya*'s attack on the so-called *infitahi* through the paradox of a "foreign" villain who is in fact more attached to "local" culture than the protagonists themselves. I argue that the effect is not to exonerate the *iniftah* as a viable economic policy, but to critique the misdirection of the New Realists' critique from the state to the people who (supposedly) benefitted from the policy. Shebl's opposition to the films of the New Realists might therefore be understood as a form of counter cinema, deconstructing the hegemonic contemporary cinema's portrayal of post-*iniftah* class relations.⁴⁴

By positioning my reading of *Anyab* within the larger sociocultural concerns of the period, this thesis also seeks to contribute to the scholarship on cultural history of the Egyptian 1980s. Though the cinema of this period has been moderately studied through the

lens of the *infitah* by the likes of Shechter and Shafik, a similarly historically oriented study of *Anyab* is poised to expand our understanding of the class politics of Egyptian cinema throughout the decade. By looking to contentious genre works such as *Anyab*, which have always lied outside the limits of cinematic respectability espoused by the New Realist films, this thesis also seeks to counter academia's hesitancy to engage with so-called "lowbrow" Egyptian films.

Camp, Cult and Class

To explore Shebl's opposition to the New Realist films further, I will also be analyzing *Anyab* through the lens of camp and cult aesthetics. I argue that, in addition to his affection for the source text, Shebl utilized the camp and cult sensibilities of *Anyab* to further his rejection of the class politics of the New Realist films. Whereas the films of the New Realists emphasized sober performances, minimal sound queues, location shooting, and plots grounded in the minutiae of everyday Egyptian life, *Anyab* is a flamboyant, hyper-stylistic musical with an absurd fantastical plot and a penchant for overdramatic uses of sound, beyond even the musical numbers. Far from being the result of the peculiar whims of a single director, I argue that Shebl's audiovisual technique is in conversation and continuum with the aesthetics of camp and cult cinema.

In general, camp tends to be described in broad terms, more of an amorphous pastiche of styles and sensibilities as opposed to a specific category or mode. It is primarily seen as an "irreverent aesthetic" whose "most defining feature...is its overt artifice." Its "over-the-top aesthetics" react "to past or current pop culture" often "at the expense of what is considered 'good' taste." Camp film, more specifically, is seen to rely on "the

construction of absurdity and outrageousness, through plot, characters, and costuming.” Camp film thrives on “over-the-top drama and excess” creating “outlandish situations...magnified by the characters’ seriousness.”⁴⁵ The performance or reading of camp is thus inseparable from comedy and/or satire. Moreover, the term retains an explicit connection with queer aesthetics and sensibilities, and its evolution within queer American subcultures, such as drag for example, illustrate this.⁴⁶

Susan Sontag’s “Notes on Camp” remains by far the most widely and consistently cited entry point into discussions around camp. Sontag’s definition of camp can be summarized in her notion of “camp-as-sensibility.” As opposed to a defined idea, she conceives of camp as “fundamentally emotional” in the sense that “it does not argue, but feels.” This definition has been criticized for its inevitable conclusion that “camp prioritizes form over content” thereby condemning camp objects and texts to an “apolitical” orientation.⁴⁷ In the wake of Sontag’s treatise, academic writing on camp often positions it as a fundamentally queer phenomenon, even when there is pushback against the notion that it is “apolitical.” Scholars like Moe Meyer have argued that “camp is not simply a “style” or “sensibility” as is conventionally accepted, but rather that it is a fundamentally queer form of oppositional critique.”⁴⁸

As was the case with *Rocky Horror*, camp allows *Anyab* to connect its relationship with Hollywood and Egyptian cinema as well as “high art, trash cinema and popular culture through citation, appropriation, reception and recycling.”⁴⁹ Camp is particularly helpful in analyzing *Anyab* for its potential to foreground what Meyer calls the “the radical politic of parodic intertextuality.”⁵⁰ Camp is also tied to celebrity for it is “individualistic” and

“relishes the uniqueness and the force with which personality is imbued,” making it an ideal framework through which to understand the politics of casting a classed celebrity such as Adawiya in the role of Dracula.⁵¹

Though I disagree with her assertion that camp is “apolitical,” Sontag’s formulation of the mode remains the most relevant for my analysis of *Anyab*. As she states, “Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. That way, the way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.”⁵² That stylistic artificiality is crucial to understanding the mise-en-scene of Dracula’s mansion, the setting for the majority of the film’s screen time. Moreover, it is critical for understanding Shebl’s consistent employment of dramatic cuts, close-ups and sound queues which are neither meant to be taken completely seriously nor are meant to be simple comic devices. In fact, by “camping” the audiovisual language of the film, Shebl presents another dimension through which to critique and distance his work from the New Realists.

Moreover, the “cultness” of *Anyab/Rocky Horror* cannot be separated from their use of camp. This is particularly the case for *Rocky Horror*, which arguably contributed to the emergence of cult cinema discourses after the 1970s due its place at the forefront of that decade’s slate of iconic genre-bending films which thrived off of their “self-advertised cine-literacy.”⁵³ As Ernest Mathijs and Jaime Sexton have pointed out, “the phrase ‘cult cinema’ which has brought the connotations of the existing word ‘cult’ to bear on the world of film culture—is a particularly knotty term, which renders it difficult to pin down in any definitive manner.” I agree with them that, while no single “film is immanently cult...the

ways in which the concept has been utilized in different contexts and developed historically has nevertheless led to a body of texts that are frequently referred to as cult films” and that such a framework is a productive lens through which to begin examining the “cult” status, or quality, of a film.⁵⁴ As such, “a definition of cult cinema can only be intersubjective,”⁵⁵ especially since the term “cult film” has also been used by film distributors, particularly of home video as a marketing label, and to this day there are distribution labels that have thrived off of releasing titles renowned and beloved for their cultic qualities.⁵⁶

There are four primary contexts through which cult cinema has been defined: sociological studies, reception studies, textual interpretations, and aesthetic analyses.⁵⁷ But definitions of the term most commonly revolve around audience activity, the most famous example of which being, of course, *Rocky Horror* itself—the cult film par excellence in every sense of the term. In both academia and the mainstream, cult cinema has been primarily understood through the relationship between the viewer and the film, the ways in which rituals associated with cult films (e.g. lip-syncing in *Rocky Horror*) constitute a manifestation of the text “offscreen in the auditorium.”⁵⁸ As Mathijs and Sexton explain: “through dressing up, talking back at the screen, and dancing and singing within the cinema auditorium, fans of the film were engaged in textual poaching because they ‘remade’ the text within a broader community of fans.”⁵⁹ Shebl can thus also be understood as a unique participant in the *Rocky Horror* fandom, given that his film is an attempt to literally remake the text.

Given the sheer difficulty of accessing reliable box office data from the period, my classification of *Anyab* as a cult film is less rooted in its reception and more in its textual

and visual qualities. For this framework, I look to Umberto Eco's seminal essay "*Casablanca*: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage" which argues that the cultic attributes of a film begin with the text itself. As Eco puts it, cult films are visually dense texts that require a high level of cinematic fluency to be read adequately. Furthermore, this "required competence is not only inter-cinematic," but is also "inter-media" in the sense that the viewer "must know not only other movies, but the whole of massmedia gossip about the movies."⁶⁰ *Anyab* fits that description aptly as its aesthetic and thematic qualities cannot be understood without comprehension of both Egyptian and American massmedia and visual culture. *Anyab* can further be understood as a work of "meta-cult," a term Mathijs and Sexton use to describe "works which self-consciously draw on cult—cult as performing cult as it were."⁶¹ In other words, the film embodies "self-conscious cultism" by actively evoking cult film history in order to imbue itself with "cult value."⁶² Moreover, the lackluster response *Anyab* received in the Egyptian press is in line with the common reception of cult films. Explaining why cult films are commonly received poorly by critics, Mathijs and Sexton argue that "because their protocols are so focused on the mainstream of cinema, or on finding the new and novel, reviews are often unable to capture the particularities of cult cinema receptions, let alone appreciate them."⁶³ The missing context of *Rocky Horror* only made this worse for *Anyab*.

Building on such textual readings of cult films, Patrick Kinkade and Michael Katovich have outlined that such works tend to exhibit themes that "(1) place typical people into atypical situations, (2) allow for narcissistic and empathic audience identification with subversive characters, (3) question traditional authority structures, (4) reflect societal

strains, and (5) offer interpretable and paradoxical resolutions to these social strains.”⁶⁴ (1) is fairly evident in *Anyab*, just as in *Rocky Horror*—it is, after all, what kickstarts the plot of both films. The “average,” bourgeoisie couple is stranded on a dark and stormy night where they are forced to seek shelter in the twisted home of a mad character who seamlessly fits the bill of (2). Both Tim Curry’s Frank-N-Furter and Ahmed Adawiya’s Dracula question traditional gender and class authorities, thus fulfilling both (3) and (4). Lastly, the endings of both films are unresolved, leaving it completely up to the audience to figure out what might have happened to the once chaste couple who is now surely forever changed by their bizarre and fantastical encounter with Frank/Dracula. *Rocky Horror* ends with its surviving human characters writhing on the ground following the launch of the spaceship into orbit while in *Anyab* Alia and Mona escape from the mansion and into the desert where they run, seemingly forever, and past the Great Pyramids of Giza. Neither ending is meant to provide a definitive conclusion to either story, but to invite the viewer to carry it with them until a future screening.

As Mathijs and Sexton explain, “filmmakers have used audiences’ management of their ‘cult attitude’ to consciously design films to include transgressive, exotic, offensive, nostalgic or highly intertextual narratives and styles.”⁶⁵ Such was the case with *Anyab*, whose commercial failure can easily be located in the absence of the right context and market in which its construction of a cult text and paratext could produce “enviable commercial prospects, with potentially high profits margins.”⁶⁶ Yet another interesting facet of *Anyab*’s exhibitiv afterlife in the United States and Europe has to do with the fact that it garnered attention through its circulation in the burgeoning cult, genre and

exploitation festival market, for cult cinema has developed an intimate relationship with the film festival circuit. As Kirsten Stevens argues, the special and logistical parameters of film festivals cause them to be “conditioned around the fleeting presentation of cinema” which in turn means that “the festival...reflects both the physical and experiential conditions of the classic cinephile’s desired cinema” by offering a “transportive experience” through the “privileging of the delivery of cinema within the auditorium.”⁶⁷ This relationship between the “cinephile’s” conception of cinema and the film festival is particularly heightened in the case of the Austin Fantastic Film Festival, seeing as it is owned and run by the Alamo Drafthouse Theater, a chain renowned for its safeguarding of “viewing conditions and rituals that distinguish the cinema theatre experience from other forms of film consumption.”⁶⁸

But all this is a relatively new development. According to Mathijs and Sexton, cult films have historically not done well in film festivals given that they “exist outside—even in opposition to—normalized routines and protocols of cultural valuation,” but with the rise of “niche festivals” such as Fantastic Fest, “the esoteric network became less esoteric and more respected—at least as part of a niche that earned its place in the cultural landscape.”⁶⁹ Consequently, spaces like Fantastic Fest are, on the one hand, by no means truly independent of the conventional festival circuit, but on the other their machinations necessitate a shift from discussing cultic forms of reception at festivals to considering them as “self-sustaining cult events.” Rather than mere, passive guests, the audiences at such events are more like “fellow believers...closely involved with the festivals’ selections and organization...extremely vocal in offering their opinions.” They have a sense of being

“virtual co-owners” and can thus intervene in the machinations of these festivals, whether it be through disruption and protest or encouragement and support.⁷⁰

To better integrate my readings of *Anyab* through the lenses of camp and cult cinema, I look to Julie Mendenhall’s essay “Cult cinema and camp” which effectively updates Sontag’s definition for use within the landscape of cult cinema studies. A camp and cult-centric analysis of *Anyab* returns us to a comparison with *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, arguably “the quintessential comedic camp cult film” whose artificiality and “over-the-top” sensibility enable the already campy qualities of film musicals to reach an incisive crescendo with a satirical bite.⁷¹ This essay is particularly useful as Mendenhall affirms the “politically subversive” nature of camp cult films, arguing that their use of “camp characters and iconography” is crucial to understanding their subversion of dominant and hegemonic identities. This is exemplified in *Rocky Horror* by Frank-N-Furter’s adage, “Don’t dream it, be it.”⁷² I argue that, as a reconfiguration of *Rocky Horror*, *Anyab* seeks to use its campy characters and qualities for the same subversive purposes of the original, only targeting the dominant class more specifically as opposed to the sexuality and sexual repression of said class in *Rocky Horror*.

In further emphasizing the link between camp and cult cinema, this thesis also seeks to enrich our definitions of both terms by underscoring their mutual investments in understanding texts that engage in hyper performativity, dense intertextuality, and irreverent, yet biting, satire. Moreover, in intervening in the contentious question of “queerness” and camp, I seek to demonstrate the limitations of fixations upon unambiguous

queer representation in camp texts by outlining how *Anyab* is at once ambivalently and unquestionably queer.

Having laid the historical and theoretical groundwork for my thesis in this introduction, my second chapter, “*There’s a Light / Where’s the Light?: The Remaking and Recamping of Rocky Horror*,” will focus on reading *Anyab* in comparison to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* by comparing and contrasting the film’s narrative, aesthetic and thematic elements. In that way, this chapter seeks to familiarize the reader with the ways in which *Anyab* is either in continuum with or divergent from common readings and understandings of *Rocky Horror*, particularly when it comes to the film’s satirical class critique. The framework of this comparison will use the writings of Qassem, Smith and Rosewarne to further understand *Anyab* as a remake, and not simply a film that has been “inspired” by *Rocky Horror*. Chapter Two will also consider where *Anyab* fits in the tradition of Egyptian remakes of American cinema.

Chapter Three, “*You’re Wrong! There Are Vampires Everywhere!: Ahmed Adawiya and the Cultural Politics of Infitah*,” will locate *Anyab* within the context of the post-*infitah* moment of cinematic discourse. Arguing against Shafik’s assertion that *Anyab* is part and parcel of the New Realists’ attacks on the *infitah* and the “fat cat” classes which emerged because of it, this chapter will demonstrate the film’s aesthetic and thematic opposition to the period’s anti-*infitah* works. At the center of this analysis is Adawiya himself, whose complicated star persona has been studied by scholars such as Andrew Simon and Walter Armbrust. Paying attention to how Adawiya was closely associated at the time with a hitherto untapped “authentic” local music culture, this chapter will also

argue that his casting as the “foreign” villain of *Anyab* was not an affirmation of the classist discourses which surrounded Adawiya, but rather a critique of them.

Chapter Four, “*Just a Sweet Vampire: The Oppositional Aesthetics of Camp and Cult Cinema*”, will look closely at the aesthetics of *Anyab* to demonstrate their firm and unambiguous opposition to the sober and dry approach of the New Realists. Using genre, camp and cult cinema theory, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the flashy and campy pastiche of the film is integral to its satirical critique of the bourgeoisie *effendiya* sensibilities of the era. I will pay particular attention to how the camp elements of the film aim to place a distance between the experience of the viewer and that of the characters. In other words, while they are living through a genuinely horrifying experience, we are witnessing a patently absurd farce that invites us to mock the naïve fears of a naïve bourgeoisie couple, much like in *Rocky Horror*.

Thus, by textually analyzing *Anyab* through the lenses of adaptation/*iqtibas*, *infatih* films and camp-cult cinema, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the satirical and subversive class commentary of the film, which has been ignored and/or misunderstood due to the failure of Egyptian critics and scholars to recognize it as a bona-fide remake of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, as well as western critics ignorance of the sociopolitical context of the *infatih*. As such, and despite the relative obscurity of the film, this project is well-positioned to contribute to the fields of remake studies and cult cinema studies. At the same time, it stands to nuance our understanding of the state of Egyptian cinema in the understudied period of the early 1980s through the case study of a genre film whose aesthetics and themes intersect with the key cultural and social debates of its period.

Notes

- ¹ Katovich, Michael A. & Kinkade, Patrick. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading "Rocky Horror"." 200.
- ² Von Gunden, Kenneth. "The RH Factor." 55.
- ³ It is consistently mentioned in the little press there is on Shebl that he and Chahine had a professional mentorship relationship, though the parameters and timing of said relationship remain unclear. *Anyab* was, however, produced by Misr International Films, Youssef Chahine's production company, though the source of its financing also remains unclear and some commentators have speculated that Shebl may have lost his family fortune making it. Regardless, of the extent of their relationship, there is a charged scene in *Anyab* in which the young couple sits down with Dracula to watch a scene from Chahine's universally acclaimed *Alexandria...Why?* (1979).
- ⁴ Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan . . . and Beyond*. 68.
- ⁵ Langford is, of course, specifically referring to horror in the American context here, but I would argue his general framework remains fruitful for the Egyptian context as well.
- ⁶ Langford, Barry. *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. 159.
- ⁷ Colman, Felicity. *Film Theory: Creating a Cinematic Grammar*. 86.
- ⁸ Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan . . . and Beyond*. 69.
- ⁹ Oppenheim, Irene. "Rocky Redux." 28.
- ¹⁰ Usually translates to demon.
- ¹¹ Peterson, Mark Allen. "From Jinn to Genies: Intertextuality, Media, and the Making of Global Folklore." 106.
- ¹² Badr-el-Din, Mohamed. "Horror in Cinema...Between Art and Commerce!"
- ¹³ Hussein, Ahmed. "Why Did Arab Horror Cinema Stumble?"
- ¹⁴ Ghoneim, Abdallah. "Ahmed Adawiya...the 'cheap actor' excels in life."
- ¹⁵ Abdel-Mohsen, Ali. "Egyptian horror movies: Laser goats and chicken blood."
- ¹⁶ ElNabawi, Maha. "Egypt's cinematic gems: Fangs."
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ "Fangs (1981)." B&S About Movies.
- ²⁰ Ersoy, Evrim. "Fantastic Fest: Anyab."
- ²¹ Knight, Jacob. "BMD Picks: Our Favorites From Fantastic Fest 2017."
- ²² "Fangs." Spectacle Theater.
- ²³ Choi, Annie. "Anyab (1981)."
- ²⁴ Vanderbilt, Mike. "[FANTASTIC FEST '17]..." *Daily & Choi*, Annie. "Anyab (1981)."
- ²⁵ Vanderbilt, Mike. "[FANTASTIC FEST '17]..."
- ²⁶ "EGYPT'S REMAKE OF THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW." *Neon Harbor*.
- ²⁷ Vimercati, Giovanni. "Fangs (1981)."
- ²⁸ "Fangs." Spectacle Theater. 2016.
- ²⁹ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 242.
- ³⁰ Simon, Andrew. "Censuring Sounds: Tapes, Taste, and the Creation of Egyptian Culture." 234.
- ³¹ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 293.
- ³² Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 177.
- ³³ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 242.
- ³⁴ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 3.
- ³⁵ Qassem, Mahmoud. *Iqtibas in Egyptian Cinema*. 8.
- ³⁶ Smith, Iain Robert. *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. 3.
- ³⁷ Beattie, Kirk J. *Egypt During the Sadat Years*. 37.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.* 141

- ³⁹ *Ibid.* 150
- ⁴⁰ Shechter, Relli. "From effendi to inḥitāh?" 24.
- ⁴¹ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 276
- ⁴² Yet it must also be noted that, professionally, they still operated in the same circles. Atef el-Tayeb, for example, was a known collaborator of Shebl's, and even has a brief cameo in *Anyab* during the vampire montage as one of the cab drivers who refuses to take a pregnant Mona to the hospital because it is not on his route.
- ⁴³ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 150
- ⁴⁴ Colman, Felicity. *Film Theory: Creating a Cinematic Grammar*. 84.
- ⁴⁵ Shaw, Sophie. "The Performative History of Camp."
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ "camp." *The Chicago School of Media Theory: Keywords*.
- ⁴⁸ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 1.
- ⁴⁹ Mennel, Barbara. *Queer Cinema: Schoolgirls, Vampires and Gay Cowboys*. 27.
- ⁵⁰ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 9.
- ⁵¹ Babuscio, Jack "Camp and the Gay Sensibility." 129.
- ⁵² Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 54.
- ⁵³ Langford, Barry. *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. 276.
- ⁵⁴ Mathijs, Ernest & Sexton, Jaime. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 1.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 6.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 6.
- ⁵⁸ Hanich, Julian. *The Audience Effect: On the Collective Cinema Experience*. 123.
- ⁵⁹ Mathijs, Ernest & Sexton, Jaime. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 58.
- ⁶⁰ Eco, Umberto. "'Casablanca': Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage." 12.
- ⁶¹ Mathijs, Ernest & Sexton, Jaime. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 58. 234.
- ⁶² *Ibid.* 235.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* 50.
- ⁶⁴ Katovich, Michael A. & Kinkade, Patrick. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading 'Rocky Horror'." 194.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 8.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 26.
- ⁶⁷ Stevens, Kirsten. "Between Like and Love: Cinephilia and connected viewing in film festival audiences." 666.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 671.
- ⁶⁹ Mathijs, Ernest & Sexton, Jaime. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 39.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 41.
- ⁷¹ Mendenhall, Julia. "Cult cinema and camp." 191.
- ⁷² *Ibid.* 194.

Chapter 2: *There's a Light / Where's the Light?: The Remaking and Recamping of Rocky Horror*

The plots of both *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* begin in earnest when the respective couples (Brad and Janet, and Ali and Mona) are stranded on a dark and stormy night with nothing in sight but the castle/mansion which becomes the site of their torment for the rest of the film. In each film, the walk towards the building is an occasion for a musical number. In the chorus in *Rocky Horror*, Susan Sarandon's Janet smiles as she spots the castle and sings: "there's a light," hopeful that this signals the end of "the darkness of the blackest night." In the chorus in *Anyab*, however, Ali el-Haggar's Ali belts out "Where's the light? Where's the light!" as he and Mona stumble through the rain, unsure of where they are heading. The conversion of the statement from "There's a light" to the question "Where's the light" is but one of countless instances in which *Anyab* seeks to both attach itself to and distinguish itself from *Rocky Horror*, calling back to it simultaneously in reverence and in jest. This playful spirit, which permutates much of the corpus of remade Egyptian films, is one of countless instances of nuance missing from the vast majority of writing on adaptation in Egyptian cinema.

Transnationalism, syncretism and adaptation have always been key traits and concerns of Egyptian cinema. As Walter Armbrust states: "the degree to which the Egyptian cinema is truly Egyptian" is questionable. Global cinema, particularly Hollywood, has always had a profound impact on the Egyptian film industry. However, and contrary to the condescending "Hollywood-on-the-Nile" framework, Egyptian cinema's relationship with its American counterpart was never fully imitative, but was

rather always syncretic, aiming to Egyptianize Hollywood genre, star and production systems instead of directly copying them.¹ This level of nuance is rarely afforded to Egyptian cinema, whether within or outside the country. In the west, the Hollywood-on-the-Nile framework has depicted Egyptian cinema as an industry that “did little more than plagiarize Hollywood,”² while locally the issue of *iqtibas*—a contentious term which may refer to either the act of adaptation or remaking³—clouds sober analyses of the industry’s relationship with Hollywood.

As Lauren Rosewarne has rightly observed, “criticism about absent—or diluted—artistry and originality are unique to screen media” as “in most other areas of cultural output, reproductions and reimaginings are not merely predictable but are completely *expected*.”⁴ This is especially the case in Egypt. Often pejoratively labelled as “Egyptianized” films, Egyptian remakes of American films hold a prickly position in Egyptian film discourse. Some critics see them as evidence of an industry’s creative bankruptcy, others as stellar exercises in the craft of adaptation. The language around such films complicates matters further. *Iqtibas* is a somewhat illusive term which does not share any one-to-one word or phrase in English. It most commonly translates to “adaptation;” however, it is critical to note that the term, especially in the modern Egyptian context, tends to be coded with specific value judgments and implications, depending on the discursive and/or generic context. For example, saying that a text, or any of its elements, is *muqtabas*⁵ can conjure a variety of meanings; from adapted or “inspired by” to quoted or “ripped-off.” Given this porous multitude of meanings that the word holds, my writing will, when

pertinent, opt to not translate the term *iqtibas* from the Arabic texts analyzed in order to best maintain the specific implications of the word.

Defining *Iqtibas*

For the purposes of discussing *Anyab*, we only need to concern ourselves with the use of the term within the landscape of Egyptian film discourse.⁶ As Mahmoud Qassem states in the introduction to his book, *Iqtibas in Egyptian Cinema*, “Egyptian cinema is not completely Egyptian.”⁷ As he sees it, the vast majority of Egyptian films are “imported” from abroad, whether inspired by global trends or directly adapted from literature.⁸ In addition to arguing that *iqtibas* has been a feature of Egyptian cinema since its inception, Qassem also argues that it is a fairly standard feature in any national cinema. In reference to John Sturges’ *The Magnificent Seven*, he writes that “the *iqtibas* phenomenon can be found all across the world, even in American cinema itself.”⁹ This normalization of *iqtibas* is critical, especially since, as we will soon see, the term can often be associated with “theft,” particularly in contemporary Egyptian film criticism.

No discussion of *iqtibas*, especially with regards to film, is complete without the notion of Egyptianization, which Qassem identifies (along with its equivalent processes in other cultures, for example, Americanization) as a subcategory of *iqtibas*. Elaborating on this distinction, he states that this kind of *iqtibas* achieves its adaptation by “dying the original story with a national color and approximating it to a context that is closer to the society that adapted the story.” As such, *The Magnificent Seven* is an Americanization of the text that Kurosawa directed, but Richard Brooks’ 1958 *The Brothers Karamazov* is merely Americanized.¹⁰ The former completely alters the world and context of the original

text, rebuilding it from the ground up for a radically different national audience. The second merely applies the optical coat that is a different language to the original Russian story. That said, Qassem does also distinguish between Egyptianizing *iqtibas* and Americanizing *iqtibas*, arguing that “all adapted Egyptian films are Egyptianized in the sense that they have transferred all the original environments to their own.”¹¹ As mentioned above, American cinema may change the setting of the adapted film (*The Magnificent Seven*) or it may keep the original setting while merely changing the language (*The Brothers Karamazov*). Egyptian cinema, on the other hand, overwhelmingly tends to attempt the former kind of adaptation,

Of all the frameworks that one may use to approach the reception of *iqtibas*, whether commercially or critically, Qassem’s is perhaps the simplest and most straightforward. He states: “The one question that every critic who has observed adapted works was: is the atmosphere foreign for our environment, or not? If it is foreign then the knives of condemnation are sharpened. And if the adapted film suits the Egyptian environment it is praised.”¹² There are, of course, different layers to this observation. As a general rule of thumb, however, it has tended to hold true that adapted films that are perceived to have underwent a successful process of Egyptianization tend to achieve, at least, either commercial or critical success, if not both. Those that do not, on the other hand, tend to fail miserably with both audiences and critics. This could not be clearer in the reception of *Anyab*, which by all metrics certainly adapted its story from both a film and a mode of (campy cult) cinema that was undeniably obscure in Egypt at the time.

In contemporary mainstream publications, discussions surrounding *iqtibas* appear most frequently in listicles which simply catalogue contemporary Egyptian films that resemble, often very superficially, foreign films. More often than not, these kinds of articles barely have any kind of commentary on the phenomenon of *iqtibas*, whether presently or historically. The few times they do, said commentary tends to be extremely ahistorical and more prone to sensational narratives of decline than they are to sober observations of *iqtibas* or its implications in contemporary Egyptian cinema. Furthermore, many of them also claim that “Egyptianizing” began in the 1980s, post-*infitah*, a position that Qassem proves to be vehemently ahistorical.¹³ A prominent example of this can be found in Saad Yassine’s article in *al-Itihad* in which he claims that “95% of Egyptian films are stolen.”¹⁴ Decrying the adaptation, and specifically remaking, of American films, Yassine lambasts “Egyptianized Cinema,” a term that critics started using around the late 1980s to describe Egyptian films seen to be “reproductions” of foreign films. Unlike adapted films that are seen to have successfully “transported” the original ethos of the story to an “authentic” Egyptian context, films grouped under the “Egyptianized Cinema” label are seen as “translations” of foreign films.¹⁵ Same plot, different language.

Another example can be found in an article in *al-Bawaba* which makes the claim that “today, most of our mainstream movies are a substandard replica of a Hollywood production. Despite doing this for ages, more recently we’ve been justifying it by adding some Egyptian humor.”¹⁶ This last sentence is particularly confusing, given that comedy has always been a dominant genre in the landscape of Egyptianized films. Moreover, the author’s inclination towards a sensationalist narrative of decline is clear in their language,

for the article describes Samir Seif's 1991 western, *Shams el-Zanati*, as a "rip-off" of John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven*, but states that *The Magnificent Seven* was "inspired" by Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. This reflects a tragically common internalized bias in contemporary Egyptian film criticism, particularly when it comes to the issue of *iqtibas*, whereby American remakes of non-American films get to be "adaptations," but Egyptian remakes, especially of American films, are inherently "rip-offs." These articles do, of course, remain pertinent to any discussion of adaptation or hybridity in contemporary Egyptian cinema; however, given their sensationalism and lack of extensive commentary, the remainder of this section will pay far more attention to more nuanced mainstream coverage of *iqtibas* and remade Egyptian films.

Despite an ultimately cynical view, Emad 'Anan approaches the issue of *iqtibas* with said nuance far more than the aforementioned listicles and, as such, represents a more productive entry point into mainstream discussions of *iqtibas* and its implications. His hostility towards *iqtibas*, particularly in its contemporary manifestation, is made clear almost immediately when he states that "the theft of foreign film and the attempt to 'Arabize' Western film production, to transfer it to Arab screens, has become an unsettling phenomenon that must be opposed as well as scrutinized."¹⁷ 'Anan does account for differing views on the value, or lack thereof, of *iqtibas*, but ultimately retains his harsh critique of the phenomenon. For example, he does spend a significant portion of the article engaging in earnest with the writing of Rafiq el-Saban, an Egyptian film critic who defended *iqtibas*. Paraphrasing el-Saban's views, he agrees that there is, fundamentally, no "shame in *iqtibas*," particularly as it has been "common since the dawn of Egyptian

cinema” and remains so ubiquitous that “not a year goes by where we don’t see a film that has been adapted,” or remade. *Iqtibas* is thus differentiated from “theft,” which he defines as instances in which filmmakers adapt “a film without mentioning the text from which it was adapted, as if it were a purely Egyptian work,” or when “the Western atmosphere of the adapted film” remains within the remake. In other words, “*iqtibas* has rules, and it is possible to create a total Egyptian atmosphere from a foreign work,” so long as the origins of the film are made transparent and its sociocultural context is sufficiently “transported” to that of Egypt’s.¹⁸

That said, ‘Anan ultimately stands by his thoroughly negative view of *iqtibas*, stating that, despite there being “those who argue for an acceptable *iqtibas*...there is no doubt that it still represents a dangerous phenomenon if we take into account that between 1933 and 1997, Egyptian cinema has adapted about 180 foreign films.”¹⁹ In addition to his failure to cite any source, let alone a credible one, for this number, ‘Anan also fails to distinguish between the degree to which “Egyptianized” films adapt or borrow from American films. This is a common oversight throughout the vast majority of articles which excessively bemoan *iqtibas*.

Other critics, however, have tended to more explicitly echo Qassem’s axiom that “successful” Egyptianizing is possible, so long as the remade film displays a certain measure of authenticity and integrity. For example, Ahmed el-Shama’ believes that any work of art may be adapted, but “the disaster begins when the filmmaker changes nothing but the language such that even the dialogue is simply translated.” Building on this idea, he suggests that in such instances it is not even appropriate to label the director as a film

“maker,” but rather a film “copier” for “everything in these movies is simply copy and paste.”²⁰ He locates the issue with most Egyptianized films not in the act of adaptation/remaking itself, but in the aforementioned “copying” of the original text which renders the remake inauthentic. In a segment which virtually reiterates Qassem’s axiom, he asserts that most “copied” or “translated” films fail commercially, not because they are remakes, but rather because “he who copied it did not exert any effort in this process and the audience understands that.” In this way, El-Shama’ locates the degree to which a work of *iqtibas* is successful, or not, in the relationship between the text and its audience, arguing that “a good film imposes itself and people are willing to forgive an unoriginal idea as long as they feel like they are being respected as viewers.”²¹ From this point of view, “copied” or “stolen” films thus “disrespect” their audiences by using their source material as a crutch rather than groundwork for an alternative, localized, vision of the original work.

Though the industrial contexts in which cinematic remakes are produced and distributed remains radically different between the US and Egypt, Lauren Rosewarne’s work reveals that the discourses in which they are received and analyzed are remarkably similar. As she has explained, remakes tend to be criticized on the basis that they are “unnecessary”²² or otherwise “pointless, irrelevant or uninspired.”²³ Moreover, and particularly when the source text is immensely popular and/or canonical, remakes are commonly described as “dumbed down” versions of better films.²⁴ Though rarely expressed openly in Egyptian media criticism, sanitization—specifically of sexual content—is another concern regarding remakes in both the Egyptian and American spheres.²⁵ Last, but certainly not least, theft remains by far one of the most frequent accusations made

against remakes, defining much of the negative discourse surrounding remaking and adaptation. In the American context, conversations around transnational reproduction often position the United States as “the cultural imperialist *stealing* from less prosperous nations.”²⁶ Just as “to *Americanize* means to turn an ‘original’ into something mass-produced,” so too does “Egyptianizing” signal turning something of quality into a shoddy imitation.²⁷ The framework Rosewarne outlined for American film exists here, but with a reversed power dynamic. It is the Egyptian film which suffers from the cultural imperialism of American cinema.

As in Egypt, film discourses in the US consistently argue that Hollywood is somehow “less creative” today, or that has just “recently ran out of ideas.” This notion is rooted in a deep-seated nostalgia for the “glory days when Hollywood was imagined as constantly churning out original and critically-acclaimed work.”²⁸ This stems from a common form of criticism levied against remakes that is even more relevant in the Egyptian context than the American; the notion that the original film is more “developed” hence marking the remake “redundant.”²⁹ Looking closely at Americanized remakes, Rosewarne explains that they are viewed “as a cliché at best and as evidence of cultural imperialism at worst,”³⁰ particularly since the term “Americanization” carries with it “the baggage of the US as a superpower, as a democracy, as a wealthy and capitalist country and...as a mass global exporter of popular culture.”³¹ Rosewarne argues that a large part of the drive to Americanize foreign media properties, including those made in English, is to adapt the ‘stylistic signature’ so that it “*feels American*.”³² This most obviously involves adapting work into a language, accent and set of cultural references deemed accessible for a

mainstream American audience, but given the immense disparity between media production budgets in the US and elsewhere, this can also mean raising the aesthetic and production value of a foreign film or television show to the technical level that American audiences are more accustomed to, particularly when it comes to costly cinematic elements like special effects.³³

Given that Egyptian cinema often remakes American films, this aforementioned power dynamic is, obviously, reversed. The “Egyptianized” American film thus becomes a mark of American imperialism vis-à-vis the infiltration of American cultural hegemony into the mechanisms of Egyptian popular culture. The “uselessness” of the remake in this context is compounded by the impossibility of mimicking the production value of the original American film. The startling difference between the visual effects and costuming of *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab*, for instance, speak to the inevitable “cheaper” look of the Egyptian remake.

Remakes as Memes

Building on the work of Robert Stam and Linda Hutcheon, Iain R. Smith argues that transnational adaptations are best understood as “memes” since the concept allows us to break away from the restrictive frameworks of fidelity which tend to dominate the literature on transnational adaptations. The memetic framework, in contrast, allows us to consider “how and why films are adapted and reworked in contexts far removed from their source.”³⁴ In the case of *Anyab*, the “meme” in question is not *Rocky Horror* but the memetic act of Egyptianizing. Egyptianization as a term and discourse has analogues elsewhere, for example India and Turkey where the respective terms “Indianization”³⁵ and

“Turkification” similarly evoke “a transformative notion of cultural exchange.”³⁶ Scholars such as Savaş Arslan have used the term to describe the various ways in which Western film is adapted and remade in Turkey. More importantly, Arslan resists “seeing these transformations in terms of two discrete national cinemas coming into contact,” opting instead to emphasize the inherent fluidity of these transnational filmic relationships.³⁷ As in the case of *Seytan*, a Turkish remake of *The Exorcist*, such remakes can also serve an ideological function by enacting subtle and allegorized political and cultural commentary in a time when direct criticism of the government and/or society is subject to intense scrutiny and potential censorship by the state.³⁸

Commenting on the positive Anglo-American reception of these films, which often blossoms into cult followings, Smith argues that it tends to be particularly invested in the “weird and wonderful” aspects of these films without showing much interest otherwise in the film’s original national and/or cultural context.³⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 1, this was often the case with western audiences and critics’ reception of *Anyab*, whereby the fixation on the film as an aesthetic and generic “oddity” often trumped any attempt to read into its ideology within the context of its native cinema. Yet by also recognizing what is both familiar and “foreign” in such transnational genre remakes, such modes of reception also speak to less essentialist ways of looking at national cinemas.

Much like Armbrust, Smith rejects the notion of a static and/or essentialist view of national cinema. To articulate his understanding of the term, as both a construct and historical category, he looks to Darrell William Davis’ conception of “Film as Syncretism” which:

concedes that national cultures are fabricated piecemeal out of available bits and fragments, often from outside national borders. Nationality arises out of difference; it only becomes an issue, and can only be constituted, in relation to others. But this is a relative difference, not an absolute, binary difference. Contamination models avoid binary categories like black-white, east-west...A national cinema, then, is not a one-way reflection of a culture, but neither is there only a dialectical, intertextual relation between cinemas and cultures. Instead, national cinema is both of these, a reflection and a dialogue, plus the next stage in its evolution.⁴⁰

William Davis' article focuses on Japanese cinema, but the core ideas outlined above apply just the same for Egypt. Smith calls for the analysis of transnational remakes from the perspective that all culture is "inherently hybrid" rather than discrete and definitive entities with discernable and essential aesthetic and/or narrative sensibilities. Much like Smith, William Davis does not believe that a national cinema responds "in a dialectical fashion to another discrete national culture," but rather is a fundamentally syncretic and fluid entity.⁴¹ Thus, rather than existing solely within an isolated sphere that may be called Egyptian cinema, *Anyab* lies more at the crossroads of both Egyptian and American cinema, arguably taking as much from the former as from the latter.

Unlike most common examples of transnational remakes, however, *Anyab* is unique in that it is an adaptation of a cult film that itself embodies numerous "cultic" elements. Even within the context of the US, there has been little to no writing on the specific phenomenon of cult adaptation. One of the most prominent essays on the subject is I.Q. Hunter's essay, though it primarily looks to adaptations of non-cinematic cult texts

into film and vice versa. That said, Hunter's case study of the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society's filmic adaptations of the author's work remains helpful in understanding *Anyab*'s relationship to *Rocky Horror*. As with these films, *Anyab* can be considered a "fan" film and an adaptation "by and for cultists...designed for comparisons and to be viewed knowledgeably as adaptations with the originals kept firmly in mind." *Anyab* can thus be thought of as a "cult adaptation" in the sense that it is an adaptation that seeks to preserve "whatever is 'cultish' about the original text and to require a special kind of viewing by self-selecting audiences."⁴² It is thus doubly unique among the contentious cadre of "Egyptianized" American films for its extremely personal nature, as well as thoroughly intertextual relationship with the original.

The musical film's historic relationship to both cult cinema and the transnational remake is vital to *Anyab*'s hybridity as well. Björn Nordfjörd argues that international film musicals, particularly in cinematic contexts such as Egypt's, "are invariably transnational by invoking the United States in their treatment of the Hollywood musical within their own national parameters." It is this "self-aware commentary" and reflexive reliance upon the Hollywood model which defines Egyptian musical films as inherently postmodern hybrids.⁴³ Nordfjörd elaborates on his conception of the postmodern international musical by outlining that it "typically involves both the Hollywood prototype and its respective counter-image—the parody or the pastiche" and thus belongs to multiple national realms at once, making it an example of transnational filmmaking par excellence.⁴⁴ Yet such musicals are not mere imitations of the Hollywood prototype, for "instead of delivering an American painting of the world, the [international] musical is made to reflect upon

American culture and its global role.”⁴⁵ As such, unique as *Anyab* is, it remains an entry in a long tradition of hybridized musical filmmaking in Egypt.

The Vampire as a Transnational Icon

Beyond genre, *Anyab* can further be understood as inherently intertextual and transnational in its centering of a vampire explicitly named Dracula. The vampire has historically been a figure in which sociopolitical anxieties of the period are embodied⁴⁶ and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* in particular has become one of the most significant and commonly cited texts in the emerging field of remake studies.⁴⁷ As Jeffrey Weinstock has argued, practically all vampire films made after the 1931 Universal classic can be thought of as a kind of adaptation. Indeed:

what clearly marks contemporary vampire narratives of all stripes is not just the insistence upon the audience’s intertextual nomadic consciousness, but the metatextual awareness of the films themselves. All vampire movies after Tod Browning’s *Dracula* are on some level aware of themselves as vampire movies attempting to depart from yet remain close to the conventions established by Stoker and Browning. Vampire movies are thus always about vampire movies.⁴⁸

Anyab reveals an in-depth awareness of the vampire tradition. As Johan Höglund and Tabish Khair have stated, “the vampire has always been a traveler and the vampire story frequently explores and transgresses national, sexual, racial and cultural boundaries.”⁴⁹ As such, the vampire “is by nature a hybrid being” making it “uniquely placed to inhabit various postcolonial positions.”⁵⁰ But the vampire can also be understood as a “queer” being by nature of its non-normative relationship to gender, sexuality and mortality. As

both Frank-N-Furter's presentation and performance can be likened to that of the undead legend, both *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* can thus be understood as belonging to the transnational filmic tradition of the vampire, though the latter obviously does so more explicitly. By both using the name "Dracula" and transporting *Rocky Horror*'s gothic sensibility to an Egyptian context, *Anyab* can also be understood through the lens of the international B-movie gothic tradition, a transnational convergence of genres that fuses local and global influences, as articulated by Justin Edwards and Johan Höglund. These films "are often rooted in a sense of place" in their incorporation of "local stories (such as folklore) and local histories that include counter-hegemonic responses from former colonial and emerging countries."⁵¹ Such is the simultaneous "national" and "transnational" nature of *Anyab*. Given that the vampire film has not historically been successful or popular in Egypt, the legibility of the film's transnational intertextuality was always going to be limited to select viewers.

Though Nordfjörd was primarily referring to musicals, Edwards and Höglund's conception of the international Gothic B-movie harkens back to his notion that such films act as reflections upon, as well as responses to, the dominance of American films abroad. The vampire is a particularly loaded figure with which to do just that. Rather than there being a distinct and well-defined vampire genre, Weinstock proposes that we think of the vampire film as "inevitably intertextual," belonging to a tradition "defined by generic hybridity."⁵² Within this vast and diverse tradition, no character is ever as interesting or compelling as the vampire, a sentiment echoed by scholars such as Harry Benshoff.⁵³ In reference to horror films, he argues that the heterosexual couple, for example, is "invariably

banal and underdeveloped in relation to the sadomasochistic villain(s), whose outrageous exploits are, after all, the *raison d'être* of the genre.” In fact, it is usually this straight hero and heroine who are stereotyped, while the “monster” is given complex and “novelistic” characterizations.⁵⁴ They are the real “stars” of the show, the very spectacle upon which the attractiveness of the film rests.

In fact, as the titular stars of their own stories, it is more often than not the movie monsters who attract audiences. Moreover, said audiences tend to be much more likely to “enjoy, experience, and identify with” the movie monster over the so-called “normal” protagonist.⁵⁵ Weinstock, however, argues specifically that the cinematic vampire is “always about sex...marked by performances of hyperbolic gender.”⁵⁶ The vampire excessively performs gender stereotypes, often to the point of parody. Vampire males, for instance, “are impossibly manly—more manly than any human male.”⁵⁷ As such, cinematic vampires can be understood as “queer” in the sense that they reveal the inherent performativity of both “manliness and womanliness.” More importantly, they reveal these gender constructs as “masquerades,” inherently artificial constructs of arbitrary cultural expectations. Every vampiric performance is on some level or the other a hyper-performance of gender. The cinematic vampire, thus, performs the irony that “the only ‘true’ man or woman is in fact a monster.” This is further emphasized by the heightened sexuality of vampire characters which demonstrates how cultural conceptions of “normalcy” and “deviance” are in no shape or form natural and static, but are overwhelmingly local, dynamic and in constant flux.⁵⁸

Additionally, vampires are seldom decorously heterosexual, monogamous and respectful partners. Rather, they are “polymorphously perverse seducers...undisciplined forces of desire that exist outside of cultural networks of socialisation.”⁵⁹ Though censorship would have prevented *Anyab*’s Dracula from ever being as transparently seductive and flamboyant as Frank-N-Furter, he nonetheless repeatedly attempts to seduce Mona away from Ali, tapping into a classed fear of intermarriage that will be further discussed in the following chapter. Of course, an analysis of *Anyab*’s class commentary first necessitates one for its source material.

***Rocky Horror* and the Terrorizing of Middle America**

As a remake which constantly refers to its original, *Anyab* demands a comparative approach that reads both its “meta-cultic” nature and politics through the lens of *Rocky Horror*. Though scholars are often divided as to how precisely one should define cult cinema, “there is general agreement that, whatever a cult film is, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is it.”⁶⁰ In addition to its widely documented cultic reception, the text itself could not more precisely fit the bill of a cult film as defined by Eco, Mathijs and Sexton. Intertextuality, for starters, is paramount to the opening track of *Rocky Horror*. As J.P. Telotte explains, the referentiality of “Science Fiction/Double Feature”:

is significant not only because it clearly situates this very unconventional film within a long tradition of (conventional) [science fiction] films, but also because it asserts a level of cinematic knowledge, particularly about sf, that the film’s audience apparently should have—or at least might *pretend* to have—in order to properly appreciate the work: their stars (such as Claude Rains and Anne Francis),

their plots, their look, even their costuming (as when the song notes Flash Gordon's "silver underwear").⁶¹

This exemplifies Eco's notion of the cult film as "intermedia." In naming its influences at the very beginning of the film, *Rocky Horror* exemplifies cult films' tendency to be a blending of various aesthetic and thematic components which "remain distinct and identifiable...for those who will look, even as the pleasures of the cult almost invariably seem too *accidental* and inconsistent a mash-up for the latter notion."⁶²

Ideologically, however, the film has been understood as "an epic which portrays the struggle now taking place in the West between the Puritan values of Space Age Technocrats and the hedonistic values of the Luxury Leisure Class, both unleashed by the decadence that has accompanied the end of the age of Western Empires."⁶³ As Jerry B. Brown and Judith Hoch see it, "the film's main plot parodies the decline of the family and changes in male and female behavior that have shocked England and America in the post-War period."⁶⁴ The social parody begins with the very first scene—the church wedding Brad and Janet attend, at the end of which he proposes to her. The scene both mocks and refutes "the basic structure of the Judeo-Christian world of our parents."⁶⁵ As such, there is general consensus that Frank-N-Furter's torment of the couple is a deliberate attempt to "destroy the bland middle-class values they represent."⁶⁶ Additionally, scholars such as Michael Katovich and Patrick Kinkade believe that *Rocky Horror* is "interpretable vis-a-vis 1970s 'crisis films'," i.e. works which rooted in the cultural context and malaise of the "post-Watergate, post-Vietnam, and post-detente" moment.⁶⁷ As they see it, the ideological basis of such films is paradoxical: they verify society by celebrating deviance. Despite the

couple's journey throughout the film, the inevitable demise of Frank-N-Furter's world, along with the couple's escape from it, may suggest an affirmation of our heterosexual society. Queerness is banished into space. The couple can return to their "normal" lives, now, and wed. Katovich and Kinkade's reading suggests that "a conservative ideology contains *Rocky Horror*'s outrageous appearances." In other words, Frank-N-Furter is nothing more than a distraction. Traditional values win out in the end.⁶⁸

Though the ambiguity of the ending, and the aftermath of Brad and Janet's adventure, do complicate Katovich and Kinkade's reading, the sociopolitical tensions of the American 1970s are certainly inescapable in *Rocky Horror*. As Sue Matheson argues, the purpose of the audible Nixon resignation speech in the car ride is not to be overlooked. She writes:

The significance of this Cold War Republican president's resignation lies in Nixon's strong identification with conservative, middle-class Americans. Many moviegoers in 1975 would have been initiated into their culture by way of the conservative, often paranoid, and generally politically reactionary medium of 1950s matinees and drive-in double features—arguably, the late-night double feature drive-in was the place where many of Nixon's middle-class voters, who later supported their government's policies in Vietnam, found their parents' social and religious attitudes reinforced.⁶⁹

As a typical representation of said voters, Brad and Janet are "embodiments of Middle America...modern versions of the American Gothics."⁷⁰ They are "hopelessly out of date" and "their clothing and lifestyle denote a highly conservative approach to life in

the sexually liberated and politically progressive '70s.”⁷¹ Brad’s shyness around sex and sexuality marks him as “the epitome of the Nice Boy Next Door,” transmitting “that prepubescent sexual innocence found in episodes of *Leave It To Beaver* and *Mayberry RFD*.” Similarly, Janet’s “bifurcated nature” illuminates her significance as the epitome of a repressed 1950s suburban Puritan.⁷² This is particularly evident in her fixation on the fact that her engagement ring is “nicer” than her friends, a remark that exemplifies how she is predominantly invested in her socioeconomic status.⁷³ As such, there lies at the heart of both *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* a disruption of an idealized bourgeoisie conception of marriage and homemaking. In Matheson’s words:

It seems that every character in *Rocky Horror* subverts the sexless 1950s suburban dream of a white picket fence and twin beds in the master bedroom...In *Rocky Horror*, similar to those alien Others of the 1950s invasion films, characters with antisocial tendencies are suffering from a malaise generated by the United States itself.⁷⁴

The recirculation of actors from the American Gothic-inspired opening number links the world of the normal to the hallucinatory one of the castle. More importantly, the return of Riff Raff’s farmer at the film’s conclusion, his antique pitchfork now a futuristic laser, represents a kind of social retribution.⁷⁵ This harkens back to Robin Wood’s argument regarding the loaded nature of the monster’s demise in horror, and horror-adjacent, cinema.

Valuable as the horror framework is, *Rocky Horror* must also be read through its relationship to the American film musical. As Mark Siegel has noted, much of *Rocky*

Horror's "humor comes from its parody of the Hollywood musical genre," perhaps most visibly in the Rocky Horror floorshow scene; "obviously a take-off on Busby Berkeley production numbers."⁷⁶ As such, a significant part of the cult/camp appeal of *Rocky Horror* is rooted in the way in the self-referentiality of its somewhat unpolished musical numbers, which have no qualms revealing their own artifice.⁷⁷ Referencing the appearance of Tim Curry (i.e. Frank) in the opening number, Siegel argues that this doubling carries a loaded symbolic significance for, much like "the Transylvanians in the film, the sexual deviants they parallel in our culture are often regarded as if they had descended from outer space," whereas in reality they have actually "arisen from our very heartland and have always been a part of our society."⁷⁸ There's a similar ironic tension in *Anyab* between Adawiya's origins as a *shaabi* singer, a genre that is anything but foreign, and his casting as Count Dracula, a character who is explicitly referred to as foreign in the text. This irony is further emphasized by the fact that he is a "foreigner" who fluently speaks a working-class sociolect of Egyptian Arabic.

This tension between the familiar and unfamiliar arguably begins in the very first shot of the film, with those massive red lips which dominate the frame. J.P. Telotte has outlined the importance of the lips to *Rocky Horror* given how "their *separation* from the text itself" provides a space through which the audience may prepare themselves for the cult experience they are about to undergo.⁷⁹ This sensation is amplified by the opening song which openly advertises the film's transparently pastiche plot while also wrapping it within the familiar conventions of, primarily 1950s, science-fiction films, much of which are explicitly named. As Telotte explains, the song is "more than just a 'celebration' of the

movies” since it “claims a generic relationship and an audience intimacy that are being *confidently* tapped in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*.” In this way, the film seems to be implicitly identifying its audience as “a group of knowing [science-fiction] viewers...who would recognize, draw some pleasure from, and enjoy celebrating that kinship.”⁸⁰ The text of *Rocky Horror* thus preps its audience for a cultic reception.

Anyab also opens with a pair of lips singing, but rather than being disembodied they belong to a face painted black. Unlike the referential lyrics of “Science Fiction/Double Feature,” this track expresses a generic fear of fear itself, ending with the line: “Fangs, fangs, everywhere fangs!” This scene succinctly demonstrates the dynamic nature of *Anyab*’s relationship to its source material, as well as the impossibility of defining it as anything but Rosewarne’s conception of a “creative remake” even in instances where the differences between itself and the original are probably more a matter of budget than anything else. Whether or not Shebl would have chosen to mimic the disembodied look of the original lips if he could is irrelevant to the starkly different effect a visible face creates. Moreover, the song’s generalized expression of fear, as opposed to specific cinephilic references, ironically underscores the hybridity of the text, as well as its limitations—it can visually point to the opening number of *Rocky Horror*, but cannot recreate nor recontextualize its cultic referentiality.

***Rocky Horror* and the Performance of Camp**

As has been commonly noted, *Rocky Horror* is by no means short on horror elements, like “murder, a scientist bent on reanimation, and cannibalism,” but they cease to become horror when they are depicted as “caricature” in service to the narrative and

aesthetic structure of the musical.⁸¹ The characters experience horror, but we the audience do not. *Rocky Horror* operates on several levels of contrast and paradox. The film, “from the beginning...establishes a tension between the wholesome musical and the macabre documentary,” parodying the popular and pulpy genres of the 1930s to 1960s as well as playing off exaggerated depictions of the prototypical monogamous heterosexual relationships to satire middle American morality. This is particularly exemplified in Frankenfurter, who acts as the “demonic antithesis to these values” by deliberately projecting a subversive and gender non-conforming presentation that is both “man/woman, host/kidnapper, scientist/artist, creator/murderer, ghoul/human, and entertainer/torturer.” This “ambiguous counterself” is thus able to defy normative gender and moral categorizations while provoking strong sentiments in each character he interacts with. In other words, Frank-N-Furter is “simultaneously repulsive and attractive.”⁸²

Yet such contrasts and paradoxes ultimately blend seamlessly together given the film’s extensive use of camp. Though few would not argue that *Rocky Horror* is “campy,” scholars and critics continue to explore what that precisely means for the themes of the film. As Andrew Card argues, “*Rocky Horror* is not quite genuine camp—it has a deliberate self-awareness that genuine camp lacks in how it aims to recreate the corny genre conventions of yesteryear.” It is precisely this lack of “genuine” camp which drives the film’s opposition to the “dull normalcy” and “squareness that Brad and Janet exemplify.”⁸³ The disruption of that normalcy is inseparable from the film’s queer ethos. In analyzing the relationship of queerness in *Anyab* to that in *Rocky Horror*, I look to Zachary Lamm’s understanding of the term as “a way of being politically, socially, and sexually an outsider

in a normative culture that would shame those individuals who dare deviate from preset moral (and usually religious) doctrine.”⁸⁴ The journey both couples undergoes begins in a sense when they depart from the comfort of “normative culture” and are introduced into a queer one which highlights the “innumerable” and “possible manifestations” of intimacy itself.⁸⁵ This is in sharp contrast to the repressed sexual background that is all Brad and Janet had previously known. By consciously employing elements of camp, contrasting the Transylvanians “embrace [of] artifice and exuberance” with Brand and Janet’s adherence to conservative sexual mores, the film succeeds in its “assault on the square, rigid sexuality embodied by Brad and Janet.”⁸⁶

This campy assault is also facilitated by the very logic of the film musical genre. As Ethan de Seife has argued, the film musical is exceptional given the sheer extent to which irony and self-referentiality are integral to the genre’s core elements of performativity. The self-reflexivity of the musical thus highlights its “artificiality and compromises the coherence of its films’ diegeses.” The ironic elements of musicals, however, even in more meta works such as *Rocky Horror*, are always balanced with the presence of discrete moments of sincerity and genuine emotionality. In *Rocky Horror*’s case, specifically, a film “which hardly ever ceases winking knowingly at its audience,” numerous songs such as “Once in a While” and “Rose Tint My World” do ultimately signal crucial narrative pivots that communicate the performing characters’ honest and sincere emotions.⁸⁷ *Anyab* has similar interludes of sincerity, particularly as Ali el-Haggar’s musical performance of Ali is almost jarringly earnest compared to the absurdity of the plot and mise-en-scène.

But *Rocky Horror* not only demands being read as a musical, but as very specifically a glam-rock musical. In fact, the aesthetics of both films are inseparable from that of glam rock.⁸⁸ Glam, in turn, is inseparable from “camp and its treatment of star image.”⁸⁹ As Julian Cornell outlines:

Glam’s retrieval of 1950s rock and roll iconography and musical styles, wedded with an emphasis on gender fluidity, can be seen as an appropriation of camp’s strategy of reinterpreting forgotten or obsolete cinematic iconography to challenge popular culture’s rigid representational strategies.⁹⁰

Rocky Horror’s use of camp to explore “shifting signifiers of gender” is therefore in alliance with the ethos of glam rock and speaks to the genre’s cohesion with the themes and aesthetics of the film.⁹¹ As Cornell states, glam is principally concerned with stardom and identity—two of the primary hallmarks of camp texts.⁹² Since *Rocky Horror* appeared “at the very end of this fertile period in rock and roll,” the film represents “a culmination of glam rock’s recurring thematic preoccupations with stardom, identity, gender fluidity, and desire.” It is thus precisely the genre’s “obsession with the plasticity of sexuality and its expression in stage personas” that results in the kind of obsession with stardom that informs *Rocky Horror* as specifically seen in the ultimately doomed arc of Frank-N-Furter.⁹³

This construction, in turn, harkens back to the very structure of the Hollywood musical, since the genre “is concerned with the construction of community and the consolidation of heteronormativity.” For example, singing and dancing in musicals can be understood as metaphoric instances in which heterosexuality and gender roles are hyper-

performed. More often than not, the narrative arc that defines said numbers bends inevitably towards the reification of the heterosexual couple, particularly in general narrative setups like *Rocky Horror* in which the couple has been separated in some shape or form for the majority of the film.⁹⁴ Said separation happens in both films, directly as a result of the monster's intervention; however, the couple's reunification is by no means meant to reify hegemonic conceptions of the heterosexual couple. Far from it, for as Cornell explains—in stark contrast to Katovich and Kinkade—that “heteronormativity is exploded by the film,” particularly given that the “escape of the romantic couple and their authority figure friend...at the end suggests that normative heterosexuality cannot be restored.” Without further dialogue, this is primarily communicated visually for the end of the film leaves the couple writing on the ground, still in the burlesque outfits Frank dressed them in. It is anything but a sense of normativity restored.⁹⁵ Building on this analysis of *Rocky Horror's* third act, Sarah Artt argues that through both narrative cues (e.g. the conservative couple introduced to the queer aliens) and aesthetic elements (e.g. the appearance of Michelangelo's fresco of God and Adam in the penultimate number) *Rocky Horror* diffuses the lines between its high and lowbrow influences thereby presenting itself as a “site that displays the myth of integration in terms of narrative, music, and visual imagery.”⁹⁶ This is precisely how *Rocky Horror's* camp sensibility relates to its queer ethos.

As much as *Anyab* manages to smuggle said ethos under the prying eye of Egyptian censors to its vampiric mansion, the departure of the second act from that of *Rocky Horror*, of course, produces a disjuncture with its queer commentary as well. Perhaps one of

Anyab's most significant departures from its source material is in the absence of a climatic number in which the couple and their captor sing together. As Zachary Lamm argues, "the ecstatic floor show acts as hedonistic counterevidence to the claim that the sex we see is only the product of domination." In other words, "if domination does occur, it seems to be a scenario in which the dominated or objectified partner participates willingly and receives pleasure equal to or exceeding that of the dominant."⁹⁷ Frank's death can thus be interpreted as a kind of tragic end to Brad and Janet's brief encounter with a queer release from their repressed sexualities. Their inability to simply and quickly get up at the end of the film suggests an inability to return to their conventional worlds, "or even their car."⁹⁸

Dracula is not given that sense of tragedy in *Anyab*, as the couple escape into a bright morning far from the horrors they endured in the mansion. That said, the "happy" nature of that ending can also be complicated. Rather than returning to the comfortable normalcy of their homes, Ali and Mona simply run, first onto the highway from which they stumbled upon the mansion, then into the vast expanse of the desert, finally ending up at the Great Pyramids of Giza. The couple wander around, almost aimlessly before continuing to run, again seemingly towards nowhere. The scene takes on an even more absurd tone when it abruptly cuts to an orchestra playing in the desert as they run by. After noticing the couple, the orchestra packs up its gear and follows after. Ali and Mona continue running and we never see where they end up. The camera cuts back to the criminologist who, after a brief monologue, takes off his mask to reveal that he is none other than Dracula. The monster thus remains alive, the couple adrift and without hope of returning to the life they once knew.

Yet there lies a danger in the adoration of Frank and Dracula as well. As Kevin John Bozelka has argued, “Frank’s brand of rule betrays the taints of fascism.” In fact, there is no shortage of fascist iconography scattered across the film, from the “swastika-like lightning bolt insignia that the Transylvanians wear on their right arms” which “also rides atop the castle on a flag” to “Magenta’s comment that Rocky is a triumph of Frank’s will—an allusion to *Triumph of the Will*.” Then, of course, there’s Frank’s own presentation, which “imbues an image of Berlin decadence circa 1930 with fascist power.”⁹⁹ *Anyab* calls back to this theme with the scene in which Alia, Mona and Dracula sit down to watch the opening scene of Youssef Chahine’s *Alexandria... Why?* (1979). As the film is set in the titular city during the Second World War, the opening montage uses stock footage of the war, including that of Nazi imagery and Adolf Hitler saluting, as shorthand for the beginning of the war and its inevitable arrival in Egypt. Dracula exclaims that he does not understand the meaning of the film and cries: “Why does everything have to be so complicated?!” Ali attempts to persuade him that the film is worthwhile if he would only give it a chance. This scene, of course, does not aim to imply that Dracula himself is a fascist, but is more interested in lampooning the common classist notion in Egypt that people from working class backgrounds such as Adawiya cannot understand sophisticated art, a theme that will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how an intertextual and comparative reading of *Anyab* through *Rocky Horror* elucidates the various machinations of queer and class critique within the Egyptian film. By first outlying Qassem’s theories

on *iqtibas*, and situating them within recent work in remake studies, specifically the comprehensive approach of Rosewarne and the transnational of Smith, I have also sought to emphasize the vitality of considering *Anyab* as a remake given how that status has impacted its reception in both Egypt and the west, as well as the various overlaps between it and other instances of transnational genre remaking.

The unambiguous coding of Brad and Janet as parodic representations of “Middle America” is also vital to understanding the positioning of Ali and Mona as a couple the film intends to ridicule by exposing them to the terror of the other, in this case the fundamentally queer, seductive Dracula. My analysis of *Rocky Horror* has thus been in the service of contextualizing *Anyab*’s own use of intertextuality, camp sensibilities and cult film aesthetics. In the following chapter, I situate the film within the sociocultural politics of the Egyptian 1980s in order to outline the various ways through which that vampire is also unambiguously classed.

Notes

¹ Armbrust, Walter. “The Golden Age Before the Golden Age.” 293.

² *Ibid.* 298.

³ Given the illusive nature of the term, I have opted to use it in the original Arabic throughout my writing as no term in English feels sufficiently equivalent.

⁴ Rosewarne, Lauren. *Why We Remake: The Politics, Economics and Emotions of Film and TV Remakes*. 178.

⁵ The adjective form of *iqtibas*.

⁶ *Iqtibas* is by no means exclusively used in film discourse, however, its implications are radically different from other fields (literature, for example) as Egyptian cinema has a particular relationship with foreign adaptations that is simply not nearly as present, or at least visible, in other creative fields.

⁷ To the best of my knowledge and research, the only book-length study of *iqtibas* in Egyptian cinema, whether in Arabic or English.

⁸ Qassem, Mahmoud. *Iqtibas in Egyptian Cinema*. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.* 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 9.

¹² *Ibid.*

- ¹³ Though the influx of foreign media that the *infitah* allowed had an undeniable impact on both the number of Egyptianized films, as well as the awareness of them as “Egyptianized” texts, Qassem’s historical account of *iqtibas* clearly demonstrates that the phenomenon, as a whole, precedes the *infitah*.
- ¹⁴ Specifically “stolen” from American films.
- ¹⁵ Yassine, Saad. “*Iqtibas*...Bankruptcy or Laziness?”
- ¹⁶ “Hollywood goes to Egyptian cinema with those 20 copycat movies!” *albawaba*.
- ¹⁷ ‘Anan, Emad. “Theft in Egyptian Cinema: Artistic Bankruptcy or Systematic Westernization?”
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*.
- ²⁰ el-Shama’, Ahmed. “Is This Theft or *Iqtibas*? When to Say An Arab Film is Stolen.”
- ²¹ *Ibid*.
- ²² Rosewarne, Lauren. *Why We Remake: The Politics, Economics and Emotions of Film and TV Remakes*. 1.
- ²³ *Ibid*. 2.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*. 130.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*. 135.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*. 139.
- ²⁷ *Ibid*. 141.
- ²⁸ *Ibid*. 178.
- ²⁹ *Ibid*. 191.
- ³⁰ *Ibid*. 127.
- ³¹ *Ibid*.
- ³² *Ibid*. 147.
- ³³ *Ibid*. 161.
- ³⁴ Smith, Iain Robert. *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. 31.
- ³⁵ Rosewarne, Lauren. *Why We Remake: The Politics, Economics and Emotions of Film and TV Remakes*. 167.
- ³⁶ Smith, Iain Robert. *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. 42-43.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*. 43.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*. 68.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*. 144.
- ⁴⁰ William Davis, Darrell. “Reigniting Japanese Tradition with “Hana-Bi”.” 65.
- ⁴¹ Smith, Iain Robert. *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*. 8.
- ⁴² Hunter, I.Q. “Cult film and adaptation.” 364.
- ⁴³ Nordfjörd, Björn. “The Postmodern International Musical Film.” 242.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*. 244.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid*. 253.
- ⁴⁶ Smith, Iain Robert. ““For the Dead Travel Fast”: The Transnational Afterlives of Dracula.” *Ibid*. 67.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*. 69.
- ⁴⁸ Weinstock, Jeffrey. *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*. 170.
- ⁴⁹ Höglund, Johan & Khair, Tabish. “Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires.” 1.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*. 5.
- ⁵¹ Edwards, Justin D. & Höglund, Johan. “International B-Movie Gothic.” 9.
- ⁵² Weinstock, Jeffrey. *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*. 19.
- ⁵³ *Ibid*. 10.
- ⁵⁴ Benshoff, Harry. “The Monster and the Homosexual.” 230.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid*. 230.
- ⁵⁶ Weinstock, Jeffrey. *The Vampire Film: Undead Cinema*. 7.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*. 9.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid*. 8.
- ⁶⁰ Weinstock, Jeffrey. “It’s Just a Jump to the Left: *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Popular Culture.” 2.
- ⁶¹ Telotte, J.P. “Introduction.” 2.
- ⁶² *Ibid*. 5.
- ⁶³ Brown, Jerry B. & Hoch, Judith. “The Rocky Horror Picture Show: A Galactic Gothic Epic.” 61.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*. 63.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid*. 65.

- ⁶⁶ Von Gunden, Kenneth. "The RH Factor." 55.
- ⁶⁷ Katovich, Michael A. & Kinkade, Patrick. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading "Rocky Horror"." 200.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 200-201.
- ⁶⁹ Matheson, Sue. "Drinking Those Moments When..." 19.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 19.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.* 20.
- ⁷² *Ibid.* 22.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.* 23.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 31.
- ⁷⁵ Von Gunden, Kenneth. "The RH Factor." 56.
- ⁷⁶ Siegel, Mark. "'The Rocky Horror Picture Show': More than a Lip Service." 305-306.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 306.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 308.
- ⁷⁹ Telotte, J.P. "Introduction." 1.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 2.
- ⁸¹ Taylor, Rumsey. "The Rocky Horror Picture Show."
- ⁸² Katovich, Michael A. & Kinkade, Patrick. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading "Rocky Horror"." 199.
- ⁸³ Card, Andrew. "Camp, Power, "Rocky Horror"."
- ⁸⁴ Lamm, Zachary. "The Queer Pedagogy of Dr. Frank-N-Furter." 194.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 195.
- ⁸⁶ Card, Andrew. "Camp, Power, "Rocky Horror"."
- ⁸⁷ de Seife, Ethan. "Cult musicals." 305.
- ⁸⁸ Cornell, Julian. "*Rocky Horror* Glam Rock." 35.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 38.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.* 38-39.
- ⁹² *Ibid.* 39.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 46.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ Artt, Sarah. "Reflections on the Self-reflexive Musical..." 62.
- ⁹⁷ Lamm, Zachary. "The Queer Pedagogy of Dr. Frank-N-Furter." 201.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 204.
- ⁹⁹ Bozelka, Kevin John. "'Your Lifestyle's Too Extreme'..." 225.

Chapter 3: *You're Wrong! There Are Vampires Everywhere!* Adawiya and the Cultural Politics of *Infitah*

The link between cinematic syncretism, national identity and bourgeoisie culture is storied in Egyptian film history, and the tension between these three forces has been present at virtually every stage of the industry. Egyptian cinema in its first three decades “tried to link itself to an imagery of social synthesis that defined bourgeois culture... despite its reputation as a Hollywood clone.” Even on a local level, this “synthesis” was inherently syncretic as it prioritized the vernacular and quotidian, but continually drew narrative and thematic points from nationalist constructs of heritage.¹ Such was the aesthetic foundation upon which mainstream Egyptian film was built.

The hostility levelled at figures such as Adawiya, previously discussed in Chapter 1, and their work was by no means new, and so-called “vulgar” or otherwise classed stars and genres have always been a point of contention with mainstream film critics. Writing in reference to oft-criticized and dismissed film genres such as belly-dance films and melodrama, Armbrust asserts that “at all periods of Egyptian cinema critics and intellectuals have denounced such films as grossly out of touch with the realities of Egyptian society,” even as said films achieved massive commercial success.² Popular music was scarcely different, and this paradoxical criticism would also be leveled at pop stars like Adawiya throughout the decades.

Beginning with a cursory look at the general relationship between vampires and class politics, this chapter explains how Adawiya’s *Dracula* was classed both by the film itself and its critics through contextualizing the sociocultural landscape of the post-*infitah*

(Open-Door policy) era in which it was released. From there, I examine how Adawiya's film star persona was, despite the severity of the criticism levied against him, similar to classical Egyptian film musicals which built their narratives around the range and appeal of their top-billed star. Finally, I examine how *Anyab* starkly clashed with the prevailing dramatic genre of its era, the New Realist film.

Vampires and Class Politics

Beyond the Egyptian context, vampires have historically, and internationally, been steeped in class coding and commentary. Robin Wood's analysis, previously mentioned in Chapter 1, warrants reiteration here. Vampires, whether in film or fiction, are staples of the horror genre and thus, like most generic monsters, respond most clearly and directly to sociocultural anxieties by representing "the dual concept of the repressed/the Other."³ Within that formulation, vampires have their own particular set of baggage. As Jeffrey Weinstock has argued, "the vampire mythos is based around an exploitative class relation in which the upper class drains the working class."⁴ The fact that Dracula is also a Count, hence a member of the landed aristocracy, only emphasizes this link. In this sense, when vampire stories place an "explicitly lower-class (coded) character/performer as/in the place of Dracula," as with George Romero's *Martin* (1977), the classed nature of the tradition becomes evident.⁵ Barry Langford expands on this notion, noting that "the agent of horrific violence—the 'monster'—is often seen as embodying and/or enabling the expression of repressed desire(s)" and this is exceptionally the case when it comes to Dracula, "who animates intense sexual desire in the (typically bourgeois, demure) women he seduces/assaults while at the same time enacting male ambivalence towards female

sexuality in blurring lines between seduction and rape, sex and violence.”⁶ As we shall see throughout this chapter, the casting of Adawiya further blurs those lines between violation/horror and seduction/pleasure.⁷

Weinstock has argued that though “the vampire always appears to come from someplace else,” the reality is that “vampirism begins at home.”⁸ This could not be clearer in the paradoxical case of Adawiya’s Dracula, who is constantly referred to as a Count from a foreign country, despite speaking a classed sociolect of Egyptian Arabic. As such, “the cinematic vampire is an overdetermined body condensing what a culture considers ‘other’ ... a constellation of culturally specific anxieties and desires into one super-saturated form.” In this sense, vampires “resist any all-encompassing one-to-one metaphoric interpretation,” for they are always representing a host of interwoven fears, anxieties and desires. While specific examples of vampiric characters may certainly lean more heavily towards particular interpretations over others, it remains simply too reductive to say that the vampire is the embodiment of any single thing, whether it be “devouring female sexuality or alternative configurations of sexual desire or of capitalist exploitation or of viral contagion or of xenophobia.”⁹

At the same time, the most common interpolative function of the vampire remains a generalized umbrella figure for social otherness, a kind of “threatening other.” Their otherness may be specifically along sexual, racial, religious, economic, or ideological lines, but it is ultimately an otherness that threatens the normative order through seduction. It seeks our conversion and draining. This is made literal through the vampire montage. In *Anyab*, as elsewhere, the cinematic vampire acts as an “overdetermined condensation of a

constellation of cultural anxieties and desires.”¹⁰ They at once attract and repulse us through their hyper-sexuality. Our fear of the vampire is a fear of our own repressed and tabooed sexuality.¹¹

It goes without saying that, as with every national cinema, class and class identities have played a vital role in the development, production and reception of Egyptian cinema. More specifically, popular Egyptian film has over the decades “introduced a number of contradicting juxtapositions of vice and virtue with class,” thus rendering class analysis particularly relevant in any narrative that centers on morality in any significant shape or form.¹² That said, class has remained shockingly underexamined in scholarship on Egyptian cinema. The depiction of class in Egyptian cinema has not only drastically shaped entire genres, but has also consistently acted as a “symbolic signifier regarding the appearance and status of film performers.” This, of course, includes the cinematic career of Ahmed Adawiya. Bafflingly, however, class remains “one of the most neglected issues in studies of film in Egypt,” as critics and scholars continue to underestimate the role it shapes in the production, marketing and reception of films.¹³

I argue that the neglect with which *Anyab* has been treated is inseparable from this aforementioned general neglect of class in Egyptian film studies and historiography. As a film that seeks to comment didactically, often aggressively, on the sociocultural moment of the early 1980s, and the post-*infatih* period more broadly, *Anyab* cannot be understood without a thorough historical contextualization of its representation of class tensions, and that analysis in turn stands to enrich our understanding of the narrative, thematic and political role of class in Egyptian cinema in this period, beyond the canonical films of the

New Realists. Central to said analysis is a comprehensive account of the cultural impact of the *infatah* and the sociocultural class which opposed it the most, the *effendiya*.

The *Infatah* as *Effendi* Crisis

Opposition to the *infatah* was primarily, and most notably, voiced by the so-called *effendiya* class.¹⁴ The term has been used to describe the middle stratum of Egyptian society which emerged after the Second World War, and particularly during the Nasserist era. The term implies the kind of conventionalism and social orthodoxy that tends to be associated with a term like *petit bourgeoisie*, though *effendiya* have tended to be middle to upper-middle class economically. As Relli Shechter has argued, “it is hard to ascribe to the *effendiya* a uniform political outlook” as they joined and partook in a diverse range of political parties. That said, they were generally ardent economic nationalists in the sense that they saw national and economic independence as equal goals “striving for modernity” and industry “as a stepping stone to a new economy and a symbol of broader socio-cultural transformation of the Egyptian nation.”¹⁵ The *effendi* figure may be secular or religious, politically liberal or conservative, but they nonetheless remain within the sociocultural confines of the conventional Egyptian middle-class, committed to the general status quo of the modern nation state and its ultimately patriarchal notions of respectability and morality.

The Egyptian audience of *Anyab* may thus glean Ali and Mona’s *effendi* status without their explicit expression of any political views. If Mona’s sizeable house in the second song (narratively equivalent to “Damn It, Janet”) was not enough of an indicator, the song is followed by a monologue from the Narrator who outlines the couple’s middle-class status and goals. That monologue is then followed by a title card featuring an

illustration of both Ali and Mona, with text underneath the images letting us know that they both have bachelor's degrees in the humanities and that their primary goals are "happiness and stability" with their fiancé. But perhaps no single sequence makes Ali and Mona's socioeconomic class positionality clearer than the vampire montage in which the various vignettes that see them "exploited" by Adawiya's everyman vampire point to a couple that is certainly with means yet at the same time far from immune to the economic instability of the period. Moreover, as if to ensure the metaphorical deployment of vampirism is clear, a short meta-argument between Dracula and the Narrator sets up the montage. In response to the former's insistence that the Narrator is heavily exaggerating the existence and dangers of vampires, the latter exclaims: "You are wrong! There are vampires everywhere!" and then the montage begins. Moreover, at the end of each vignette, Adawiya looks to the camera and flashes his fangs. It is primarily through this marking of the protagonist couple as an unambiguously *effendi* one being terrorized by the classed monster of Adawiya's Dracula that *Anyab* positions itself firmly in the fierce polemics of class identity of the early 1980s.

The montage is also significant for its demonstration of the *effendiya*'s perceived relationship with other socioeconomic groups in Egypt. In addition to their general political centrism, the *effendiya* tend to locate themselves firmly in between two other classes, which I'll refer to as *ahl al-balad* and *ahl al-dhawāt*.¹⁶ In the broadest of uses, the former refers to the proletariat and lower-classes, while the latter signifies the well-off bourgeoisie and/or landed aristocracy. As with "*effendiya*," however, these terms do not exclusively denote material capital, but sociocultural as well. For example, one can be of means, but still speak

in a sociolect associated with *ahl al-balad*, thus rendering them ineligible of being *culturally* perceived as bourgeoisie. The proliferation of well-off individuals from “*ahl al-balad*” backgrounds during the 1970s and 80s constituted one of the most essential grounds for the *effendiya*’s fierce opposition to the *infitah*, as the changing market provided (for some) unprecedented opportunities for class mobility. This, of course, in turn disrupted the socioeconomic hierarchy in which the *effendiya* located their place in Egyptian society. The speed with which some formerly lower-class merchants were able to accrue wealth, paired with the astronomical rise of non-classical pop stars such as Adawiya, was perceived as a threat to the very existence of the *effendiya* as a class. Their opposition to figures like Adawiya was, in a sense, an attempt to reaffirm the “natural” sociocultural hierarchy to make up for the disruption of the socioeconomic one.

The heated cultural discourses of the post-*infitah* era were particularly apt demonstrations of the machinations of *effendi* identity. The switch from Nasserite state socialism to a neoliberal free market had, as expected, a massive impact on the production and reception of the arts and mass culture. Just as the *infitah* “loosened state control in the economic sphere,” so too did it do the same to the artistic sphere as well. Furthermore, technical innovation fundamentally changed the production and distribution of mass art. This was particularly the case with the music industry, whose business models and modes of circulation radically changed after the advent of cheap cassette technology, allowing for musicians like Adawiya to achieve what was then an unprecedented level of stardom and relevance without the support of the state’s cultural infrastructure. Like much of the “new mass culture,” Adawiya would be ceaselessly criticized by establishment critics, who

overwhelmingly subscribed to an *effendi* anti-*infatih* position.¹⁷ Given their commitment to the respectability politics of classical Egyptian musicians sponsored by the state, they found his music to be vulgar, trivial and ultimately “dangerous” to the *effendiya*’s way of life.

In response to the changing socioeconomic tides, the *effendiya* constructed what Shafik identifies as “the so-called *infatih* ideology...materialism spreading at the expense of the educated but materially deprived middle class,” and this construct was then projected onto any figure associated with the *infatih*, regardless of their actual role within the changing socioeconomic landscape.¹⁸ From this perspective, anyone who was seen to be benefitting from the *infatih* was somehow part of a deliberate affront to the conventional middle-class lifestyle of the *effendiya* and its socially conservative values. The “*infitahi*” that was constructed by the *effendiya* imaginary is thus an unreal amalgamation. They are at once too “western” and too “local.” Too “rich” in terms of material capital, but too poor socioculturally. Much like the popstars, actors and filmmakers who arose in this period specifically as a result of *infatih* policies, the nouveau riche was perceived by the *effendiya* as an inherent threat, regardless of their socioeconomic origins or actual role in the changing economy. This reductive assessment of both the nouveau riche and emerging cultural icons such as Adawiya lies at the heart of *effendi* hostility towards cultural manifestations of the *infatih*.

Of course, *effendi* opposition to the *infatih* was not solely cultural. Understanding the crisis of *effendi* identity in the 1970s and 80s requires understanding how their commitment to economic nationalism in the mid-twentieth century created “a

‘productionist’ paradigm” based on an “amalgamation of authenticity and modernity.” The Nasserist regime’s economic project (a centralized economy run by the state, nationalization of key industries, limited private sphere, etc.) became rooted in this vision of economic nationalism. As such, when the *infitah* was instated in the 1970s, it was inevitably critiqued through a lens that was as economic as it was national and cultural.¹⁹ “Ferociously contested from day one,” the *infitah* initially found little support from public discourses, apart from official voices. Quickly, a new intellectual canon emerged, lamenting the onslaught of the *infitah* deeming it an ultimately negative force upon Egypt’s present and future. The *infitah* was embedded with an existential quality by its critics. As they saw it, the changing economic tide was not merely a threat to the *effendi* nationalist productionist paradigm. Rather, it amounted to the very destruction “of society and culture at large because *effendism* was taken to represent the soul of the nation.”²⁰ The threat of the blood-sucking Dracula in *Anyab* is thus not merely bodily, nor is it restricted to the two lovers. As archetypal *effendi* youth, their fear of Adawiya’s Dracula is a fear for their very sociocultural existence which, per the vampire montage, is being strained and threatened by the “exploitative” blood-sucking of the working class.

It is by no means an exaggeration to say that there was a borderline apocalyptic element to the *effendiya*’s fear of socioeconomic change in the 1970s. The increasing commercialization of society posed a threat to the *effendi*’s very identity and social reproduction. What they saw as an “‘unmistakable consumerist drive’ was tantamount to the creation of ‘a new Egyptian man’ and ‘a new social order’ that would dominate post-*infitah* culture and society at the expense of the *effendiya*” thus marking “the end of the

dominance of *effendism* as the prevailing ideology and lifestyle in Egypt.”²¹ Additionally, though the grow of Egypt’s local consumer society meant, as elsewhere, that a general broadening of the middle-classes, existing economic conditions meant that “such broadening stood for sharing relative deprivation.” Thus, just as many an *effendi*’s economic situation deteriorated, so did many an “*ibn al-balad* (son of the country), lionized as an authentic noble savage during the Nasserite period, but knowing his place,” emerge “out of his ‘natural’ milieu and threatened the *effendiya*.”²² This “unnatural” emergence of the *ibn al-balad* manifests in Adawiya’s embodiment of Dracula, the rich owner of a massive mansion. Ali and Mona are forced to share this literal space with him, initially due to the natural circumstances of the weather, but soon enough due to the coercion and manipulation of the vampires. The film thus places the *effendi* heroes in a dire situation in which they are literally stuck with the monstrous other currently threatening their perceived way of life.

Fancying themselves the “authentic” Egyptian middle class, the *effendiya* were similarly, though certainly not equally, repelled by the upper classes, particularly following the *infitah*. As such, “*effendi* commentators increasingly expressed a sense of alienation from the political and economic elite,” a class they came to perceive as having “made itself foreign” and “lost its authenticity” due to its supposed increasing “excessive consumption of modern—read Western—commodities.”²³ The *effendiya* had always had a tenuous relationship with the two classes they believed themselves to be stuck between, particularly since they tended to define themselves in opposition to both. The *effendiya* were a kind of syncretic class, locating themselves squarely between the “(mostly) urban lower class (*ahl*

al-balad)” and the aristocratic upper class, or “*ahl al-dhawāt*.” The sought to combine the supposed “localism/traditionalism and authenticity” that tends to be associated with *ahl al-balad* with the progressive “modernism/Westernism” associated with *ahl al-dhawāt*.²⁴ Whatever that place, it was certainly not with the nouveau riche. The rapid economic change brought by the *infitah* made it “difficult to distinguish below and above from the ‘middle’.” Thus, a third category is conjured by the *effendiya*, “*ahl al-infitah*, or simply *infitahis*,” a hybrid nouveau riche class which “combines the worst of the two groups.” Regardless of whether an “*infitahi*” emerged from “below” or “above” the *effendiya* believed that this group “eroded the existing economic and socio-cultural system and, by extension, the *effendiya*’s source of livelihood, social status, and identity.”²⁵

The *effendiya*’s adamant rejection of both “*ahl al-balad*” and “*ahl al-dhawāt*” meant that their construction of the *infitahi* was at times inconsistent if not flat out contradictory. This was often extreme such that “some *infitahis* were thought of as backward by the *effendiyya*; their ridiculed emulation of modern consumption patterns further exposed their *ahl al-balad* origins.” At the same time, others “were modern to the degree of being foreign” such that they were seen to have forfeited “their authenticity and their loyalty to Egypt by selling out their economy to international exporters/investors,” not to mention “adopting the lifestyle of the West thus following the familiar steps of *ahl al-dhawāt*.” As such, *effendiya* narratives commonly presented a “blur between the two categories, a convergence of people from the two groups who became the *effendi*’s nemesis.”²⁶

It is in *Anyab*'s representation of the inherently paradoxical nature of the *infitali* construct that it becomes clear that the film does not place an *effendi* couple in the lead in order to sympathize with their classist fears, but rather to satirize them. This is primarily visible in the stark audiovisual difference between Adawiya's Dracula and the other vampires who inhabit the mansion. For starters, all the vampires have elaborate glam rock-style face paint, mostly influenced by the cover of David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane*—except for Dracula, who has no make up whatsoever, just visible fangs. The first vampire the couple encounter, identified in the credits as Dracula's assistant, has a thunderbolt painted over his face and pronounces Dracula's name in an exaggerated, ostensibly American accent. Attempting to seduce Mona, he then bursts into an upbeat disco song that extensively uses both synth and electric guitar riffs. His number is then interrupted by Dracula who, also attempting to seduce Mona, sings an upbeat song as well, but a *sha'bi*²⁷ one; indistinguishable from what Adawiya himself was producing at the time. On the one hand, Shebl is obviously paying tribute to the vital role glam rock plays in the original *Rocky Horror* (see Chapter 1). On the other, however, he is also contrasting the aesthetics of a primarily Anglo-American genre that never found mainstream success in Egyptian music, with the unequivocally local stylings of Adawiya's *sha'bi* music. This not to mention how he is also contrasting the hint of American influence on the assistant with Adawiya's frequently classed sociolect. The *infitali* of *Anyab* is thus not a single person, but a community of contrasts constructed not out of reality, but of the social anxieties of the *effendiya* who sought to reject both the "lower class" vampires of Dracula and the westernized "upper class" vampires of the assistant.

In his analysis of the word “*infitahi*” Armbrust argues that, beyond being an umbrella term used to describe Egyptians who made their fortunes in the 1970s, the word represents one of the primary linguistic and cultural responses to the *infitah*. More specifically, it represents the transferring of negative and classist connotations that had been used for impoverished and working class Egyptians “to other terms, such as *bitu l-inifitah*, ‘those of the Open Door...’—sometimes simply *infitahi*—the people who have made fortunes and drive Mercedes.”²⁸ It is difficult to overstate the relevance of the Mercedes Benz to the iconography of the post-*infitah* era and its popular discourses. As Kirk J. Beattie has noted: “Egypt quickly made its way toward distinction as the world’s largest importer of Mercedes Benz” which then become a symbol of how “sleek foreign imports competed with donkey-drawn carts in Cairo’s incredibly crowded streets.”²⁹

As previously mentioned, the vampire montage features numerous instances where Adawiya’s ubiquitous vampire steps out of a Mercedes. The most jarring one is the first vignette which opens up with a prospective future in which Ali and Mona are married and living together. Ali wakes up in the morning and is irritated to find that the faucet of their bathroom has burst. He begins yelling and Mona remarks sadly that “this is the tenth time this week.” Ali angrily asks her why she has yet to bring a plumber, and she says that she had been calling him all week, “but his majesty only gave word that he’s coming today.” We cut to the exterior of the apartment building, clearly in an affluent neighborhood, where Adawiya’s Dracula plumber arrives in a 1970s-style Mercedes Benz S to the tune of the James Bond theme. In addition to the specific relevance of the car in the tapestry of post-*infitah* iconography, the sheer absurdity of the scene, which depicts a bitter *effendi* fantasy

of what a plumber in the early 1980s makes, highlights how divorced Ali and Mona's experiences are from the reality of Egyptian class politics and dynamics, rendering these events satirical depictions of how antagonistically the *effendiya* viewed the constructed *infitalis* at the time.

Additionally, socially mixing with this enemy that was the *infitali* quickly became a taboo as marriage was a particularly critical concern for the *effendiya*. The proliferation of anti-*infitali* discourse meant that the "reproduction of the *effendi* family was seen to be endangered, especially as the nouveaux riches of the *infitali* often married into the *effendi* family."³⁰ The supposed threat of an *infitali* seeking entry into the *effendiya* through marriage loomed large as this act "symbolizes the final deterioration of the *effendi* character" as well as "the reception/infiltration of the nouveau riche *infitali*, with his values and lifestyle, into the middle stratum's most intimate circle." It was a particularly sore point for *effendi* men as "this often happened because the working male *effendi* could not adequately provide for female consumerism."³¹ This anxiety is primarily expressed in *Anyab* through the battle between Dracula and his assistant for Mona, one which culminates in a full-on fistfight in the final act of the film. Mona's rejection of both men marks a critical departure from *Rocky Horror*, in which both Brad and Janet gradually come to enjoy the pleasures of Frank-N-Furter and the castle. Though *Rocky Horror* was similarly concerned with the sexual taboos and anxieties of the American middle class, *Anyab*'s reformulation of the relationship between the girl and the monster, here between Mona and both vampires, is part and parcel of her characterization as a typical *effendi*

woman of the time. That is to say, she is a kind of innocent maiden seemingly under threat from the clutches of the greedy and predatory *infitahis*.

The rise of consumerism writ large was deeply concerning for the *effendiya* and the influx of consumer goods into the country became one of the focal points of *effendi* anti-*infitah* discourse, as well as the spread of the notion that *infitahis* were exceptionally materialistic and greedy. Thus the economic critiques of the *infitah* soon gave way to generalized “criticism of parasitic behaviour and conspicuous consumption” across all facets of “contemporary public discourse in the press, in films and in novels.”³² The use of derogatory terms associated with parasitism was common as “many an *infitahi* in films [was] engaged in what are usually referred to by film critics and academics as ‘parasitic’ occupations, mainly trade (especially in consumer goods) and speculative real estate, if not sheer corruption and crime.”³³ The wide reach and circulation of this criticism spoke to the hegemony of the *effendi* response to the *infitah*.³⁴ Beattie notes that “many small and medium-sized capitalists were unhappy as well,” but maintains that “the most disgruntled elements were bureaucrats and public sector factory workers who had been relatively pampered and protected under the Nasser regime.” This was particularly the case in urban areas where “‘fat cat’ conspicuous consumption, income disparities, and status reversals were glaring.”³⁵ The vampire montage, which takes place almost entirely in Cairo, satirizes this power dynamic through a reversal. It is thus the bourgeoisie couple who are at the mercy of the incompetent plumber, the conniving public-school teacher and the blood-sucking mechanic.

Despite the extremeness of *effendi* hostility towards the nouveau riche, there was a kernel of truth in their suspicions of the newly wealthy. As Beattie notes, “the new economic policies combined with outright corruption as well as serious deficiencies in the regulation of public and private-sector business practices and tax collection to create numerous opportunities for amassing fortunes in a short time span.”³⁶ Moreover, “most of the nouveau riche acquired their wealth through import schemes, government sub-contracting, exchanging money, or representing foreign business interests.”³⁷ That said, this new “‘fat cat’ wealth knew no specific ideological orientation,” nor did they possess any coherent cultural identity solely based off of their status as newly wealthy.³⁸ As such, *effendi* hostility to the *infitah* can neither be understood as a solely classist position, nor as a mere defense of the Nasserist economic system. It was, rather, an attempt to hold on to a comprehensive socioeconomic system which was materially and socioculturally beneficial to the *effendiya*. The *infitah* had rendered this system so fragile, that even a pop star like Adawiya was seen as a threat to it.

Ahmed Adawiya as an *Infitah* Icon

Adawiya’s rise “to national fame from a ‘folkloric’ background” did not hinder his popularity, but it did result in intense scrutiny of his work and its supposed meaning, or lack thereof.³⁹ Given that his songs had a habit of making “an open appeal to lower-class sensibilities, but not in terms of modernizing ideology,” his work was often dismissed by establishment critics as “vulgar” and “trivial.”⁴⁰ As Armbrust explains, “despite Adawiya’s relatively straightforward use of colloquial forms—easily recognizable to native speakers of Egyptian vernacular and sometimes praised as an element of authenticity in other

singers—many of the people who considered Adawiya a vulgar singer claimed that his music had no meaning.”⁴¹ Indeed, it was precisely because Adawiya’s appealed organically to the masses “without any of the rhetoric of ‘raising their cultural standards’” that he was set apart from the classical and conventional musicians who were backed by the cultural establishment and featured prominently on public television and print media.⁴² This is also why he was often ignored, if not actively criticized, by those with power and influence in the music and culture establishments.

This is even lampooned in the scene mentioned in Chapter 2 in which Dracula and the couple sit down to watch Youssef Chahine’s *Alexandria...Why?* (1979) and Dracula exclaims that he cannot understand the film. Ali defends it based on the fact that it has won prizes in film festivals and Dracula says that he does not care. Ali then melodramatically stares off into the distance and states “if we all think a little, we can understand anything.” The joke of the scene, of course, is that Ali himself does not express any actual understanding of the film. When Dracula criticizes it for being “too mysterious,” Ali merely responds that it has won prizes, but otherwise says nothing about the text itself or why he might think it is a good movie. This suggests that Ali himself does not understand the film, but feigns admiration for it solely on the basis that it has accumulated international prestige, most notably through winning the Silver Bear at the 29th Berlin International Film Festival. The scene thus mocks the *effendi* position that artists and cultural figures such as Adawiya had nothing “serious” or “sophisticated” to contribute to Egyptian culture by depicting the *effendi* hero as equally clueless as Dracula. If anything, Dracula is at least honest in that he wants to watch a more conventionally entertaining film.

In many ways, these attitudes towards Adawiya were a result of the sheer unprecedented nature of his stardom. Adawiya's rise to fame in the 1970s represents the convergence of shifting technologies and policies wrought by the *infitah*. A far cry from the classical musicians who had dominated the landscape of Egyptian music in the decades prior, Adawiya could not have broken into the mainstream without both the dissemination of more accessible recording technology such as cassettes and the receding role of the state in Egyptian cultural production, two phenomenon that were a direct result of Sadat's *infitah*. In fact, "few figures in Egypt's modern history are more synonymous with 'vulgar' cassettes than Ahmad Adawiya."⁴³ In fact, "Adawiya's success was met with a horrendous snobbery" from across the political spectrum, but particularly from *effendi* critics, and he began to take on a symbolic role much larger than his own music and persona. As Andrew Hammond explains:

For the leftist intellectual elite, he was a symbol of everything wrong with the times: the pro American policies of Nasser's successor Anwar Sadat, Sadat's peace with Israel, his apparent ditching of the Palestinians, and his loosening of the socialist command economy...To these intellectuals, under Nasser there was Umm Kalthoum, but with Sadat the Arab world was left to the insidious silliness of Adawiya songs.⁴⁴

In addition to the potent sense of triviality with which Adawiya was associated, commentators also projected elitist post-*infitah* socioeconomic anxieties onto him and his fanbase, coding the latter as "people who peddled bad foodstuffs, built shoddy apartment blocks, and made a fortune dealing drugs." The first two of these vices were featured

didactically in the vampire montage. The state agreed and kept Adawiya's music off official airwaves, excluding him from the "official canon" despite the massive commercial success of his tapes.⁴⁵ Writing in reference to Adawiya and his contemporaries, Virginia Danielson notes that "major institutions such as Egyptian Radio and Television discouraged such performance; their programme committees viewed them as having little value and denied them a place on radio and television." Significant as this rejection by state institutions was, it did little to curb the popularity of Adawiya and his ilk as "the cassette industry enabled the circulation of such music and artists and began to circumvent the established system of producing musical success."⁴⁶ Adawiya was here to stay.

Given that Adawiya's craft "displays little of the vocal technique characteristic of classical Arab music, relying instead on volume, vocal range, and tempo", he was commonly charged with pandering to "low tastes."⁴⁷ The sense that Adawiya represented the very deterioration of Egyptian popular music was empowered by the seemingly fateful passing of two of the most iconic classical Egyptian musicians of the 20th century, Om Kalthoum and Abdel Halim Hafez, in 1975. *Effendi* critics thus began to associate these legendary singers' passing with that of their cultural way of life, and Adawiya's rise to stardom in turn became emblematic of a new cultural order that was simply unfit to succeed them. The emergence of Adawiya was framed by *effendi* critics as a narrative of national decline in which the singer stepped "into the immense void these stars left behind" only to gain "traction with a 'new class' of Egyptians consisting mainly of skilled workers and merchants," the very same group of "citizens whom critics accused of profiting from al-Sadat's *infitah* and contributing to the 'decline' of public taste." From this point of view,

Adawiya was seen as a cultural force both validating and accelerating the supposed social decline brought about by the *infitah*, rather than an organic evolution of Egyptian music in the wake of privatization and decentralization of the music industry.⁴⁸

The tension between modern and classical music is central to the casting of the film as Ali el-Hagggar (Ali) is himself a classically trained musician and his musical numbers throughout the film, whether lyrically or tonally, emphasize his adherence to and command of the style. Adawiya's numbers on the other hand, as mentioned previously, would by no means look out of place on any of his commercially released albums. Given that Dracula is quite literally trying to steal Mona away from Ali, *Anyab* demonstrates a thorough understanding of the stakes *effendi* critics assigned to this seeming battle between the old and the new.

As immensely popular as the classical musicians who preceded him were, Adawiya and his music clearly served a hitherto unaddressed need for a more relatable form of popular music. For many poor and working class audiences, "Adawiya epitomized 'their long lost wish' by singing about daily problems, to which they could relate, in the vernacular they understood."⁴⁹ As Danielson has explained, Adawiya's blend of slang and *sha'bi* stylings "brought the music of Egyptian childhood, familiar music from inexpensive entertainments, into the commercial market."⁵⁰ The heated discourse around Adawiya and his music was thus not only classed, but deeply rooted in questions around Egyptian identity and authenticity in general. As Danielson has noted, "the discourse of local authenticity...remains central" to any conversation about Adawiya, as well as his legacy. In a sense, attempts to critically analyze Adawiya's popularity were questions regarding

what makes one “‘really Egyptian’, as differentiated from ‘Western,’ ‘American,’ ‘European,’ ‘Lebanese,’ ‘Saudi’” etc. the value of such an identity being “as important as the value of entertainment, diversion, or articulation of social problems, all of which might be shared across socio-political boundaries.”⁵¹ That said, these questions of authenticity were, of course, particularly pertinent to the *effendiya*, and after music, they manifested the most in the popular discourses surrounding Egyptian cinema.

New Realism and the Cinematic Response to the *Infisah*

By the 1980s, Egyptian cinema had developed a set of narrative and thematic tropes regarding its commentary on the *infisah*. The new private-sector cinema which rapidly emerged in this period was associated with “loss of state support for the arts, but also with loss of creativity, commercialization, and vulgarization of culture by the *infisahi*’s ‘new public’.” Unsurprisingly then, film critics, following in the footsteps of their counterparts in music, “implicitly associated the demise of quality film production with that of the *effendi* way of life.”⁵² Just as elsewhere in mass art and culture, the “*infisahi* class was portrayed as replacing the more respectable *effendiya* to the detriment of Egypt” and “*effendi* intellectuals, whether in arts, literature, or academia, lamented the emergence of the new man, the new public and the new social order during the *infisah*.”⁵³ As previously mentioned, if the vampires of Dracula’s mansion were not a clear enough manifestation of this *effendi* fear of being replaced, if not destroyed, the vampire montage further emphasizes Ali and Mona’s view of the so-called *infisahis*.

In response to the rapid socioeconomic changes of the 1970s, “the nouveau riche or ‘fat cat’ became the most recurrent character during the 1980s, usually shown as a crook

ascending from the margins of society to form part of the powerful economic elite.” As Shechter notes, “cinematographers established a visual lexicon of consumer goods and consumption patterns associated with *infitah* lifestyle,” all with the aim of representing “conspicuous consumption.” Thus, objects such as “suits (1970s style), fancy watches, and imported cigarettes (especially Marlboro)” came to represent *infitahis* “newly attained status in the public sphere.” Unsurprisingly, the image of a Mercedes Benz was also critical to this visual formula.⁵⁴ Films of this era suggested “that the new *iniftah*-class had managed to ascend from the bottom of society and push the respectable middle class to the margins.”⁵⁵ Such tropes would form the basis of the New Realist movement.

As Shafik has argued, Egyptian New Realism specifically emerged in response to post-*iniftah* socioeconomic anxieties, namely concerns regarding: “moral corruption, materialism, rapid social ascent, labour migration and political abuse.”⁵⁶ Moreover, “much credibility was attached to those films because of their realist character, not only on the formal but also on the narrative level,” particularly as they were seen to have “bluntly expressed the turmoil and threats the educated middle class experienced after the failure of the Nasserist model of state capitalism and the economic decline that characterized the early phase of the [*iniftah*].” As such, “this motif of unprecedented upward class mobility, along with an allegorical depiction of the haunted academic, became pivotal to New Realism,” and that haunted academic in turn was mocked in the form of the Narrator.⁵⁷ For various filmmakers, moreover, “crumbling gender and family relations both embodied and symbolized a broader social malaise.”⁵⁸ New Realist films were particularly concerned with the “impact of the *iniftah* on gender relations and family values.” Love in these films

commonly “crumbled under the difficult economic conditions of the salaried middle strata, especially the inability of many an *effendi* male protagonist to buy an apartment, the prerequisite for marriage.”⁵⁹ *Anyab* mocks this trope by making the obstacle to the couple’s love a farcical romp. Rather than economic strain, the couple is threatened by a singing-dancing vampire on New Year’s Eve. Even in the vampire montage, where the couple’s obstacles are initially grounded in the material reality of early 1980s Egypt, the comedic heightening of their struggles, as exemplified by the satirical characterization of the plumber, sets the film apart from the positionality of its New Realist contemporaries.

Despite facing insufficient support from producers, the New Realist films’ critical success was immense, and their shared recurrent themes and formal characteristics were quickly identified and lauded. Their commitment to “shooting on location, sober acting, the reduced use of music, and socially committed themes with a strong focus on moral conflict” were particularly noteworthy.⁶⁰ Yet despite this ideological opposition to the *infitah*, New Realist films did not exactly center the working class and economically destitute in their narratives. As Shafik explains, “New Realist preoccupation with the ‘underprivileged’ did not necessarily include peasantry and workers but remained almost exclusively focused on the petit-bourgeois milieu,” and the movement retained a predominantly middle-class perspective. This is particularly evident in the fact that “of the twenty-six films between the 1980s and early 1990s that can be classified as New Realist...only six deal with the working class or with peasants.”⁶¹ New Realism was thus less interested in the plight of the working class and peasantry in the post-Nasserist economy as much as it was “in social problems related to the urban lower-middle class,

such as the housing crisis, migrant workers, and political abuses.”⁶² Moreover, much like *effendi* discourse across the mass arts, New Realist films tended to display a firm hostility towards *iniftahis* as they “linked the nouveaux riche with criminal practices and dismissed them morally by exposing their materialism and lack of traditional sense of community.”⁶³ As Shafik argues, this stemmed from the filmmakers’ own positionality, being “largely from the urban middle or lower-middle class themselves” who were nonetheless “equipped with the necessary cultural means of expression” in order to “denounce via (film) culture the more prosperous bourgeoisie for its excessive possession of economic means—and at the same time for its ‘lack of culture.’”⁶⁴

My analysis sharply diverges from Shafik’s in her association of Shebl and *Anyab* with the New Realists.⁶⁵ Referring to *Anyab*, she argues that the film criticized the *iniftah* by “exploiting” the already classed image of ‘Adawiya by casting him as the unsympathetic vampire.⁶⁶ Moreover, she argues that el-Haggar’s casting reinforces the film’s classist view of ‘Adawiya, given how the former had a classical and highbrow musical repertoire. Shafik concludes that, unlike *Rocky Horror*, *Anyab* ultimately “voiced the basic fears and biases of the Egyptian middle class regarding their own social status instead of working to undermine bourgeoisie ideology.”⁶⁷ Additionally, Shafik states that “the question of class is depicted as a clash between highbrow culture and kitsch” as “the bourgeois couple are threatened not only with having their pockets emptied, but with being swamped by supposedly ‘gross’ lowbrow art and the ascendant aspirations of the lower classes.”⁶⁸ Much of Shafik’s argument is rooted in the undeniable contrast between Adawiya’s Dracula and al-Haggar’s Ali. As she states, the films plot “contains several musical numbers that create

on the sonic level an opposition between ‘Adawiyya’s popular music and the songs of the young bridegroom,” played by el-Haggar. Whereas Adawiya “spices his colloquial lines with urban lower-class slang wrapped in relatively rough tunes,” el-Haggar “has a more polished performance style, be it in text or sound.” This contrast is also emphasized visually, manifesting itself in “the skin of the two singers.”⁶⁹

According to her, this renders *Anyab* a contrast to the original *Rocky Horror*’s mockery of “bourgeoisie sexual morality and ideology”⁷⁰ and puts it in more in line with the “the 1980s New Realist concept...of the bourgeoisie as the victim of social change, by making it complicit in the undermining of its own class.”⁷¹ From Shafik’s point of view, *Anyab* “reveals that new realist commitment was in part not as much socialist oriented but submitted to a large extent to the perspective of a materially cornered petty bourgeoisie.”⁷² Far from being a member of the New Realists’ work, I read *Anyab* as a satire of the movement and its visual and thematic tropes. In addition to its countering of the tropes discussed above, *Anyab* rejects New Realism through the simple fact that its aesthetics could not be more antithetical. Beyond the fantastical plot, the vast majority of the film takes place inside a gauche mansion, the exaggerated acting is absolutely anything but sober and the soundscape (not even including the musical numbers) is dense with a vibrant pastiche of local and global tracks, some original, many sampled from famous themes such as those of James Bond and the Pink Panther. The closest the film comes, whether aesthetically or thematically, to the work of the New Realists is in the vampire montage, where most of the vignettes are shot on location across Cairene streets and public spaces. Yet still, any sense of New Realist sobriety in such scenes is immediately thrown out the

window the moment Adawiya dramatically stares back at the camera to reveal his fangs just as the music swells.

Genre as Resistance to New Realism

Anyab's satire of New Realism is also facilitated by its position as a hybrid horror-musical, not to mention the baggage which both genres carry in the history of Egyptian cinema. Genres and modes such as horror and cult film (at least as understood in American cinema) have rarely succeeded in Egypt. Shafik explains that "as a general rule, lowbrow or subcultural cinematic expressions have difficulty seeing the light, not only because of the censors hampering (even if not preventing) their distribution but also because of the lack of funding available for such endeavors."⁷³ Working with Robin Wood's understanding of horror film, Shafik defines it "as normality threatened by monsters."⁷⁴ As she explains, while conventional horror films barely existed in the early history of Egyptian cinema, supernatural elements such as magic and ghosts did "yet in a harmless or profoundly comic way" as they were "bound in an overall joyful context, and without the necessary sensationalistic audiovisual effects." In other words, "the '*afrit* or ghosts in these films may create confusion and scare the film's characters, but not the audience."⁷⁵ Though she defines *Anyab* as horror, Shafik does argue that:

Shebl's films may just as easily be placed in the category of social drama, as they comply at the level of plot and character development with new realist social criticism of the time, as exemplified in the work of plainly realist directors such as Atef El-Tayeb...Mohamed...Khan, and Khairy Beshara.⁷⁶

Putting aside the problematic comparison with New Realist directors, I push back against Shafik's characterization of *Anyab* for its unqualified categorization of the film as a horror. Rather, just as with *Rocky Horror*, I place *Anyab* somewhere between conventional horror cinema and the aforementioned cadre of Egyptian films which feature supernatural beings that may scare the characters, but are not meant to actually inspire fear in the audience. While the film undoubtedly makes extensive use of horror tropes and visuals, much like the original, its propensity to be an authentically horror film is undermined by the fact that it is also a campy and highly performative musical, particularly given the fraught history of that genre within Egyptian cinema.

Egyptian musicals remain among the most developed and most recognizable genres in the industry's history. As Linda Mokdad has argued, popular Egyptian cinema's historic contribution "to the dissemination of Egyptian identity" has led Egyptian musical films to produce extensive debates around "the anxiety of foreign control or influence", thus marking the genre as "an important site of contestation—one that reflects an ambivalent relationship to Egyptian and Arab nationalism."⁷⁷ Egyptian musical films have been particularly understudied in anglophone academia, despite their massive importance to the history of the industry. As Corey Creekmur and Mokdad argue, musical films' reliance on "music and language in the form of popular, performed songs rather than musical styles that travel more easily as soundtrack scores" has caused the genre to function "as an explicitly and exclusively local or national form, drawing upon distinct musical, linguistic and cultural traditions, including dance and costume understood as 'native' rather than 'cosmopolitan'." Yet as much as film musicals outside the US have tended to be grounded

in their local cinematic and cultural contexts, they have also “frequently imitated Hollywood models, too often resulting in their easy dismissal by critics who find them culturally ‘impure’.” It is this “tension between local and global elements” which lies “at the heart of all international film musicals”; a constant balancing act between the “Hollywood model” and the claiming of “their own cultural specificity, traditions and stylistic uniqueness in a national...realm.”⁷⁸ Such generic tensions visibly clash with the emphasis on locality and authenticity inherent in the *effendi* position of the New Realists.

Despite having clear aesthetic and thematic overlaps with Hollywood musicals, Egyptian film musicals also had their own signature traits. As Mokdad explains, Egyptian cinema’s “branding as the ‘Hollywood on the Nile’ could be explained by its profit-driven goals and formulaic fare” yet as condescending as the title may often be used, it “simultaneously acknowledges the successful and highly developed star and studio system of the Egyptian film industry.”⁷⁹ Much like the classical Hollywood studio system, Egyptian cinema is also impenetrable without an in-depth look at its use of genre. Rather than seeking new talents, Egyptian musicals have historically “exploited an already available star system, building on various forms of media such as radio and theatre, which would typically have offered audiences a history of and familiarity with the stars that would later come to frequent the screen.”⁸⁰ Additionally, Egyptian musicals “rarely featured stars who both sang and danced” and even “when dancing occurs in films that showcase famous singers, it serves a secondary function.”⁸¹ Such was the case with Ahmed Adawiya.

As Mokdad points out, the overwhelming tendency of Egyptian musicals to “visualize the audience in the diegetic space of the narrative reveals the extradiegetic

importance of their singing stars” such that the performers who are “attractions in and of themselves, suggest an essential link that musical films have with other cultural forms of music in Egypt,” Adawiya’s *sha’bi* music in the case of *Anyab*.⁸² With the aforementioned deaths of Om Kalthoum and Abdel Halim Hafez, the 1970s witnessed “a general decline of the musical” primarily because “no singer was able to attain the same fame as their predecessor on and off screen.”⁸³ Besides the generic incompatibility between musicals and New Realist films, this central role which the singer-cum-actor has historically played in Egyptian cinema also distinguishes *Anyab* from the work of the New Realists as it gave Adawiya’s Dracula a meta and larger-than-life quality from the get-go, thus consistently reminding the viewer at every turn that what they were watching was not a sober reflection of reality, but a densely performative text that is inseparable from the persona and work of those involved in it.

Conclusion

As Weinstock and Langford have explained, the vampire is itself a loaded symbol with regards to class politics and tension as well as the relationship between class and tabooed sexuality—all of which has been central to the mythos since it was popularized by Bram Stoker. The casting of Adawiya—a classed and initially marginalized artist—may thus ostensibly appear to be a classist reimagining of the Dracula story, whereby it is the bourgeoisie who are being fed upon and stalked by those with less power than them, rather than the other way around. However, when one considers the cultural history of *effendi* opposition to the *infitah*, and the cinematic manifestation of said opposition in the form of the New Realist movement, it becomes transparent that *Anyab*’s casting of Adawiya was a

choice meant to satirize the hostility the singer faced from the establishment, as opposed to reifying it.

In this way, *Anyab*'s class politics stand in opposition to those of the New Realists, less because the film affirms the political and/or economic validity of the *infitah*, and more because of how it uses intertextual cues to signal the absurdity of the normative *effendi* position against the constructed, and often paradoxical, *infitahi*. By clearly marking Ali and Mona as a typical *effendi* couple, and marking the vampires with contradictory *infitahi* coding such that they are at once too "local" and too "western," the film illustrates the classist fears which lay at the heart of normative *effendi* constructions of the *infitahi*.

Notes

¹ Armbrust, Walter. "The Golden Age Before the Golden Age." 303.

² *Ibid.* 302.

³ Wood, Robin. *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan . . . and Beyond*. 68.

⁴ Weinstock, Jeffrey. *The Vampire Film*. 153.

⁵ *Ibid.* 155.

⁶ Langford, Barry. *Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond*. 158.

⁷ *Ibid.* 159.

⁸ Weinstock, Jeffrey. *The Vampire Film*. 11.

⁹ *Ibid.* 15-16.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 125.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 72.

¹² Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 270.

¹³ *Ibid.* 241.

¹⁴ The designation originates from the early-nineteenth century, commonly meaning "a modern/Western educated person who usually belonged to the Egyptian-Ottoman elite of the period." See Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 580.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 571.

¹⁶ Roughly translates, respectively, to "people of the country" and "people of means."

¹⁷ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 165.

¹⁸ Shafik, Viola. "A Cinema without Horror?" 280.

¹⁹ Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 573.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* 578.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Shechter, Relli. "From effendi to infitāhī?" 22-3.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 33.

²⁷ A local Egyptian genre, discussed further in the section on Adawiya and his rise to fame.

- ²⁸ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 27.
- ²⁹ Beattie, Kirk J. *Egypt During the Sadat Years*. 159.
- ³⁰ Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 579.
- ³¹ Shechter, Relli. "From effendi to infitāhī?" 30.
- ³² Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 574-5.
- ³³ Shechter, Relli. "From effendi to infitāhī?" 26.
- ³⁴ Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 575.
- ³⁵ Beattie, Kirk J. *Egypt During the Sadat Years*. 159.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.* 150.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.* 151.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.* 153.
- ³⁹ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 181.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 181-2.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* 181.
- ⁴² *Ibid.* 184.
- ⁴³ Simon, Andrew. "Censuring Sounds: Tapes, Taste, and the Creation of Egyptian Culture." 244.
- ⁴⁴ Hammond, Andrew. *Pop Culture Arab World!*. 148.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ Danielson, Virginia. "New Nightingales of the Nile: Popular Music in Egypt Since the 1970s." 306-7.
- ⁴⁷ Armbrust, Walter. *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. 180.
- ⁴⁸ Simon, Andrew. "Censuring Sounds: Tapes, Taste, and the Creation of Egyptian Culture." 248.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ Danielson, Virginia. "New Nightingales of the Nile: Popular Music in Egypt Since the 1970s" 306.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.* 310.
- ⁵² Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 579.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* 580.
- ⁵⁴ Shechter, Relli. "From effendi to infitāhī?" 29.
- ⁵⁵ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 274.
- ⁵⁶ Shafik, Viola. "Egyptian cinema: Realism." 62.
- ⁵⁷ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 274-5.
- ⁵⁸ Shechter, Relli. "The Cultural Economy of Development in Egypt." 579.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 578-9.
- ⁶⁰ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 275.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.* 276.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* 278.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 280.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 150.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 292-3.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 293.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 294.
- ⁶⁹ Shafik, Viola. "A Cinema without Horror?" 279.
- ⁷⁰ Shafik, Viola. *Popular Egyptian Cinema*. 294.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.* 301.
- ⁷² Shafik, Viola. "A Cinema without Horror?" 278.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.* 274.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 277.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Mokdad, Linda. "Egypt." In *The International Film Musical*. 220.
- ⁷⁸ Creekmur, Corey & Mokdad, Linda. "Introduction." In *The International Film Musical*. 2.
- ⁷⁹ Mokdad, Linda. "Egypt." In *The International Film Musical*. 213.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 214.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.* 216.
- ⁸² *Ibid.* 219.
- ⁸³ Shafik, Viola. "Egyptian cinema: the Musical film." 48.

Chapter 4: *Just a Sweet Vampire: The Oppositional Aesthetics of Camp and Cult Cinema*

The Rocky Horror Picture Show, as mentioned in previous chapters, has long been considered as much a work of camp as of cult cinema, and though these modes are by no means indistinguishable, they too have a long history of being intimately connected with one another. They do not operate as two parallel modes within the text of *Rocky Horror*, but are rather conjoined as nearly everything that can be classified as camp about the film and its meta context is crucial to its cult qualities, and vice versa. For example, the text's deeply cinephilic referentiality is a hallmark of cult cinema, but at the same time the film almost exclusively recalls B-movies and genre flicks that by its release date had become "campy" by mainstream standards. Similarly, the highly performative musical numbers, with their heightened sexuality and emphasis on passionate character expression, are textbook instances of camp, and at the same time they are the foundation of the shadow cast experience that has made *Rocky Horror* the landmark of cult cinema it is.

This unity of camp and cult as aesthetic and thematic modes operates throughout *Anyab*, as well. Transferring the narrative structure and performative ethos of *Rocky Horror*, Shebl's remake must similarly be understood as a work of "deliberate" camp as much as it is one that aspires to become cult. Particularly when considered in the Egyptian context, these modes are similarly indistinguishable and their overlap seeks to further distance the film from the New Realist cinema of its period, further emphasizing the notion that *Anyab* is an unambiguous work of satire that seeks to illustrate what it finds to be the sheer absurdity of *effendi* anxieties in the post-*infatih* period.

Though I argue that *Anyab* is a work of camp, I approach this argument through Moe Meyers' assertion that "Camp cannot be said to reside in objects, but is clearly a way of reading, of writing, and of doing that originates in the 'Camp eye,' the 'eye' being nothing less than the agent of Camp."¹ But the "camp eye" also belongs to the maker. As Chuck Kleinhans puts it, "Camp is a strategy for makers as well as for reception. It draws on and transforms mass culture." I differ, however, with Meyer in his assertion that camp's critique necessarily remains "in the dominant culture's own terms" and "seldom rests on any coherent or sustained analysis of society or history."² I find this approach dismissive of the incisive potential of camp, visible in such works as *Anyab*, and instead look to identify camp's capacity for "parodic intertextuality."³ Camp and parody theory are likewise intertwined, as seen in the writing of Kleinhans who understands camp through Linda Hutcheon's theory of parody, arguing that the latter always "involves the articulation of a critique by expressing a meaning different to the stated or ostensible meaning through a repetition or doubling."⁴ As a remake of a densely intertextual film, one that literally repeats the majority of its original's narrative beats, *Anyab* relies extensively and fundamentally on this sense of repetition to enact its satirical agenda; a feat that is by no means uncommon in the corpus of cult cinema.

Cult Text

Terms like "cult film" and "cult cinema" began to be frequently used in the 1970s, primarily in reference to films that garnered repeat audiences who would perform "ritualistic" behaviors at screening. Academic studies of cult cinema began to flourish in the subsequent decades, thanks to the emergence of several writings on *The Rocky Horror*

Picture Show and Umberto Eco's landmark essay on *Casablanca* and cult films.⁵ For the most part, the exhibition of cult cinema has been the primary marker of cult films' identities as "it is in the interaction between screen and audience that cults become solidified." Due to the sheer difficulty of accessing archival material pertaining to the exact box office performance of *Anyab* back in 1981—a feat made even more arduous by the COVID-19 pandemic—I have opted instead to take the textual approach in my analysis of *Anyab* as a cult film. That said, the film's circulation in genre film festivals and theaters across the United States and Europe, as discussed in Chapter 1, itself indicates the film's cultic potentiality with regards to exhibition and reception. Film festivals are particularly crucial for cult film exhibition since as they are able to screen films outside of a mainstream exhibitive context for niche audiences whose viewing practices and routines often sharply diverge from those of "normal" viewers. This dynamic was only heightened in the case of Fantastic Fest, where *Anyab* was tremendously visible in the 2017 program, both before and after its screening.⁶

Cult films are also often identified through their supposed "out of control" production cultures. As Mathijs and Sexton argue, this is particularly "evident in products that become cult because of their failures, when the final product of labor is perceived as an abject fiasco, and the reason for that failure is seen as the result of inefficient use of skill and craftsmanship."⁷ While the subject of *Anyab*'s production has not been a source of much discussion in either the Egyptian or American contexts (somewhat surprisingly given that Shebl was rumored to have lost his family fortune in the production of the film) Mathijs

and Sexton's point remains evident in American outlets' fixation on *Anyab*'s shoddy production value.

Text-centered cult film discourses, particularly when used to sell and/or distribute films, tend to emphasize themes of “‘exoticism,’ ‘rarity,’ ‘genre,’ ‘transgression,’ and ‘quality’.” Cult films are thus strategically positioned to be received by cinephilic audiences seeking unique, intertextual filmic experiences that blur the line between sophistication and trash. Genres such as “the giallo, anime, martial arts, vampire movies [and] sleaze movies” are particularly common to such approaches, as they tend to exemplify cult cinema's overwhelming tendency to display “stylistic components that trigger enthusiasm, aberrant reactions, or repeat-viewing devotion.” Given cult cinema audiences' tendency to seek out shocking and otherwise visually arresting material, the aesthetics of cult films are inseparable from their reception contexts. In other words, these films “operate purely on an affective and visceral level” and as such can be “defined through their representational and stylistic excess.”⁸ They succeed because of their chaotic visual decadence, and not in spite of it. The visual elements of cult films include: “strange...weird aesthetics; transgressive content [and] heightened intertextual self-awareness,” all highly present throughout the runtime of *Anyab*. These elements are employed in order to place distance between the cult film and the norms of mainstream filmmaking, embedding the act of watching them with a sense of being counter-cultural, regardless of whether or not the actual themes of the films are socially normative, let alone regressive.⁹ Camp and cult cinema are thus also intertwined in their emphasis on excessive visuals and “playful corporeality.”¹⁰ Their appeal is similarly inseparable from their shock

value and distance from mainstream aesthetic norms. As Matthew Tinkcom puts it, “camp’s traces are...most productively discovered by wondering at those moments where narrative fails as an explanation of how a given text is formally and aesthetically conceived.”¹¹ It is the search for that explanation which drives the love and appreciation of cult and camp films.

This is as apt an entry point into *Anyab* as it was into *Rocky Horror*. As previously mentioned, the film’s audiovisual landscape is a tapestry of excessively stylistic pastiche, using everything from rapid cuts and jarring zooms to sound cues appropriated from American film scores and visual speech bubbles to assert its irreconcilable distinction from the mainstream and conventional. The sheer density of *Anyab*’s aesthetics, which heavily reference both Egyptian and Anglo-American film and music, lend themselves to repeat, almost ritualistic viewing. The audiovisual excess of the film is thus not simply a matter of personal vision or style, but an active attempt to embed the film with a sense of cultic rewatchability through transnational intertextuality.

Narratively, cult films also tend to privilege certain kinds of (anti)heroes. They are stylish, over-the-top, flamboyant, and often morally dubious. As usual, *Rocky Horror* remains the quintessential example of this phenomenon. Michael A. Katovich and Patrick Kinkade argue that Frank-N-Furter “as with other camp heroes in the post-1960s film genre... appeals to qualities that mainstream conservative culture disdains.”¹² As extensively discussed in Chapter 3, Adawiya’s Dracula was in several ways an even more charged character since his very casting was seen to be a controversial and loaded statement. Moreover, as Count Dracula, he is at once the villain and true hero of the story.

Just as Frank-N-Furter easily eclipsed Brad and Janet's mundane suburban persona, so too is Adawiya's Dracula an infinitely more interesting and entertaining character when compared with the archetypal *effendi* couple that is Ali and Mona. Though the fishnet stockings and overt sexuality of Frank-N-Furter would have been impossible to apply to Dracula, *Anyab* transfers the musical stylishness and flamboyance, not to mention the moral dubiousness, of *Rocky Horror*'s "monster" onto Dracula, making him the undisputable (cultic) star of the show.

Much of the pleasure of cult film spectatorship and criticism is articulated through the "so-bad-they're-good" paradigm, whereby films that meet a certain threshold of "bad" become enjoyable not in spite but because of their "bad" quality. This impulse "to champion bad films asserts that watching these films as valueless trash offers a form of phenomenal experience that is transgressive: [lifting] the viewer out of the dreary normalness of everyday life."¹³ This is, of course, strikingly similar to how connoisseurs of camp articulate their fondness for "bad" art. So-called trash cinema and camp have always had a particularly intimate relationship since both "make visible (and audible)" a "range of responses" which "unleashes forms of disgust, laughter, nausea, delight, and the general sense that what is being displayed is, at the very least, not in the best of possible taste."¹⁴ As Kleinhans has argued, camp films—much like cult and trash cinema—"minimally...embody the ethos of shocking mainstream middleclass values."¹⁵ Their appeal lies precisely in their provocation and seeming lack of respect for both moral and aesthetic norms.

The last twenty years have displayed an explosion in “the celebration of badness.” The increasingly global popularity of Tommy Wiseau’s bizarre drama, *The Room* (2003), for instance exemplifies the cult of the “so-bad-it’s-good-movie.” In a sense, *The Room* has even become a franchise, what with the success of Greg Sestero’s 2013 memoir, *The Disaster Artist* (co-authored with Tom Bissell), as well as that of its 2017 eponymous adaptation by James Franco. Though by all means the most famous example of the “so-bad-it’s-good-movie,” *The Room* is anything but alone. As Mathijs and Sexton note, “numerous books celebrating the worst movies ever have been added to mock awards, and in some cases even replaced them, as an increasing number of films are showcased for their badness.”¹⁶ Since cult cinema thrives off of shock value and an aesthetic distance from the mainstream, these entertainingly bad films are ideal candidates for cult followings as their appreciation facilitates a specific form of performative cinephilia: if you understand them to be “bad,” but still love them, you have a particularly sophisticated understanding of what makes a film “good” such that you can even find that “good” in “objectively bad” films.

The cultural specificity of “so-bad-it’s-good-movies” is critical though. As Mathijs and Sexton note, “most of the films at the top of the canon of badness are American, an indication perhaps of that culture’s perceived obsession with rankings of cultural achievements,” even when the “achievement” is the production of a “terrible” film.¹⁷ American film culture’s capacity to appreciate “bad” films is by no means universal, and the lack of an equivalent framework, at least in scope, in Egypt’s cinematic context remains a crucial reason as to why *Anyab* seems to have more English than Arabic-language digital coverage and commentary.

Mathijs and Sexton also stress the applicability of camp to our understanding of cult cinema, arguing that the appreciation of films through the lens of camp often privileges film genres whose core motifs are incompatible with realism, such as “the musical, melodrama, and horror,” not to mention “films which are cheaply made and therefore do not disguise their artifice very well.”¹⁸ The fact that both *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* are horror-musicals then marks their seamless bridging of camp and cult quite clear. Furthermore, distance and time are crucial to both the appreciation of camp works and “so-bad-it’s-good” movies. This is particularly the case with film from the 1950s; “a decade that has proven ripe for camp cultism” as evidenced by the films of John Waters and, of course, *Rocky Horror*.¹⁹ As such, cult cinema, like other forms of paracinema displays an “archival bent” which often slips “into a nostalgic tone” that is commonly prevalent in works of camp. Both camp and cult thus operate with an “urge to delve into the more obscure and maligned recesses of film history,” an impulse that facilitates their rejection of cinematic culture—if not culture as a whole—and firm positioning outside of the mainstream.²⁰

Such a rejection lies at the heart of *Anyab*’s pastiche. This is most visible in the way it appropriates western media sources (*Rocky Horror*, glam rock, disco, the themes of James Bond and the Pink Panther, etc.) to enact a critique of the *effendiya*’s reductive obsession with local authenticity, as discussed in Chapter 3. Intertextuality and pastiche tend to be ubiquitous in films considered cult, particularly when it comes to cult horror. Resisting cult film criticism which blurs the line between cult horror and cult cinema in general, Mathijs and Sexton argue that cult horror is defined by “its extreme relationship

to reflexivity.” *Rocky Horror* is, of course, the apex of that mode, presenting a “reflexivity...so recognizable that the film ceases to be seen as horror at all.”²¹ Despite being completely obscure in relation to its original, *Anyab* similarly relies on a level of generic reflexivity which nullifies its sense of horror, as also discussed in Chapter 3.

As with camp works, parody commonly plays a critical role in the reflexivity of cult films. As a process that reworks texts in order to mock them and/or their fundamental elements, parody depends “on an oscillation between similarity and difference” that balances congruence, between the original text and the reworked one, with disparity between the two works. The simultaneous visibility of both is, of course, what makes the “parodic effect” successful.²² Appealing as parody is in cult cinema, it is not without its problems. Parody can be understood as a “cultic form of filmic expression” in the sense that its functionality is dependent on broad cultural knowledge. Therefore, it has the capacity to exceptionally cater to “cult cinephiles,” or viewers who otherwise possess an extensive knowledge of film history and culture. It is such dedicated viewers who are capable of recognizing an “extensive use of parody” as well as “spotting the allusions at work in a parodic text.” Thus, this indicates the presence of an elitist component to the viewing of parody and similarly intertextual works, since their success is inseparable from the viewer’s own access to film culture and knowledge. Furthermore, since hyper-intertextual cult films often cannot be “fully understood” without such broad filmic knowledge, cult cinema as a mode therefore overwhelmingly privileges the exceptionally film literate viewer, who is more likely than not to already have privileged access to cultural and material capital.²³

Anyab is no stranger to that elitism. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the nature of the film's intertextuality was so dense that Egyptian critics at the time, unfamiliar with *Rocky Horror*, assumed the film was experimental. Despite the generally positive response it has received on the Euro-American genre festival circuit, much of the film may also fall flat for viewers unfamiliar with the Egyptian context and the legacy of Adawiya as a loaded icon of the post-*infatih* era. The film, thus, inherently favors a particular kind of viewer; namely Egyptians who have either lived in the United States and/or Britain, or otherwise have a sufficient grasp of the popular Anglo-American media of the 1960s and 70s. In narrowing the range of viewers who are capable of comprehensively grasping the various intertextual references of the film, *Anyab* thus increases its cultic quality by rendering its text a puzzle to be constantly resolved and revisited.

The driving momentum of cult cinema is rooted in its regurgitation of film history for shock value. Think of how *Rocky Horror* continues to recall, even summon, a cadre of B-movies and genre films that were already hopelessly outdated by 1975.²⁴ Intertextuality is also critical to Umberto Eco's understanding of cult cinema. As he argues, the appreciation of a cult film requires a competence that "is not only inter-cinematic. It is inter-media, the sense that the spectator must know not only other movies, but the whole of massmedia gossip about the movies."²⁵ Such is the case with *Anyab*, as it is not only "inter-media," what with its heavy reliance on appropriated sound cues and western popular music, but also international in its privileging of viewers who are familiar with both Anglo-American and Egyptian popular culture. But as with *Rocky Horror*, that

intertextuality cannot be fully understood without considering how it is also a function of the film's employment of camp.

Camp as (Queer) Parody

In the broadest sense, camp has been understood as “art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is ‘too much’”²⁶ owing to its “love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration.”²⁷ There is general consensus that camp must not be seen “in terms of beauty but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization.”²⁸ The question of “where” camp lies, in the object or in the eye of the beholder, has been a subject of debate. Susan Sontag believed that “the Camp eye has the power to transform experience,” but argued that “not everything can be seen as Camp.”²⁹ Sontag favors what she dubs “naïve” or “pure” Camp, work in which “the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails.” More specifically, it is a seriousness whose failure can be “redeemed as Camp” given its possession of “the proper mixture of the exaggerated, the fantastic, the passionate, and the naïve.”³⁰ Though Sontag would have likely found the deliberate camp of *Rocky Horror* to be unsatisfying, the film's intense nostalgia for American B-movies resonates with her assertion that “the process of aging or deterioration provides the necessary detachment” from an older work of art that was thought to be a “failure” in its own time. In this sense, the passage of “time liberates the work of art from moral relevance, delivering it over to the Camp sensibility” so that “what was banal can...become fantastic.”³¹

Since “Notes on Camp,” writers have generally agreed that camp is neither “serious” nor “frivolous” but rather that “seriousness always takes part in the production

of a camp effect” through the “conversion of the serious into the frivolous.”³² Many writers since Sontag, however, have criticized her essay for her insistence “that the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized—or at least apolitical.”³³ This argument is related to her problematic understanding of comedy as “an experience of under-involvement, of detachment” in contrast to the “hyper-involvement” of tragedy.³⁴ With regards to *Rocky Horror* and cult cinema write large, another critical note which has been generally debunked from Sontag’s essay is the assertion that “deliberate Camp,” which “knows itself to be Camp...is usually less satisfying” than “naïve” or “pure” camp.³⁵ The immense popularity of *Rocky Horror*, as Caryl Flinn points out in her critique of Sontag’s fixation on “failed seriousness,” is enough to dispel the idea.³⁶

Meyer’s critique of Sontag centers on her “removing, or at least minimizing, the connotations of homosexuality” thereby “[killing] the binding referent of Camp—the Homosexual.”³⁷ Though she does mention that “there is no doubt a peculiar affinity and overlap” between camp and “homosexual taste,”³⁸ she ultimately refutes the notion that they are one and the same. As per Meyer’s account, this decision on Sontag’s part caused the discourse on the subject “to unravel as Camp became confused and conflated with rhetorical and performative strategies such as irony, satire, burlesque, and travesty; and with cultural movements such as Pop.”³⁹ According to him, writers (“whether gay or non-gay”) have “clung” to Sontag’s “definition of Camp-as-sensibility” in order to remain “invulnerable to critique, forever protected by invoking Sontag’s own critical exemption.”⁴⁰ Julian Mendenhall sees Sontag’s assessment of camp less as an erasure of queer identity and performance, and more of a democratization of a sensibility. Writing in

reference to Sontag's essay, Mendenhall states: "when she implies that anyone can perform camp, that anyone can camp it up, and that anyone can cultivate a 'camp taste' or 'camp vision,' Sontag merely opens the definition of camp up to all genders and sexual varieties."⁴¹ As such, Meyer believes that "because Camp is defined as a solely queer discourse, all un-queer activities that have been previously accepted as 'camp,' such as Pop culture expressions, have been redefined as examples of the appropriation of queer praxis." The so-called "un-queer" therefore "do not have access to the discourse of Camp, only to derivatives constructed through the act of appropriation."⁴²

Of course, not every theorist believes that camp is an inherently progressively subversive mode. Kleinhans, for example, argues that camp is no different than any other subcultural mode in the sense that it remains operative within a largely racist, patriarchal and bourgeoisie society. As such, camp mere self-identification as "different" from the mainstream and dominant culture does not automatically make it a radically oppositional mode. Rather, camp's potential for subversion comes through the audience's reception of the work as well as its exhibitive context: i.e. from the "camp eye."⁴³ Positing that camp sees "everything in parentheses" instead of Sontag's proposed "quotation marks," writers such as Andrew Britton have taken an antagonistic stance against camp, arguing that it is incapable of radically critiquing the norm given that it is "only recognisable as a deviation from an implied norm, and without that norm...would cease to exist."⁴⁴ Britton argues that this norm is simply masculinity and that camp is little more than "a mere play with given conventional signs" whereby the signs of masculinity are replaced parodically with those of femininity. From this perspective then, Britton concludes that camp is fundamentally

superficial, individualistic and “apolitical.”⁴⁵ Meyer does not denounce camp with such intensity, but opposed mainstream views of camp from a different angle. Using Hutcheon’s definition of parody,⁴⁶ he seeks to untangle Camp from its associations with satire, irony, and travesty “and to terminate, finally, the conflation of Camp with kitsch and schlock.” He sees the former conflation as “a confusion that entered the discourse as a result of the heterosexual/Pop colonization of Camp in the 1960s.” In this sense, Meyer sees camp as an exclusively queer form of parody, one that is only oppositional when it is providing a specifically queer critique.⁴⁷ Though I agree that there lies an inherent relationship between camp and both queerness and parody, I do not find its association with such modes as satire, irony, kitsch and schlock to be counterproductive, but necessary. In fact, to dissociate camp from these modes, while fusing it to queerness, implies that all “queer” performance is a kind of camp. This is a self-evidently limiting, and potentially problematic, equation.

Despite his overall negative view of camp, Kleinhans still finds value in parody as he sees it as an “adaptive” form of critique, for “once people sense that history is changing and that they can change things around them, they use parody differently.” The process of responding to history makes parody become “deep and cutting against the past, against the status quo, against what holds people back.” It becomes “fused with anger in art and political expression.” When parody is specifically articulated through camp, it has the exceptional “ability to expose what the powers-that-be would like to keep neatly hidden and out of sight.” In its resistance to the dominant ideology, camp-as-parody becomes capable of exhibiting “a determined recycling of political agendas as well as aesthetic diversity.”⁴⁸ Camp’s employment of parody thus operates “as a mode of discourse...within

the dominant ideology, but with an internal tension.”⁴⁹ As discussed in Chapter 3, *Anyab* centrally concerns itself with the “internal tension” and contradiction of the dominant *effendi* opposition to the *infitah*, and this becomes the foundation of its camp sensibility and parody.

Though I find Meyer’s critique of the so-called “un-queer” to be too broad and aspecific as to be productive, I do find his definition of “queer” in relation to camp to be immensely helpful. Here, the term does not assume the gender of the subject, but rather seeks to indicate “an ontological challenge to dominant labeling philosophies...as well as a challenge to discrete gender categories embedded in the divided phrase ‘gay and lesbian’”⁵⁰ and an overall “oppositional stance to essentialist (sexual orientation as innate) models.”⁵¹ Moreover, Meyer defines both terms, queer and camp, through a Marxist lens as he argues that “the queer label contains a critique of a more vast and comprehensive system of class-based practices of which sex/gender identity is only a part.”⁵² His understanding of “queerness” and its counter-hegemonic qualities thus goes beyond its opposition to “essentialist formations” of gender and sexuality. Instead, he argues that the term “queer” presents a wide and malleable notion of counter-hegemonic identity, capable of underwriting “the epistemology deployed by the bourgeoisie in their ascendancy to and maintenance of dominant power.”⁵³ In this way, Meyer defines camp as a “parodic operation” which “gains its political validity as an ontological critique.”⁵⁴ A challenge to conventional ontology, camp “displaces bourgeois notions of the Self as unique, abiding, and continuous while substituting instead a concept of the Self as performative, improvisational, discontinuous, and processually constituted by repetitive and stylized

acts.”⁵⁵ The vampire montage is a pitch-perfect demonstration of this understanding of camp. Though there is little that may be deemed overtly “queer” about the sequence, its melodramatic and overly performative nature transforms each vignette into a parodic operation whose goal is to challenge the hegemonic bourgeoisie view of the *effendiya* with regards to the socioeconomic class dynamics of the post-*infatih* era. The subsequent repetition of these stylized scenes in each vignette demonstrates an active deployment of camp, one with the goal of rendering *effendi* discourse absurd and out of touch with reality.

Meyer further argues that “the function of Camp...is the production of queer social visibility.”⁵⁶ Though I do not think that this notion is entirely untrue, I do find great fault with Meyer’s total equation of any queer performance paradigm with camp, which causes him to state that camp is “the total body of performative practices and strategies used to enact a queer identity, with enactment defined as the production of social visibility.”⁵⁷ This insistence that “*all* queer identity performative expressions are circulated within the signifying system that is Camp” at once excessively narrows the use of the term and expands it beyond usefulness.⁵⁸ If any expression and/or performance of queer identity, including sincere and transparent acts, can be considered “camp” then we are no longer discussing the same term which Sontag attempted to codify decades ago. As such, I insist that any adequate definition of camp must be grounded in a sense of irony, extravagance and/or flamboyance. In this sense, *Rocky Horror*’s relationship with camp is not rooted first and foremost in its production of queer social visibility, but in that the framework of said production is rooted in irony, extravagance, and flamboyance. While *Anyab* could not have afford to reproduce said queer visibility, at least not as explicitly, it does inherit the

performativity and excess of its original. ‘Adawiya’s Dracula is certainly nowhere near as “queer” as Frank-N-Furter, but he is just as campy. To take a queue from Sontag, he is not a vampire, but a “vampire.”

Arguments such as Meyer’s can be traced back to writers like Jack Babuscio who located camp in the so-called “gay sensibility,” in the sense that the mode of camp as always operated from within the “same sociocultural level as the [gay] sub-culture from which it has issued.”⁵⁹ Writing before the term queer had become mainstream, Babuscio defines the gay sensibility “as a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream; a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression.” As such it is not only political in being aware of the subject’s marginalization, but also in being a perspective which is fundamentally shaped and defined by the experience of one’s own “gayness.”⁶⁰ For Babuscio, camp is “gays’” response to the assignment of “natural” and “normal” attributes to society which render “homosexuality [into] abnormal, unnatural, sick behaviour.”⁶¹ In this way, camp is a specifically gay/queer mode which facilitates the relationship between queer people’s activities and expressions, and the “heterosexual order of things.”⁶² Like others, Babuscio cannot conceive of a work of camp that is not deployed by an explicitly and openly queer person, particularly a cisgender, gay man.

As for cinema, Babuscio argues that camp films display an “emphasis on sensuous surfaces, textures, imagery, and the evocation of mood as stylistic devices—not simply because they are appropriate to the plot, but as fascinating in themselves.” From this point of view, horror in particular lends itself very well to camp interpretations, particularly in

the genre's tendency to express "instant feeling, thrills, sharply defined personality, outrageous and 'unacceptable' sentiments."⁶³ Much like Sontag's characterization of camp as "the love of the exaggerated, the 'off', of things-being-what-they-are-not,"⁶⁴ Babuscio locates the essence of camp in its exaggeration. In this sense, the application of a campy style means "the emphasis shifts from what a thing or a person is to what it *looks* like; from what is being done to *how* it is being done." As such, "the musical comedy, with its high budgets and big stars, its open indulgence in sentiment, and its emphasis on atmosphere, mood, nostalgia, and the fantastic, is, along with horror, a film genre that is saturated with camp."⁶⁵ As Tinkcom argues, film musicals and melodramas are the "two genres in particular [which] lend themselves to...forms of visual and affective extravagance" especially since they tend to feature stories which revolve "around the crises of heterosexuality within the constraints of capital's social formations."⁶⁶ Horror-musicals are, thus, doubly camp.

In addition to exaggeration, theatricality is another essential element in camp. Building on Sontag's remark that camp "is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater,"⁶⁷ Babuscio argues that "to appreciate camp in things or persons is to perceive the notion of life-as-theatre, being versus role-playing, reality and appearance."⁶⁸ This harkens back to Sontag's assertion that "the hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance," a notion she visualizes with the example of a "woman walking around in a dress made of three million feathers."⁶⁹ This is yet another reason for camp's inextricable relationship with queer subjectivity, for if "'role' is defined as the appropriate behavior associated with a given position in society, then gays do not conform to socially

expected ways of behaving as men and women,” at least not conventionally.⁷⁰ Babuscio views camp’s propensity for performance and theatricality as inherently critical. As he argues: “camp, by focusing on the outward appearances of role, implies that roles, and in particular, sex roles, are superficial—a matter of style.”⁷¹ In the case of *Anyab*, this deconstructive performativity can also be applied to the film’s presentation of class and class identity, as discussed in Chapter 3, as well as in Jeffrey Weinstock’s notes on vampiric gender parody in Chapter 2.

Moreover, humor and specifically comic performance, is integral to camp. As Babuscio argues, camp humor “results from an identification of a strong incongruity between an object, person, or situation and its context” since “the comic element is inherent in the formal properties of irony.” This irony is rooted in the incongruity that is one of the primary strategies of camp. By this, Babuscio means that camp tends to respond to a “hostile environment” usually to “highly contradictory” messages from society, e.g. the notion that queer people are at once “just like anybody else” and “unacceptably ‘different.’”⁷² It is such basic “contradictions” that form the “joke” of a campy sensibility. “Laughter, rather than tears,” thus becomes camp’s “method of dealing with the painfully incongruous situation” of queer and marginalized people in society.⁷³ Once again, *Anyab* acts as a textbook example of this aspect of camp. As discussed in Chapter 3, the film actively tackles the inherently contradictory *effendi* construct of the *infitahi*, by exposing the absurdity of such a figure being somehow both lower and upper class, too “local” yet also too “western.” This contradiction thus forms the “joke” of *Anyab*’s campy sensibility, which places the *effendi* straight in its crosshairs.

The Intersection of Cult, Camp and Class

Class has been barely considered in theories on either cult or camp. One of the few writers to have done so is Caryl Flinn, who has noted that “class-specific camp icons [such as Divine] seem to move back and forth between their makers and their targets, offering even less hermeneutic fixity than notions of gender or race.”⁷⁴ Adawiya’s role in *Anyab* must be understood through this lens, particularly as the characterization of his Dracula seeks to mock the inherently contradictory nature of the *effendi*’s construct of the *infitahi*. Tinkcom’s view of camp through a Marxist lens is crucial here. Beyond its previously discussed relationship to queer cultures and aesthetics, camp can be understood as “an insistence on...continually examining the contradictions that capital gives rise to on a daily basis,” particularly through capitalism’s rupturing of monetary and sociocultural value.⁷⁵ Cinema is particularly apt for such uses of camp, given its capacity to act as “the medium, par excellence, that visualizes...the indeterminacies and contradictions of capital and the effects of modernity.” *Anyab* is thus a bona fide example of camp film’s propensity to “make sense of the representations to which the specific political economy of capital gives rise.”⁷⁶ This is the crux of *Anyab*’s vampire montage, whose vignettes repeat exaggerated instances of *effendi* encounters with the fragile economy of the early 1980s, but distorted through a fantastically classist lens that sees plumbers and mechanics as “exploitative” Mercedes-driving vampires who prey on the sidelined bourgeoisie.

Like others, however, Tinkcom narrows camp down to a queer masculine phenomenon or, as he puts it: “an alibi for queer men to labor within those contradictions.”⁷⁷ Just as with Meyer, I reject this narrow essentialization of camp while

retaining that the mode is intimately linked to queer performativity. As such, I still agree with Tinkcom's view that film commodities which frequently possess queer-coding, such as film musicals or "trash" cult films, can be thought of as "in drag" since they "coyly [give] up some secrets about [their] production while withholding other knowledge from unsuspecting viewers."⁷⁸ Though *Anyab* features no instance of unambiguous queer language or action, its recycling of *Rocky Horror*'s plot and narrative structure—in which queer subjectivity and performativity are absolutely central—render it susceptible to a queer reading. In a sense, the film seems to be aware of the undeniable queerness of its subject matter, yet simply lacks the means to (re)express such a sensibility itself. Here, Tinkcom's note about the "drag" of musicals and cult films serves us well, particularly with regards to the scene in which Dracula's assistant wears a *Rocky Horror* t-shirt, thus openly acknowledging the film's indebtedness to its queer original while also "coyly" giving up its status as a remake and an inherently fannish work.

Camp discourses within cult cinema are, of course, by no means new. As Mendenhall states "cult movie fans often have a taste for camp, and they are the tastemakers who make camp films into cult favorites."⁷⁹ Given how commonly cult films overlap with camp ones in their "ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, [and] theatrical" aesthetics, there has always been tremendous value in putting these two modes of cinema in conversation.⁸⁰ As previously mentioned, *Rocky Horror* "is the quintessential comedic camp cult film" particularly since "musicals themselves are usually camp" given their "artificial" and "over-the-top" quality. Similarly to Babuscio, Mendenhall argues that whenever characters in musicals break into song, "the realism is broken, thus calling

attention to the artificial, constructed nature of the film, which results in a camp moment.”⁸¹ Of course, that realism is even more aggressively and actively broken in both *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* by the consistent reliance on heavy-handed instances of breaking the fourth wall, whether by having characters think in speech bubbles in the latter, or the presence of a narrator who addresses the audience in both.

Much of *Rocky Horror*’s campiness is rooted in the star of the show, Tim Curry’s Dr. Frank-N-Furter. As Mendenhall remarks, the character’s “affected flamboyance” hints at “the notion that the word camp came from the French, *se camper*, meaning ‘to pose or to flaunt.’” As such “camping” in *Rocky Horror* is synonymous with “flaunting” particularly when it comes to Frank-N-Furter, and inevitably the whole cast’s, employment of drag.⁸² Though *Anyab* does not employ drag, there is a similar use of flaunting. Every scene featuring Adawiya’s Dracula has him overflowing with flamboyant swagger. He winks at the camera consistently, relentlessly flirts with Mona, argues with the Narrator and breaks out into ecstatic song about how much he likes to have fun. Though much of this characterization has to do with Adawiya’s own jubilant persona and repertoire of upbeat songs, it is also one of the most vital ways through which *Anyab* recreates Frank-N-Furter within the confines of Egyptian censorship.

Conclusion

By virtue of being intertextually parodic works that utilize the hyper-performativity and excess of both horror and musicals, *Rocky Horror* and *Anyab* unite the modes of camp and cult cinema in their textual fabric. Moreover, by reconstructing the dense referentiality of its original in a starkly different national and cinematic context, *Anyab* demonstrates the

relevance of the textual approach to cult cinema, as the absence of sufficient data on its reception throughout the decades in Egypt by no means neglects its strict adherence to the tropes and structures of cult films.

Furthermore, *Anyab* demonstrates that the deployment of camp may be intimately linked to queer subjectivity and performativity while not providing unambiguous queer visibility. Both Adawiya's *Dracula* and the audiovisual landscape of the film demonstrate that the use of irony, extravagance and flamboyance does not necessitate the inclusion of overtly queer characters and/or actions, but nonetheless may be otherwise linked to themes of queer subjectivity and visibility. Though I will not speculate on whether or not Mohamed Shebl himself identified as queer, the aggressive sexuality of *Rocky Horror* means it would have been impossible for him to not identify the text as explicitly so. His humorous callback to *Rocky Horror* within the very text of *Anyab* thus suggests a longing to participate in the production of a transparently queer subjectivity.

Notes

¹ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 11.

² Kleinhans, Chuck. "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody." 162.

³ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 9.

⁴ Kleinhans, Chuck. "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody." 169.

⁵ Ernest Mathijs & Jamie Sexton. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 3.

⁶ *Ibid.* 32.

⁷ *Ibid.* 27.

⁸ *Ibid.* 7.

⁹ Mathijs, Ernest & Sexton, Jamie. "The cult cinema studies experience." 2.

¹⁰ Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 27-28.

¹² Katovich, Michael A. & Kinkade, Patrick. "Toward a Sociology of Cult Films: Reading 'Rocky Horror'." 200.

¹³ Ernest Mathijs & Jamie Sexton. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 38.

¹⁴ Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. 25-26.

¹⁵ Kleinhans, Chuck. "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody." 163.

¹⁶ Ernest Mathijs & Jamie Sexton. *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. 38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 38.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 87.

- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* 89.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* 92.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* 201.
- ²² *Ibid.* 224.
- ²³ *Ibid.* 226.
- ²⁴ Gorfinkel, Elena. "Cult Film or Cinephilia by Any Other Name." 36.
- ²⁵ Eco, Umberto. "'Casablanca': Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage." 12.
- ²⁶ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 59.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.* 53.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* 54.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* 59.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* 60.
- ³² Cleto, Fabio. "Queering the Camp." 28.
- ³³ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 54.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* 63.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.* 57.
- ³⁶ Flinn, Caryl. "The Deaths of Camp." 438.
- ³⁷ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 6.
- ³⁸ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 64.
- ³⁹ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 6.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 7.
- ⁴¹ Mendenhall, Julia. "Cult cinema and camp." 193.
- ⁴² Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 1.
- ⁴³ Kleinhans, Chuck. "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody." 168.
- ⁴⁴ Britton, Andrew "For Interpretation: Against Camp." 140.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 138.
- ⁴⁶ As he puts it, "a denigration articulated within a dominant discourse that finds value only in an 'original'" thereby contesting the "ideas of Romantic singularity." Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 8.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ Kleinhans, Chuck. "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody." 171.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 162.
- ⁵⁰ Meyer, Moe. "Reclaiming the discourse of Camp." 1.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.* 2.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 1.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 2.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ Babuscio, Jack "Camp and the Gay Sensibility." 121.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 122.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.* 122-3.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.* 125.
- ⁶⁴ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 56.
- ⁶⁵ Babuscio, Jack "Camp and the Gay Sensibility." 126.
- ⁶⁶ Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema.* 28.
- ⁶⁷ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 56.
- ⁶⁸ Babuscio, Jack "Camp and the Gay Sensibility." 127.
- ⁶⁹ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp'." 59.
- ⁷⁰ Babuscio, Jack "Camp and the Gay Sensibility." 127.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.* 127.
- ⁷² *Ibid.* 130.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 131.

⁷⁴ Flinn, Caryl. "The Deaths of Camp." 442.

⁷⁵ Tinkcom, Matthew. *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema*. 5.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 27.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 9.

⁷⁹ Mendenhall, Julia. "Cult cinema and camp." 190.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 191.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

Chapter 5: Conclusion: *Fangs, Fangs, Everywhere There Are Fangs*

In synthesizing the literatures on cult cinema, camp theory and Egyptian cultural history, it has been my goal throughout this thesis to demonstrate the class-centric satirical dimensions of *Anyab*'s rich, intertextuality. Moreover, it has been my goal to use Mohamed Shebl's debut film as both a case study of the intersection of cult and camp aesthetics as well as a case study of those literatures' applicability outside the Anglo-American cinematic sphere. In a similar vein, I have also aimed to contribute to the literature on remake studies by analyzing *Anyab* as an extremely unconventional remake of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, thus bridging that burgeoning field's literature with that of cult cinema studies. Lastly, it has also been my goal to use *Anyab* as an entry point into a much larger discussion on the turbulent cultural politics of the early Egyptian 1980s, specifically as they manifested in genre cinema.

My first chapter laid the historical and theoretical groundwork for *Over at the Dracula Place*, giving context to Shebl's life and work, as well as their place in the larger schemata of Egyptian cinema and popular culture. It also sought to demonstrate the importance of this research, given how understudied and mistheorized the film has been so far. From there, my second chapter focused on a comparative reading of *Anyab* and its progenitor, *Rocky Horror*. In comparing and contrasting the two films' narratives, aesthetics and themes, this chapter sought to familiarize the reader with *Anyab*'s intimate, but inevitably unfaithful relationship to *Rocky Horror*. Most importantly, however, this chapter also sought to demonstrate how the satirical class commentary of the Egyptian film

borrows heavily from the narrative structure and irreverent ethos of the original. Using the writings of Mahmoud Qassem, Iain R. Smith and Lauren Rosewarne, this chapter argued that *Anyab*, as a thoroughly intertextual film, demands to be read as an Egyptianized remake of *Rocky Horror*.

Locating *Anyab* within the sociocultural context of the post-*infatih* moment of cinematic discourse, my third chapter argued against Viola Shafik's lumping of the film with the successful New Realist movement of the time, arguing that Shebl's film instead positioned itself in opposition to these film's construction of the so-called *infitahi* trope. Building off of the previous chapter's demonstration of *Anyab*'s indebtedness to the satirical class commentary of *Rocky Horror*, this chapter focused particularly on the central figure of Adawiya, contextualizing the classed nature of his star and how its usage in the film is meant to terrorize the bourgeoisie couple and not the actual audience. In this way, the "foreignness" of Adawiya's Dracula was not meant to be an affirmation of the classist discourses which plagued the pop star, but rather a satirical critique of them.

To further understand how the aesthetics and satire of *Anyab* are interlinked, my fourth chapter deepened my analysis of the film as a class-centric satire by analyzing its usage of and relation to cult and camp film aesthetics. Through the lens of these two modes, the film's opposition to the sober and dry approach of the New Realists became quickly and abundantly clear. Moreover, in drawing from the rich literature on camp and cult cinema, this chapter also sought to demonstrate how *Anyab*'s flashy and campy pastiche was integral to its satirical critique of its era's bourgeoisie-*effendiya* sensibilities. I paid particular attention to the distance the camp and aesthetically cultic elements of the film

placed a distance between the experiences of the viewer and that of the characters, reiterating the argument that it is not us who are meant to be terrified of the classed Dracula, but Ali and Mona. In turn, this links the project back to the initial comparative approach of the second chapter, demonstrating the various ways in which *Anyab* mirrors its original, whether aesthetically or thematically.

In textually analyzing *Anyab* through the intersecting lenses of remaking/*iqtibas*, *infatih* discourses and camp-cult cinema, I have hoped to demonstrate throughout this thesis the satirical and subversive class commentary of the film, and to make a case for why it should no longer be marginalized to the sidelines of Egyptian and genre film history. The persistent failure of mainstream Egyptian critics and scholars to analyze the film as a bona-fide remake of *Rocky Horror*, paired with the pervasive ignorance of American critics of the sociocultural background of the film, has meant that *Anyab* has long been denied an adequate, let alone thorough, textual reading. In providing that reading, it has been my hope to contribute to the fields of remake studies and cult cinema studies, as well as to expand our understanding of the state of Egyptian film discourse in the early 1980s. That work, of course, does not end here and there remains much to be done to enhance our understanding of this understudied film and period.

The Memetic Legacy of *Anyab*

The most obvious next step for any kind of research regarding *Anyab* would be a thorough examination of its reception within the Egyptian context. As mentioned in my first chapter, the fact that I had to conduct my research during the COVID-19 pandemic meant that I was unfortunately unable to access crucial archives and libraries that would

have permitted me to adequately assess how the film was initially received in Egypt in 1981, As much as I could glean from contemporary internet sources about the film's box office failure and general initial obscurity, the immediate reception and coverage of the film warrants its own research, particularly with regards to how critics and audiences may have interpreted the thematic relevance of Adawiya's casting.

None of this is to say, however, that *Anyab*'s footprint on the Egyptian internet sphere is nonexistent. In fact, the film—specifically the image of Adawiya's Dracula—has resurfaced in some corners of social media over the last decade as a meme of sorts; a way to poke fun at the often ludicrous nature of 1980s genre cinema. This was particularly evident on Youtube, where in 2014 two remarkably similar comedy web series, *Raseeny* and *El 3elm Wel Emaw*—both spoofs of informative Egyptian talk shows—used the image of Adawiya's Dracula as a gag.¹ The videos were published within months of one another, and though it remains unclear as to whether or not the latter got the idea to include a reference to *Anyab* from the former, the memetic recurrence of the film regardless signals its endurance over the last decade. As late as 2019 and 2020, the occasional semi-viral Facebook post will appear reminiscing over the ridiculousness of *Anyab*, prompting jabs at the film and its shoddy production design, as well as shock by users who had not previously heard of the film.²

2020 saw a significant bump in discussions of *Anyab* for another critical reason; the release of Rami Yasin's vampire thriller film, *Bloodline (Khat Dam)*. As far as I have been able to determine, this has so far been the only Egyptian vampire film to have been made in the decades since *Anyab*'s debut. As such, discussions of Yasin's film drew

numerous comparisons with Shebl's, despite the radical difference between the two in production value, tone and even release format.³ Starring Nelly Karim and Dhaffer Abdine, two of the biggest stars in contemporary Egyptian film and television, the film follows a married couple who resort to turning their young son to a vampire when they fail to otherwise find a cure for his rare disease. Though it lacked the budget of an Egyptian blockbuster, *Bloodline*'s cinematography and production design are a far cry from the deliberately campy aesthetics of *Anyab*, opting instead for a genuine attempt at an ambiguous and suspenseful atmosphere. The degree to which that atmosphere does or does not succeed is, of course, a matter of one's taste, but even the staunchest critics of *Bloodline* could acknowledge that it looked much more similar to a contemporary indie film than anything like *Anyab*.

Not every outlet acknowledged *Anyab* in its coverage of *Bloodline*, however. This is, at least in part, due to the director's own false claim that his was the first Arabic-language vampire film.⁴ Across several interviews and statements, Yasin actively sought to position himself as a pioneer of the Arab vampire film, erasing the legacy of *Anyab* in the process.⁵ That said, it does seem as though the majority of publications did attempt in some shape or form to root their (usually negative) coverage of *Bloodline* within the history of Egyptian horror cinema, often comparing it to other films besides *Anyab*.⁶ The reception of the film followed, once again, Mahmoud Qassem's axiom regarding Egyptian films that are seen to be adaptations and/or imitations of foreign movies.⁷ Criticism of the film was tied directly to the degree to which it was perceived to have been successful, or not, at its process of "Egyptianizing" the "foreign" story.

Some articles plainly asked: “why would you make an Arab film about a vampire?”⁸ Such critiques plainly chastised the film for showcasing a non-regional mythological creature instead of an object of terror that was seen to be actually relevant to Egyptian and/or Arab culture in general, e.g. a jinni. For many critics, it was simply inconceivable to center a horror story on a monster perceived to be “alien” to regional cultures and tradition.⁹ They argued that the vampire as a trope and genre emerged out of particular material and cultural circumstances, unique to the western European situation of the 19th century and so was inappropriate for a contemporary Egyptian context.¹⁰ The film did not fare much better with audiences.¹¹

When *Anyab* was mentioned, it was usually disparagingly as a way of emphasizing that Egyptian vampire films and/or horror at large have always been in some shape or form bad. Even though virtually every critic acknowledged the leaps and bounds in production design between *Anyab* and *Bloodline*, they saw both as failed instances of *tamseer*, in the sense that they could not adequately transfer the “foreign” story into a believable Egyptian context. Unsurprisingly, many of such references to *Anyab* implied a connection between the so-called “cheapness” of the film with the perceived vulgarity of Adawiya.¹² Other articles seem to do the same, but with the supposed “triviality” of the film instead.¹³ Though the past decades have witnessed an overwhelming transformation of the cultural consensus on Adawiya, with the vast majority of people now seeing him as a bona fide national musical icon, the pervasive classing of his star and legacy has by no means faded. The fixation on his role in *Anyab* as a kind of gag does, however, beg the question: if the overwhelming Egyptian coverage of the film sees it as an affirmation of anti-*infatih*

discourse through the mockery of Adawiya, is it even possible to argue that the film is a satire?

On the Multiple Readings of *Anyab*

Satire is, of course, by no means fixed and static. A film may appear abundantly parodic to one viewer, but completely sincere and unassuming to another. The same viewer, even, may with time or life experience grow to reinterpret texts they once thought to be genuine as satirical and vice versa. Furthermore, a viewer's knowledge of a film's particular production and/or cultural context is often critical to their understanding of its relationship, or lack thereof, to satire. For example, if one were to watch Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* (1997), without any knowledge of the director's previous films or his commentary on this particular one, they might interpret the film as a tacit endorsement of fascism and right-wing militarism.¹⁴ As mentioned in previous chapters, intertextuality is crucial to satire, as it is to camp and cult film aesthetics. All three modes are integral to the film and it has been my hope to demonstrate the futility of any attempt to read *Anyab* that does not take their convalescence into account.

At the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that, given the general unpopularity of *Rocky Horror* within Egyptian media, incomplete readings of *Anyab* were always inevitable. Moreover, without the context of Adawiya's *Dracula* as a retelling, even reperforming, of *Frank-N-Furter*, it essentially makes no sense for the Egyptian viewer to assume that the classist reading of *Anyab* is not the most obvious one, whether or no they agree with it. Throughout this thesis, I have considered it beyond me to comment on the actual success, or lack thereof, of *Anyab*'s satire, and I believe that remains the case here. On the one hand,

I simply consider the heightened subjectivity of such a question to be unproductive for scholarship. On the other, I find it to be an asinine and unpromising venture—at the very least until one may be able to access the archival material that would provide a better picture of how the film was actually received at the time of its release in 1981.

Much like camp, satire is by no means an exact science, and any serious discussion of either must take into account the impossibility of definitively stating for a fact whether or not the text in question will always be perceived as either at any given time or place. That is simply and patently unfeasible. My work throughout this project has thus been less of an attempt at proving to a fault that *Anyab* is an unquestionable satire, and more of a demonstration of the necessity of reading such a richly intertextual film in comprehensive context. I remain uninterested in staking a claim as to whether *Anyab* is a “good” or “bad” film—that is still besides the point. I am, however, deeply invested in revealing the potential of an Egyptian film studies methodology that moves beyond the condescending “Hollywood-on-the-Nile” framework previously discussed. The comprehensive and nuanced study of Egyptian film and media still has a terribly long way to go, but I do hope this multilayered analysis of an obscure vampire musical from the 1980s can act as a step on that road.

Notes

¹ In order of release, these are *Raseeny*’s episode on “Vampires in Egypt” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Us2bB8u3kVw>) and *El 3elm Wel Emaw*’s episode on “The Evolution of the Villain in Egyptian Cinema.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXpss2Hh1xQ>)

² This is an example of such a post: <https://www.facebook.com/fan.el7ewar/posts/1262290363938176/>

³ It was released during the COVID-19 pandemic exclusively on the streaming site Shahid.

⁴ Hamad, Marwa. “‘*Bloodline*’: Everything to know about first Arab vampire horror film,” *Gulf News*.

⁵ “MBC’s Shahid to premiere Arabic horror film ‘*Bloodline*’ on October 30,” *Broadcast Pro*.

⁶ Abd Elkader, Nada. “*Bloodline* Review: How To Not Do Horror,” *identity*.

⁷ *Bloodline* is not an adaptation of any specific vampire story, but given the general rarity of vampire stories in Egyptian literature and media, it was perceived to be a generally “Egyptianized” take on the vampire mythos.

⁸ Alsaady, Liqaa. “*Bloodline*... Why Did the First Arab Vampire Film Fail?,” *Arabi Post*.

⁹ Gamal, Amgad. “*Bloodline*... the First Arab Vampire Movie...,” *Daqaeq*.

¹⁰ Adel, Mohamed. “*Bloodline*... the First Arab Vampire Movie Causes Mockery,” *Aljazeera*.

¹¹ “Tweeters on *Bloodline*: Where’s the Horror?” *alarab*.

¹² Ibrahim, Injy. “*Bloodline*: What Was All This For?” *Ida2at*.

¹³ Bin Amer, Saber. “From *Anyab* to *Bloodline*: Repeated Egyptian Disappointments,” *alarab*.

¹⁴ Whether or not the film succeeds as a satire of fascism is often still debated, but regardless such a debate is impossible without taking into account how Verhoeven has actively attempted to position his film over the years as a satire.

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