Authoritarianism and Subject Formation in Post-Independence Egypt: Egyptian Literature and Western Social Theory in Dialogue

Passent Moussa

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

University of Essex

February 2023

Acknowledgements

There are not enough words to express my deep gratitude and respect for my supervisor and companion, Professor Colin Samson, who inspired me at all levels by bringing his vast knowledge and rich experience to this work. Our extended discussions, which began as early as my MA and during which we always enjoyed digressing, opened my eyes to the wide skies of the field of sociology and beyond. He was always present, encouraging, and open to my ideas and always trusted me, especially in the darkest times when I doubted my work. I was particularly inspired by his great intellect, humility, and artistic sensibility, which set the interdisciplinary tone of my research. It was by no means easy to complete a doctoral dissertation in three years while being the mother of a three-year-old child born just as the programme was beginning and in times of a pandemic, but without his constant guidance, encouragement, and care, this work probably would not have come to fruition. I am so indebted to him that words are not enough to express it.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Carlos Gigoux, who generously took the time to read and comment on my work progress during our panel meetings and beyond. His valuable advice and constant encouragement helped me improve my work and develop a broader perspective on it.

I would also like to thank all the members of the Sociology Department, especially Michele Hall, who was available when needed, gave me advice, and took a lot of paperwork and administrative work off my hands. A special thanks to Sandy Macmillen, the most incredible academic liaison librarian anyone could ask for. Sandy was so helpful, accommodating, and courteous that I could not understand he was able to get it done in such an efficient and timely

manner. He is such a resourceful and tireless person who helped me and probably many others during the pandemic with their distance learning.

I owe this work to my parents, my beloved mother Aziza Fathi and my father Mohamed Moussa, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the years of unconditional love, care and trust that made it possible for me to write this study and these lines. Without their tremendous love, understanding and encouragement throughout my life, it would have been impossible for me to complete my studies and many other endeavours in life. I love you both and am grateful for all you have given me and done for me. My mother is no longer here to read this, but I am sure she would have been happy to see me fulfil a big dream I have always wanted. For the wonderful childhood she gave me, for a life full of joy, laughter, love, and security, for every expression of warmth, love, encouragement, and care, for her constant smile and strength that always inspired me, I dedicate this work to her wonderful soul, for she is always with me.

With great love, I thank Ahmed Fahmy, my husband, for being a great companion who loved me, supported me, encouraged me, and helped me to the best of his ability to cope and survive the difficult life of the last three years. We survived a pandemic, became parents for the first time, both spent nights studying for our PhDs and taking care of our little child at the same time. Thank you for being there for me and sticking it out with me. Your support, love and care made this project possible.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the many family members and friends who have been of immeasurable value to me. My special thanks to my siblings for their continued love and support even though we have been separated by distance. My deep appreciation and love also goes to my dear mother-in-law, Regine Fahmy, for her encouragement and moral and emotional support throughout my years of study. My sincere appreciation goes to my best friend, Noha Saleh, who accompanied me on my journey from the very beginning.

And finally, my love and gratitude goes to my baby daughter, Sophia, who was born when I had just started my studies and became a toddler and then a child during the course of my doctorate. I want Sophia to know that her rebellious spirit has always moved my pen. She is my greatest source of inspiration in every little gesture and movement she makes, and she was part of this research from the beginning until the day I handed it in. In the long, quiet nights we spent together, I had the opportunity, while you slept in my arms, to think about my work and let it run through my mind. In all the books and novels, you left your mark with your scribbles to show that you were there at every moment to bring this work to life and, above all, to give me life.

This work is dedicated to the memory of my beloved mother Aziza and my sunshine Sophia.

To your wonderful souls, I owe everything.

To all freedom fighters around the world: Your lives matter.

Abstract

The study grew out of a desire to examine how it feels to be denied what Hannah Arendt famously referred to as the 'right to have rights,' including the right to disobey. More specifically, this study seeks to understand how people living under particular regimes of power—characterised by distinct politics of fear, uncertainty, and silence—feel, define, and express themselves in relation to power, whether in the form of submission or resistance. In other words: How do authoritarian power dynamics affect individuals' perception of self and how does it play into and shape the everyday life of the individual? At the heart of this inquiry is the notion of the subject, which forms both the conceptual foundation and the central focus of this study.

The study draws primarily on the theoretical contributions of Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, and Hannah Arendt on the interplay of power, resistance, and subjectivity. To frame the discussion, a socio-historical examination of post-independence power practices in Egypt and their impact on the constitution of the political subject is conducted. Research data is generated through an art-inspired qualitative research approach, primarily using Egyptian novels as a source of data to uncover the nuances and interiorities of the process of subject formation. Through a dialogue between Western social theory and Egyptian literature, the study provides an understanding of power practice in Egypt from 1952 to the present, particularly at the level of the inner panorama of the self in society and expands it into a reading of social and political theories on the question of power, subjectivity, resistance, and agency.

The study is divided into six main chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. Each empirical chapter of this study tells the story of a particular episode in time and is somewhat self-contained, yet all chapters are connected into a large coherent reading of modern Egyptian power practices. Just as the novels examined in this study tell a story with their words, so does my research.

The study concludes that the process of subject formation in Egypt should be understood as an artefact of historical continuity that connects the past to the present, not necessarily in a linear fashion, but in a way that gives it a genealogical context, and as a dynamic process of shifting subject positions. The study further argues for the limitations of the status conception of citizenship as a defining framework for the state—society relationship in the context under study and proposes instead the use of the power—subject framework as a substitute. Last but not least, the study suggests that the connection between theory and method, expressed in the very structure of the research, reveals the epistemic relevance of literature to the conceptual imagination, contributing in a sense, to the discussion of the decolonisation of knowledge production. In some ways, this interdisciplinarity underscores the sheer breadth and hybridity of the concept of subject formation that has become apparent throughout this analysis.

Keywords— Power, Subject Formation, Subjectivity, Egyptian Literature, Resistance, Agency

Table of contents

Acknowledgments ii
Abstract v
Table of contents vii

Chapter 1:

Introduction 1

Research Methodology: Data Generation and Data Analysis..12

Theoretical Bearings: Primary Literature 33

Secondary Literature 41

Chapter 2: The Politics of Terror Under Nasser: The Defeated Subject (1950s-1970s)

2.1 *Karnak Café* 45

2.2 *The Black Policeman* 70

Chapter 3: Neo-Liberal Authoritarianism Under Sadat: The Naked Subject (1970s-1980s)

3.1 *The Committee* 88

3.2 *The Heron* 110

Chapter 4: In-Operativity and Listlessness Under Mubarak: The Silent Subject (1980s-2011)

4.1 *Chronicle of a Last Summer* 125

4.2 *The Crocodiles* 147

Chapter 5: The Politics of Death and Uncertainty in Post-2011: The Expendable Subject

5.1 *The Queue* 167

5.2 *Here is a Body*..191

Chapter 6: Conclusion ………………………………………………………………… ...223

Bibliography 234

Chapter 1
Introduction

It was last summer when I travelled to Egypt with my family for the first time after moving to Germany. I quickly crossed the long hall leading to the checkpoints where police officers wait at open counters to receive passengers and check their documents. Contrary to popular belief, I have always thought that open counters are more intimidating than closed ones. While the partitioned windows enforce some distance between the officer and the passenger, at the open counters you are in close contact with the person checking your documents, so your posture, face, and reaction can be easily seen and closely examined.

I walked through a long line at passport control, anxiously awaiting my turn. Every time I passed through the checkpoint, at least for the last 7 years, I crossed my fingers that everything would go well. The uncertainty of being stopped lingered with me and many other young Egyptians for a while. This time, when I arrived at the checkpoint, the policeman, after flipping through my passport, stopped me and held my passport aside for about ten minutes. I tried to ask what was wrong, but he ignored my question and rudely pointed at me and said, 'You stay here.' To him, I am nobody, but a passive subject upon whom the power he wields is exercised. He did not bother to pay any attention to me or explain the reason for the inspection. Then he handed my passport to another policeman who looked at me and asked, 'What have you done?' This time he called me by name. The first officer made a serious and angry face. The second faked a smile and repeated 'what have you done?' I know that smile, it is that smile that permeates you, it means we know more than you and it is we who decide. I replied, 'I do not know. Can you please tell me why you are stopping me.' He then lapsed into an awkward silence, looked at me, my little child, and the passport, and with the same suspicious smile said nothing. It is just to update your personal data in our system.' I did not know why I was stopped, and I did not know why I was let go, and I do not know if that will ever happen again or if I

will ever be let through again, but later I learned that the stop probably meant they had a message on their screen saying this person is wanted. This all happened in no more than 15 minutes, but it felt to me much longer.

Between the first angry officer and the one with the fake smile, I had moments of irritation with many thoughts running through my head. I envisioned all the scenarios that some of my friends, colleagues and acquaintances had experienced. I remembered Ismail al-Iskandarani, a researcher and investigative journalist who had been arrested in 2015 upon his arrival from Germany. After spending 3 years in pre-trial detention, al-Iskandarani was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of belonging to an illegal organisation and spreading false news about national security in Sinai. I remembered Alia Mosallam, an academic, historian and mother of three, who was detained for hours at the airport and then interrogated by the prosecution before being released on bail. I remembered Ahmed Gamal Zyada, a young photojournalist and columnist who was arrested for the second time upon his return from Tunisia in 2019. I remembered Mohamed al-Baqer, the Nubian lawyer and human rights defender and, most importantly, my friend whom I would rely on in case of interrogation or arrest, but then I remembered that al-Baqer has been in prolonged detention for over three years. And finally, I recalled a memory of a close friend jumping for joy as he strode through the airport gates and boarded his flight after months of detention and travel ban.

My thoughts crowded out my feelings. I did not know what to feel, but I knew what would happen if they confiscated my passport and interrogated me. I tried to stay calm and reassure myself that if they searched my handbag, they would find nothing but novels. I am glad that my research project is largely based on literary texts, which gives me some freedom to escape the harassment. Is not that already a function of literature? Could I be prosecuted for reading political and social reality through literary text? Could I be harassed for reasoning about abstract concepts through imaginative fiction? But was not the Egyptian student carrying

Orwell's *1984* arrested back in 2014? And have not writers been put on trial for violating what they call 'social morality?' In the midst of my running thoughts, it occurred to me that the novel I have in my hands, *The Crocodiles* (2013), opens with the female activist whose years of resistance and voluntary exile ended in suicide after she brought to life her notion of the *Stillborn* generation, which she formulated in a book of the same name, a year before her suicide.

I searched my insides for feelings of distress or fear but found nothing but an alarmed silence. I know I have committed no crime, but I also know that none of those who are considered political challengers and are arrested or forced into internal or external exile have done so. I know that we are all subjects of surveillance and control by a regime that acts with unlimited and unchallengeable powers as those of the sovereign power described by Hobbes and Foucault. I know that airports have become a liminal space between a prison on the inside and an exile on the outside. I know that random checks are a means of intimidation to subjugate individuals and put them in a constant state of discomfort and fear; fear of freedom and oppression alike, and above all I know that the precariousness of becoming subjects of and to a regime of coercion and control has opened up new battlefields of subjugation, survival and resistance. This is precisely what this study is about.

As an insider researcher who strives to balance the personal (private) and the academic (public), I was initially hesitant to conduct an analysis on a context to which I belong for fear that I would not approach my subject as detachedly and objectively as I should, or at least as some schools in social science research think one should. That is, until it was prompted in one of the conversations with my supervisor that the subject of my research says something about the human condition that is personally valid for me. Just as it probes into my subjectivity as a young Egyptian researcher enmeshed in and affected by the complex power dynamics in my country and throughout the Middle East region. My subjectivity, so to speak, has influenced

all aspects of this research, including the interpretation of Egyptian literature (used as a research method to generate research data, as described below) and the development and presentation of the entire thesis. My interpretive perspective is shaped in part by my multiple identities: as an Egyptian researcher concerned with the work of activism and its intertwining with academia, as a reader of Arabic literature concerned with the real world of politics and its parallel portrayal in fiction, and most importantly as someone who spent most of her life under the dictatorship of the Mubarak regime and experienced a moment of revelation in 2011. These identities shape and inform my thinking and perspective on the topic of study. I write from the perspective of an Egyptian subject with an oppositional consciousness to oppression and authoritarianism.

Background: The Question of the Subject

Awais Al-Rawi was a young Egyptian from the village of Al-Awamiyah in Luxor-Upper Egypt. On September 30, 2020, Al-Rawi confronted a police officer who had beaten his father when he tried to arrest his brother. According to eyewitnesses, Al-Rawi struck the police officer back, at which point the officer shot him in the head at close range. Al-Rawi was dead. There was no investigation and no arrests. The only police response was to stage a show of force and fire live ammunition into the crowd of mourners who had gathered for his funeral (Middle East Monitor, 2020). This is just one of many (spoken and untold) accounts of the subjectivation of human life in contemporary Egypt that call for a rethinking of the subject question and a repositioning within narratives of belonging and modern notions of citizenship.

The relationship between the state and the individual has been the subject of intense debate from ancient to modern times (Machiavelli, 2009; Rousseau and Cranston, 1968; Weber, 1919; Weber, 1947; Parsons, 1967; Almond and Powell, 1978; Nelson, 2006). It is this relationship that has long informed research on concepts such as identity, citizenship, belonging, and participation. While the study of citizenship in its modern liberal tradition, which confers uniform rights and duties on all members of a given territory or state, is beyond the scope of this work, the focus instead is on the constitution of the individual as subject rather than citizen.[1] Being a subject, this study argues, is in a sense antithetical to being a citizen, who as Arendt (1951 [1968]: 296) puts it, 'has the right to have rights' in the procedural and legal sense, but who is in effect denied those rights, not because he or she is not part of an organised community, but because he is excluded from it by virtue of its exclusionary and authoritarian practices of power.

[1] For more on the general concept of citizenship, see (Habermas, 1996); (Heater, 1999); and (Mann, 1993). For the concept of quasi-citizenship/denizenship, see (Hammar, 1990) and (Knott, 2017). For more on the concept of semi-citizenship, see (F. Cohen, 2009). For the concept of atypical citizenship see (Naujoks, 2020) and for the concept of post-national citizenship see (Soysal, 1994).

The use of the *subject* concept as the main analytical framework of this study thus suggests a link between the past and the present that in some ways echoes the colonial narrative of *subject races* taken up by Evelyn Baring, known as First Earl of Cromer or Lord Cromer (1908; 1913), who served as Consul General in Egypt during the British occupation from 1883 to 1907, and whose legacy is traced in the successive regimes of power in post-independence Egypt. This point is particularly emphasised to illustrate that the choice of a particular starting point for this study (in this case, 1952 or the post-independence period in Egypt) can by no means be read or interpreted in isolation from its past. In this research, I use the past to comment on the present to tell a story about the effects of political oppression within a historical framework. Inspired by the research methodology described below, the study is guided by the literary practice of using the past to comment on the present, as is common in modern and contemporary Arabic literature (see Khan, 2008). In doing so, I argue that the process of subjectivation is not a linear process of submission and obedience, but rather circular, whereby common features can emerge throughout history, just as responses to authoritarianism can reinforce each other and change positions, by which I mean here resistance and submission. I do this by looking at works of Egyptian literature, as will be elaborated below.[2]

The understanding of how the subject is constituted, as a necessary pre-condition of power (subject who founds power) and as an instrumental effect of its subordination (subject produced by, sustained, and attached to power) is an area of concern in social theory. However, the theoretical conception of *the subject* and the being to which the subject can amount to is in some ways ambiguous, for it is difficult to locate or identify it as an individual human being, a body part, a material thing, a mental function, or an activity. Because of its relative ambiguity, the *subject* as thought, as being, as experience, as psychic structure, and as activity continues

[2] Please note that the term subjectivation is often used interchangeably with the terms subjectification, subjection (*assujettissement*), or subjugation, as in this study, all of which have the same meaning and are understood as a process of becoming a subject.

to be the focus of debate among thinkers and philosophers in various disciplines and is often conflated with concepts such as self, consciousness, identity, personality, character, and spirit. In what follows, I do not intend to dwell on the various theoretical or complex conceptual constructions that have been given to the notion of the subject but will simply provide an introductory note on its fundamentally ambiguous character and then move on to a specific working definition that provides a conceptual framework for this study. I begin with Immanuel Kant (1997), for whom the human subject seems to be a fundamental given, a transcendental or absolute subject postulated by the cogito (I think), it is the innate possession of the cognitive faculty, it comes before experience, action or thought, whereas for Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1982) the subject is an activity and not a faculty. Fichte's subject is a construct, an active human being, a cognizing moral agent, and not a fundamentally given faculty, the (I) already indicates an activity of thinking, which contrasts with Kant's notion of the transcendental subject. The cognitive activity itself, exercised within the limits of experience, is what constitutes Fichte's subject (the cognitive subject). For Georg W.F. Hegel (2018), on the other hand, the subject is social; it is neither activity nor cognitive faculty, but the consciousness of an activity, of being put into relation to one another in what became to be known as the modern state, i.e., the consciousness of the distinction between oneself and the external objective world; the subject in Hegel's sense can thus be understood as *subjective spirit/mind* or, as some would call it, self-consciousness. For Marx (2007), the subject is a form of alienated social relations expressed through the category of capital, rather than as a human subject, whether individual or collective; unlike Hegel and Fichte, the subject cannot be understood only as a human individual through its mental, spiritual activities or capacities, but rather through the manifestations of its labour role, its sufferings, and passions. The Marxian subject is thus a 'constituent subject,' it has no ego and possesses no self-consciousness (see Postone, 1993: 77, 218). For Louis P. Althusser (1971: 171, 174) on the other hand, the subject is an individual

constituted by ideology, which has the function of transforming individuals into subjects through an operation called 'interpellation' or 'hailing.' This happens when individuals endorse all the rituals of the ideological apparatus and act according to these rituals. For him, therefore, the individual subject is deprived of any freedom, except that of freely accepting his subjugation. According to Judith Butler (1997: 44-46), subjection is paradoxical. At the heart of becoming a subject are the ambivalences of domination and subjugation, which paradoxically occur simultaneously-not in separate acts, but together at the same moment. The individual subject is not possible without this simultaneous subjugation and domination. Thus, the formation of the subject depends on forces external to itself. The subject might resist and struggle with these very powers that dominate and subjugate it, and at the same time it depends on them for its existence (1997: 2). In a sense, Butler is concerned with the psychic life of the subject, not only what constitutes it, but also how it comes about and how it functions. Furthermore, Freud (2003) outlines a more psychoanalytic theory of *the subject* that presents him/her as dialectically constituted. Through his division of the mind into (a) conscious and unconscious and (b) id, ego, and superego, Freud refutes the concept of the unitary subject. The two coexist in a mutually generating, sustaining, and negating relationship. The principle of 'presence in absence' and 'absence in presence' underscores the dialectical movement between conscious and unconscious dimensions of Freudian subjectivity (see Odgen, 1992). From Freud to Jacques Lacan (1977; 1981), who sees the subject as 'constructed' —though in this case not by the dialectical relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, but rather by the symbolic order that involves the formation of what he calls signifiers, the world of language, culture, and law.

The peculiarity of the concept of the *subject*, in my view, is that it articulates in one and the same move a concept of powerlessness and subordination and a concept of agency and resistance. While most of the above thinkers are more concerned with the conception of the

subject in terms of its nature of being and existence, Michel Foucault, the theorist most closely associated with the concept of subjectivation, articulates the formation of the subject primarily within a phenomenology of power; the subject is neither innate nor transcendental, it is thoroughly constituted, sustained by, and attached to power. Applying a Foucauldian approach to the study of power and subjectivation in post-independence Egypt therefore seems appropriate. Accordingly, this thesis treats the subject as an individual who possesses cognitive and emotional capacities and who is constantly embedded in, affected by, and wrestling with repressive power structures. However, the subject, the central figure of my study, does not necessarily mean that he or she lacks agency, but rather that he or she struggles to manifest agency in the face of power. The working definition of the *subject* used in this study is that of Foucault (1982: 781; 1994: 331), who assigns two meanings to the word subject, from which the study takes as its starting point: a). subject to someone else by control and dependence. b). subject to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge; in other words, who or what they understand themselves to be is made or produced by being bound to a particular identity through conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings are interrelated and denote a form of power that subdues and subjugates, according to which the subject becomes an object for others on the one hand and an object for himself or herself on the other.

To understand subjection not only in its abstract or theoretical nature, but also and more importantly as a lived experience in Egypt, it is necessary to formulate a central research question that frames the study and informs the subsequent methodology of data collection (generation) and analysis, namely: How do people living under particular power regimes characterised by distinct processes of absolute power exercise understand and define themselves in relation to power, and how do they participate in its acts of subjugation, if they do so at all? This central question raises the following sub-questions: What effects does this

form of power have on the self-presentation (self-concept) of those affected and what forms of resistance (individual or collective) to subordination exist, if any?

To place these questions in a broader theoretical context, I start from a Foucauldian postulate about the concept of the *subject* and incorporate further theoretical insights from the work of Giorgio Agamben on biopower and the state of exception as a plausible dominant paradigm of governance in the Egyptian context. Incorporating the central theoretical tenets of Foucault on subject formation (1975, 2008), on the one hand, and Giorgio Agamben's (1998, 2005) work on bare life, the sovereign, the state of exception, and biopower, as well as Hannah Arendt's (1968) work on totalitarianism, on the other, could provide a framing of the theoretical discussion on authoritarianism and subject formation in Egypt. Other (secondary) theoretical insights are drawn from Carl Schmitt (1985, 2014) on dictatorship and the sovereign exception, Erving Goffman (1961) on survival and secondary adjustment techniques for self-definition, and Judith Butler on subjectivation and the psychic life of power (1997), among others, to underpin the analysis. The above works, in my view, are expressions of complementary ways of thinking about the connections and linkages between power, agency, resistance, and subjectivity.

As my study draws on a plethora of theoretical categories about power and subject formation, relying solely on social theory to understand the process of subjectification may prove problematic, as it may hinder understanding of other nuances and everyday manifestations of power. As Judith Butler (1997: 10) writes, the specific mechanisms of how subjects are formed in subjugation and the ways in which resistance and insubordination occur in relation to the subjugation process have not been fully elaborated in social theory. In an effort to broaden the analytical perspective, I draw on a broad interdisciplinary perspective that combines social and political theory with historical perspectives of postcolonial Egypt and most notably Egyptian literature (fiction). Using Egyptian literature as a source of data and method of inquiry, allows

me to uncover the nuances and provide a different understanding of the inner workings of power as well as the understanding of subjects in their emotional existence, which I believe is not possible within the framework of social or political theory alone. Thus, theory and method are intimately intertwined in my study, forming a unity that illuminates the other side in an insurmountable way. A detailed analysis of the value of the literary imagination for sociological inquiry will follow.

In short, despite the considerable scholarly attention that has been devoted to the study of political regimes in colonial and postcolonial Egypt, there is an apparent lack of a particular theoretical perspective on power through which a more informed understanding of the effects of power at the individual level can be explored. Arguably, using Egyptian literature to understand power and subject formation can help a) decolonise (or at least de-centre) Western theory and b) make theoretical and abstract concepts more vivid. This will ultimately serve to read contemporary Western theory on power and subjectivation in dialogue with Egyptian (Arabic) literature and place it within a cosmopolitan framework that transcends Western scholarship.

Research Methodology: Data Generation and Analysis

To generate my research data, I use the *Arts-Informed Qualitative Research Approach*. The term arts-based research in the social sciences was first coined in 1993 by Elliot Eisner, a curriculum theorist and one of the pioneers in the field. He suggested that the arts could provide rich models for social and behavioural science research and help understand the classroom as a performance event (Eisner and Barone, 2011). Some have used the terms 'arts-based research' and 'arts-informed research' interchangeably (Ewing and Hughes, 2008), while others have distinguished the two terms. Rolling (2010) highlights a particular distinction between arts-based and arts-informed approaches, emphasising high creative engagement, immersion and disciplined practice in arts practice for the former, while emphasising the use of inspiration from the arts in either source or presentation for the latter, which I believe is the case in my research, hence the use of the *arts-informed approach* (see Leavy, 2015 and Eaves, 2014 for more on the *arts-based approach*).

I argue that *arts-informed approach* is well-suited for examining the experience of subjectivation for its ability to provide a degree of reflexivity, detail, and nuance to the subject of my study, and in particular, can capture the complex texture of lived human experience and its shifting subject positions. Through this methodological approach, insights can be gained about the research subject that would otherwise remain covert or obscure through other traditional means of qualitative research identified with most social science inquiry. Furthermore, I argue that this approach has the capacity to provide dense accounts and expand the possibilities of multiple realities and understandings, making sociological analyses richer and more articulated (see Butler-Kisber, 2008 and Coser, 1963: 4).

The literary novel is the narrative form of inquiry or genre on which my research will focus. Reading Egyptian novels is, in a sense, an investigation of the social, political, and cultural facets of modern Egypt, as literary critic Sabry Hafez (1976) suggests. Irwin (2001:7) goes

even further suggesting that the Egyptian novel, and more generally the Arabic novel, is an instrument of politics. To quote him, 'As far as both the novelists and censors are concerned, fiction is an instrument of politics.'

I use this research approach based on Coser's (1963) assumption that literature, through the trained sensibility of selected novelists, can (a) substitute for direct observation and (b) capture and skilfully articulate minute details of lived human experience. Moreover, I argue that the use of literature as a source of data is well-suited to explore broader epistemological and theoretical questions such as those raised by postmodern and post-structural theory (in this study, the question of power and subject formation).

Research data are generated through the analysis of selected literary works by Egyptian writers, to excavate, above all, reflections, and nuances on the lived experience of being a subject of authoritarianism. Due to the nature of my work, I use the term 'generated' instead of 'collected' throughout the thesis. More specifically, the textual analysis aims to reveal the multi-layered dimensions of the process of subjugation, the practices of subject formation, the responses to power that can manifest themselves in various forms of survival, resistance, and subjugation. In this way, my research stands as an attempt to invite multiple sociological readings of Egyptian literature rather than limiting it to literary criticism.

The data are generated and analysed based on several themes that emerge from the reading of the novels, including, as presumed at the outset, resistance, agency, submission, survival, and self-presentation. The generated data are treated as analogous to and relevant to situations that reside in the closer real everyday world of the public (the readers). This is where the empathetic understanding and interpretive subjectivity of myself as a researcher and as an insider and reader of Arabic literature comes into play. As Egyptian literary critic Samia Mehrez (2008) says, no literary text can be separated from the charged fields in which its author and readers live-and thus each text becomes an event that is simultaneously personal, aesthetic, linguistic,

cultural, social, and political. For the novelist interpreting the world, and for me as a researcher interpreting a literary work, and for the fact that we (the selected novelists and myself) are immersed in and affected by the social context under study, Weber's (1978a) approach to *interpretive sociology* cannot be less important to my analysis, rooted in the concept of *Verstehen* or understanding, that is at the heart of this study: understanding how and what people feel and respond to when exposed to a politics of fear and subjugation.

The study is divided into four main chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. Each chapter presents two different novels in which the themes addressed are explored in detail. The analysis in each chapter incorporates the theoretical ideas of Foucault, Arendt, Agamben, and others and places them in dialogue with the novels studied to illuminate the analysis. Finally, in the spirit of Edward Said's (1982) notion of 'travel theory,' the journey of theoretical ideas outside of the Western context is traced (knowing full well that the contexts in which the theories I examine purportedly operate are Europe or, in the case of others, North America) in order to draw a more decolonised reading and possibly make theoretical connections, gain insights, and vary a theoretical perspective.[3] The value of this study is therefore threefold: a) theoretical, characterised by the connections and analytical reading of Western social theory in dialogue with Egyptian literature, b) empirical, through the examination of the lived and felt experience of being a subject of authoritarianism, and finally c) methodological, through the asserted and implied value of literature in sociological inquiry.

[3] In a 1982 essay later published in his book *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Edward Said (1983:226) explored the idea of travelling theory. Ideas and theories, Said wrote, 'travel-from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another' though the 'circulation of ideas takes different forms, including acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation.' Although they emerge from particular traditions, theories are nonetheless fluid, mobile, and exported to contexts other than their own. Yet, they are not left unaffected by the travel journey. While Said's particular concern was literary theory, but his arguments about travelling theory could possibly be applied to political and social theory, as Lloyd (2015) argues.

The writing style, then, speaks of a dialogue or interweaving of theory and method, for I narrate the plots of the novels using illustrative excerpts, place them in a historical and socio-political context, and analyse them theoretically, hoping to give my analysis a lively and multi-layered (eclectic) character.

My writing style was inspired in some ways by Michel de Montaigne (1905), [1580] for whom writing served to stimulate his thinking while he marched with his pen, and for whom meandering and digressions were a central feature of his writings, in which he found great pleasure. In a sense, my writing is not so strictly linear; I move between scenes of the same plot, proposing in each a sociological connection to one of the theories. At the same time, I place the literary text in a particular historical context and make connections and syntheses between the theories under study to illuminate and deepen the analysis. This makes the writing form of the study as important as the content, in the words of Montaigne (1580: 792): 'I love a poetic progress by leaps and skips; 'tis an art.' As I carry on with my research, the spirit of Montaigne and Weber is palpable in my interpretation and writing style.

The advantage of speaking Arabic as a native language allows me to have full access to literary texts in the original language. Although I have the opportunity to read and analyse novels in Arabic, I have chosen to use the existing English translations of the novels under study. For the novels under study, the translations were done by professional and renowned translators, most of whom have spent some time in Egypt and are familiar with the social and cultural fabric of the society and, most notably, have been recognised and awarded for their translations.[4] This is done partly to minimise the administrative burden associated with

---

[4] To name just a few profiles of the translators whose translations appear in my study, Roger Allen, translator, and retired professor of Arabic and comparative literature at the University of Pennsylvania, has translated numerous works by Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, including *Karnak Café,* the opening novel of my study. Allen has received much acclaim for his translations. Elisabeth Jaquette, a translator of contemporary Arabic literature, was a finalist for the National Book Award for her translation of *Minor Detail* by Adania Shibli and was longlisted for the Booker International Prize. Her translation of *The Queue* by Basma Abdel Aziz, a novel examined in Chapter 5 of my study (nominated for the Best Translated Book Award and the TA First Translation

professional translation, but mainly to ensure accurate translation from Arabic into English. To make sure that the meaning is not lost in the translation, I have randomly checked both versions from time to time, as far as this was possible.

As for the selection of novels, the deep impression the selected novels made on me when I first encountered them is one reason why I chose them. But that alone is not a sufficient reason to select them. Why and how the selected writers (novels) make sense of social and political realities is a significant factor in this selection. To be concise, I was guided in my selection by the following criteria: a) the texts can be used as a good sociological source, b) the selected texts can identify with the voiceless population and express the everyday life in post-independence Egypt, c) the stories and their details have verisimilitude which I am as an Egyptian researcher could relate to d) through their oppositional consciousness, the selected writers were able to unmask the workings of power (the question of power is the overarching theme of their literary work), e) the importance of the writers was as much political and social as literary, hence their public persona and subjectivity as agents, instruments and products of power are strongly present in their works; f) the selected literary narratives are for the most part self-narratives in which the writers reveal something about their lives and their world. In all the selected novels, one can speak of what Jerome Bruner (1986: 20) calls the 'dual landscape,' that is, the duality of consciousness and action (between the inner vision and the outer reality, the private and the public). While most of the selected literary texts reinforce the omniscient narrator or agent-protagonist, who in a sense represents the writer himself, they also bring to life the subjective worlds and conscious experiences of the various protagonists (how they think, believe, and feel). Along Bruner's duality of agency and consciousness, the

---

Prize) (see an interview with Jaquette, 2018). Jonathan Wright, who translated the novel *Here is a Body* examined in Chapter 5 of my study, is a journalist and literary translator who served as the head of the Reuters bureau in Cairo. Wright has won numerous awards for his translations, including the Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation and the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2014 (see an interview with Wright, 2020).

question of the self in relation to self and others arises, which is central to my object of study; g) the availability and accessibility of the texts in their original (Arabic) language. Other novels were read, studied, and contemplated, to name a few: *The City Always Wins* by Omar Hamilton, *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al-Aswany, *The Day the Leader Was Killed* by Naguib Mahfouz, and *The Zafarani Files* by Gamal al-Ghitani, but at some point, the decision was made not to use them. My decision to use certain novels and exclude others was based in part on my tastes as a researcher and reader of Egyptian literature, but mostly on the fact that I was guided by the extent to which the novels enabled me to make connections to theory and social reality and to generate data about my object of study. Finally, the decision to limit the use of novels had to be made anyway given the limitations of the wording of my dissertation. With this in mind, care was taken to ensure that the novels selected represented a broad range of writers, reflected the experiences of different generations of writers, and took into account gender, geographic, and socioeconomic representation, as well as differences in the context under study.

Although it is difficult to pin down the literary approach of the novelists drawn upon in this study, I contend that what characterizes their respective literary approaches is the sheer authenticity and resonance with which they paint the portrait of the workings of power and its effects in Egypt. Their approach to literature suggests more subtle correspondences and a blurred line between social reality and fiction. As in fiction in general, metaphors and allegories are often used as an uninhibited method of thought to suggest or reveal a subtle meaning or form of truth.

Who has gone this way?

While it is still less common among sociologists to use fiction, systematically – for data on social practice or social change, some efforts to locate affinities between the world of literary imagination and social sciences can still be identified. In *Blurred Genres*, Cultural

anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1980: 168) surveyed a range of new approaches for cultural analysis towards what he called 'refiguration of social thought' and destabilizing of traditional boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities. Geertz argues that the instruments of reasoning in social sciences are changing and much more of the imagery, method, theory, and style are to be drawn from the humanities.

In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), James Clifford imaginatively borrows lines from poet William Carlos Williams' poem *To Elsie or the Pure Products of America Go Crazy from Spring and All* (1923) as a kind of extended metaphor for his book. Williams' poem forms the basis for Clifford's analysis, through which he attempts to capture the feelings of loss of authenticity, rootlessness, desolation, and insecurity in the age of modernity. In her book *Writing on the Mud Wall: Nigerian Novels and the Imaginary Village* (1992), sociologist Wendy Griswold uses the characteristics of the Nigerian village novel and the literary system underlying this genre to show how a common image of African rural life before and after the colonial encounter has been shaped by the exigencies of literary production. The village novel is used as an example to demonstrate the impact of global cultural production systems on aesthetic creation. In his book *Speculative Surveillance: Fantasy and Foucault* in Whitehead's *the Underground Railroad*, Max Bledstein uses Colson Whitehead's novel (2016) to demonstrate the possible applications of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and to reveal what some refer to as the blind spots in Foucault's chronicle of human development.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, literary texts have long been able to invoke social meanings and plausibly represent social reality. For example, Gabriel García Márquez's *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975/2007) is a protest against the dictatorial regime in Latin America. Fyodor Dostoevsky's poem in *The Grand Inquisitor* (1993) debates the nature of social control and deviance, structure versus agency, and the philosophical question of free will. Richard Wright's Black Boy (1945) deals with racial dynamics and depicts the treatment

of blacks in the American South (Mississippi) at the beginning of the twentieth century (see further Carter, 2014: 389).

Rethinking The Boundaries Between Fiction and Non-fiction

> The zone between the practices of fiction writers and non-fiction writers is blurry [because fiction] is only more or less fictional (Banks, 2008: 155–156).
>
> Literature, though it may be many other things, is social evidence and testimony… a continuous commentary on manners and morals (Coser, 1963: 2).
>
> There are so many intersections and openings, so many parallel projects of research, so many forms of literary study that rely on sociological thought, and so many forms of sociology that confront the literariness of their own objects and procedures, that the real question today is not whether, or even why, but how. How can sociology and literature best take advantage – institutionally as well as intellectually – of their polymorphic and often underacknowledged but nonetheless durable partnership (English, 2010: xx).

Despite the enormous role literature plays in social life, its relevance as a reliable source of data in social science research is widely disputed by those who advocate objective truth through rigorous methods based on lacking the character of validity and truthfulness, as opposed to non-fictional narratives conceived as truthful representations of reality (Longo, 2017: 5).

The struggle between those who claim to obtain objective (universal) truth and those who valorise fictional texts as faithful mirrors of reality, but more importantly as instruments through which reality can be embodied and rationalised to give it social meaning, has historically dominated the understanding of what does and does not count as social research (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Barone, 2012, Leavy 2016, see also Haley, 1976, and Snow, 1959). However, the relationship between the world of fiction and the real social world is arguably much more complex and problematic than the straightforward struggle over the question of fidelity and truthfulness, as Longo (2017: 6) suggests. On the one hand, truthfulness as an absolute value can be questioned in the social sciences, as will be discussed below, as can the absence of truthfulness in fiction; on the other hand, the role of the writer as narrator of the social world and bearer of a particular truth is central to the fiction-nonfiction debate as it will likely unfold throughout this study.

More elaborately, literary works, through what Coser (1963) calls quasi-real worlds, can not only express the wholeness and elusive complexity of human experience in its individual manifestations and social expressions by drawing on existing sociological constructs or themes, but they can also introduce new ones and evoke questions not yet explored or addressed by sociologists or social scientists, thus enriching sociological research (Kundera, 1988; Longo, 2017: 6). In other words, fictional narratives can help rethink the way we understand, approach, and make sense of reality (Ricoeur, 1984). Thus, if we accept that fiction is a response to and a representation of society, and above all an instrument to understand and interpret the world, then the question of veracity and truthfulness becomes a less pressing issue. In an interview, Egyptian novelist, and Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz said:

> The writer may employ fantasy, but he always has an eye to reality. I belong to this type of writer. I may invest my work with abstract dimensions, but this is only to get to the heart of reality. I, therefore, believe that unrealistic literature does not exist (Faraj, 1986: 20).

Although there are different positions on the question of truth in fiction, it cannot be denied that fiction can give us a plausible and reasonably accurate picture of certain aspects of life, that is, it contains some form of truth, whether asserted or implied. As English writer Marina Warner (2018) explains novels, or stories 'reveal truth in various imaginative variations or stratagems,' while they do not necessarily depict what happened, as Warner asserts, they are capable of painting possibilities of dreaming and thinking with eyes closed. In the novels we have all read, there may be countless references that we can cite as actual representations or projections of reality, not necessarily in the form of an absolute or veritable truth, but at least as the truth of the projection or statements made and conveyed by the author (Hospers, 1960: 41). It would therefore be 'methodologically inhibiting' to deny them their importance as a potentially valuable source for sociological investigations based on a 'contested quest for referential truthfulness' (Longo, 2017: 6). Reflecting on the imaginary and truth in fiction, Rakha (2015), an Egyptian writer, says in one of his interviews:

> I think literature does provide a methodology for being who we are in a relevant or rewarding way—as individuals with experience and information who have an interest in knowing the truth, some truth. I am not sure there is something better or worse about it but there is definitely something truer or more meaningful in context, in the sense that unless you are working with ideas and feelings, with people that affect your knowledge of who you are or what it means to be this person, writing becomes not just vapid but also boring. And by the same token if it does not touch a deep part of us as readers, or if as readers we do not want to be touched.

Taking the question of truthfulness in fiction a step further, one could argue, following Bruner (1986:12-14), that the issue is not whether fiction is true or not, but rather that, like non-fiction, it is able to imbue experience with meaning, thereby making it more believable, intelligible, and reflective. In this context, Bruner distinguishes between what he calls the imaginative or 'narrative mode of thinking' and the 'paradigmatic mode of thinking' or the logico-scientific mode of thinking. Whereas the former is about testing hypotheses and logical reasoning as a means of seeking truth, the latter is more about producing good stories that have the capacity to reach the specifics surpassed by the paradigmatic thinking, thus showing more value and concern for the human condition that is at the heart of the truth-seeking experience.

On the other side, one can problematize the concept of absolute 'faithfulness' or 'truthfulness' in the realm of social science by assuming that there is no theory-neutral language (no single legitimate way of making sense of the world) with which to generate 'facts or 'data' that can then be used to test and adjudicate between other theories (Bocock, 1988: 65; Eisner, 2002). 'Facts do not speak for themselves; they only speak to those who share the same world view as that of those who generated them' (Bocock, 1988: 65). This ties in some ways with Foucault's (1997-2000; 2017: 237) conception of truth, for whom truth does not stand outside of power or is deprived of power. On the contrary, it is produced by power. By its very nature, it is polymorphic: that is, there is not just one game of truth (e.g., the scientific one), but a multiplicity of possibly incommensurable games that do not all have the same degree of scientificity or claim to be scientific at all.

To illustrate the polymorphous nature of the concept of truth, following Foucault, each time Arendt speaks of truth in her essay *Truth and Politics* (1967), she indicates what kind of truth she means: historical truth, trivial truth, some truth, psychological truth, paradoxical truth, real truth, philosophical truth, hidden truth, ancient truth, self-evident truth, relevant truth, rational truth, impotent truth, indifferent truth, mathematical truth, half-truth, absolute truth, and factual truth. There is no such thing as 'the truth,' but only the truth in relation to something specific.

Looking at the matter from the point of view of literary critics, literature could be defined, as Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature* (1956: 68) suggest, as 'a social institution using as its medium language, a social creation/phenomenon [...] literature represents and depicts life; and life is in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary imitation.' In response to the question of why we need fiction, German literary critic Wolfgang Iser (1989: 282) argues that the distinctive feature attributed to literature lies precisely in its ability to represent 'what is not there,' in the sense that it uncovers unspoken realities and illuminates unexpressed feelings, aspirations, and desires (Khalifah, 2013: 4).

Value of Literature in Stimulating Conceptual Thinking

Discussion of the relationship between fiction and social reality often revolves around the argument of representation, viewing the writer as an informant and the literary text as a social mirror exposing the reflection of the society in which the writer and his/her text is embedded. While it is undeniable that literature is an expressive mirror of society as mentioned above, it is also an analytical material that offers an alternative perspective on the realities it seeks to represent and a space to stimulate the conceptual imagination (Harrington, 2002 and Beer, 2015).

To sharpen the argument on the relationship between sociology and literature, Coser (1963:5) argues that fictional narratives can be seen not only as instruments for clarifying what sociology has already defined theoretically, but also as providing theorists with stimuli and insights for reformulating sociological theoretical frameworks. Thus, according to Coser, fiction serves the same function that is often attributed to empirical research (see also Longo, 2017: 103).

> [..] one ventures to think that literary perception may upon occasion perform a similar role for sociological theory; a certain type of knowledge, attained by intuitive methods may be harnessed for use of theoretical systematization (Coser, 1963: 5).

Richard Rorty (1989: xvi) echoes Coser's argument about literature's ability to stimulate conceptual imagination, arguing that one of literature's strengths is that it serves as a 'cultural laboratory' for exploring and testing new social theories. In his book *Telling About Society*, Howard Becker (2007:8) suggests that in addition to its qualities as a literary work, fiction also possesses the qualities of social analysis as a form of telling about social reality. He argues that fiction has values and qualities that can be of great value to social scientists and therefore should be treated as another form of theorising about the social world. For example, Becker (2007: 241) observes how Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* amassed countless detailed descriptions to construct a social analysis of the marriage customs of a particular group of early nineteenth-century English landed gentry. Similarly, novelist Rebecca Brown's work offers an insightful exploration of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. Many others have followed the same path,[5] considering the potential illuminating and analytical qualities of fiction and suggesting that it might provide a space for rereading social thought (Beer, 2015).

> Countless are those who forbid sociology any profaning contact with the work of art, either by thinking that works of art evade all rational and theoretical understanding or by worrying that a scientific analysis is doomed to destroy

[5] See more *Sociology as an Art Form* (Nisbet, 1976), *Literature as Qualitative Research and a Method of Inquiry* (Brinkmann, 2009; Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005*), Theorising the Social Through Fiction* (Váňa, 2020), *Arts-based Research* (Eisner and Barone, 2011), *Poetic for Sociology* (Brown, 1977) and *a Lyrical Sociology* (Abbott, 2007).

> that which makes for the specificity of the literary work and of reading, beginning with aesthetic pleasure (Bourdieu, 1996, xvi).

The ability of sociology and literature to borrow from and inspire each other speaks to what Robert Nisbet (1976) calls the close affinity of sociology with literature, found in several features: the topics or subjects of inquiry (both rest on the desire to understand the world), the styles in which both reveal themselves, and the modes of representation that both use (both work most of the time with concepts that are more or less abstract representations of the social world they study) (Della Porta and Keating, 2008). While many theorists and philosophers, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Foucault, use a literary dimension to convey and give meaning to their philosophical works, others go further and use fictional elements and literary narratives as inspiration or bases for many of their theoretical formulations.

From Marx and Engels, who made extensive use of artistic imagery, metaphors, and repeated references to European literature in their own works, which was a characteristic feature of their style (e.g. 'callous cash nexus' 'appendage to the machine', see *Capital* and *Anti-Dühring*), [6] to Goffman, who explicitly acknowledges his debt to Orwell in his response to Denzin and Keller (1981), to Derrida, who questions the boundaries between philosophy, sociology, and literature in *Acts of Literature* (1992), to Slavoj Žižek (1993: 88), who assumes that with the abandonment of fiction, reality itself is lost, and, last but not least, to Foucault, who repeatedly uses the image of Shakespeare in many of his works. In his lecture '*What Is an Author*?' given at the Collège de France in 1969, Shakespeare is mentioned in connection with the question of the author (Rabinow, 1984: 101). A much more detailed discussion of Shakespeare can be found in Foucault's work *Madness and Civilization* (1967), in which he discusses the figures of madness in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. In addition, Foucault (2007) refers to the

---

[6] In his letter to Engels on 31 July 1865, Marx writes 'the advantage of my writings is that they are an artistic whole, and this can only be achieved through my practice of never having things printed until I have them in front of me in their entirety. This is impossible with Jacob Grimm's method which is in general better with writings that have no dialectical structure (Marx and Engels, 1975: 172).'

overthrow of one monarch by another, as in Richard II or Richard III, and argues that part of Shakespeare's historical drama is the drama of the coup d'état.

> I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that is, 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth (Foucault, 1980: 193).

While many sociologists work creatively with metaphorical language that is ostensibly situated in the realm of imaginary literature, the novelists I study, as will be shown in the following sections, closely scrutinised the real world by immersing themselves in society, observing life on the streets and in coffee houses, and collecting stories; some worked with archival material; and others wrote about experiences they themselves lived through, witnessed, or experienced from afar. All this is done with the aim of achieving verisimilitude through close reference to sociological and political issues relevant to Egyptian society. Thus, their fictional worlds have something to contribute to the social inquiry of my study.

The above remarks on the dualism of fiction and non-fiction are meant to suggest that the boundaries between literary and sociological imagination are dissolving more than ever, and that they may dissolve even further among the newer generations of sociologists for whom this work stands. And just outside sociology, it is becoming increasingly clear that the work of novelists or artists in general is as much sociological as it is aesthetic.

Writers as Sociologists

> I value literature because of the way – the peculiar way – in which it explores, re-creates, and seeks for the meanings in human experience; because it explores the diversity, complexity, and strangeness of that experience . . . because it re-creates the texture of that experience; and because it pursues its explorations with a disinterested passion (not wooing or apologizing or bullying) (Hoggart, 1963: 31).

Based on the assumption that literature, in and of itself and through its insights, can contribute to our understanding of society and not merely serve as a mirror or, as Richard Hoggart (1971) calls it, 'symptomatic evidence,' literary writing can be viewed as both an outcome of qualitative research and a method of inquiry (see Rosenblatt 2002; Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005). In other words, literary writing can be treated as a sociological craft, a prototypical example of the sociological imagination, or a qualitative research method in its own right (Keith A. Roberts, 1993: 317; Brinkmann, 2009). In coining the term sociological imagination, C. Wright Mills (1959) pointed out that sociology is interested in both the micro-individual social processes and the larger social structures that act on these individual experiences and shape the most private realm of our lives. Similarly, the literary imagination, though it may appear to be a very private and personal experience (a relationship between the writer and his or her text), is a profoundly shared enterprise, a relationship between the micro (personal) and the macro (public), shaped by the social norms and contexts in which it is embedded and through which it is articulated and interpreted.

In his talk 'The Literary and the Sociological Imagination' (1967), Hoggart argued that the production of literary narratives follows broadly similar approaches to those of social scientists.[7] The starting points of both the writer and the social scientist are not far apart. While the former employs his imagination and looks for what Hoggart calls 'significant detail' to establish and rule out theses on which to base his/her plot, the latter uses his trained sensibility

[7] The talk was first published in *Speaking to Each Other: Essays Vol. II About Literature* ([1970], 1973).

to hypothesise. In this sense, the writer's ability to form metaphors or allegories can be seen as akin to the social scientist's ability to formulate hypotheses. Conversely, if we view the process of hypothesising as a dynamic creative process, it could be argued that the social scientist's ability to formulate good hypotheses is determined in part by his or her imagination. Furthermore, to formulate a scientific hypothesis or find a 'significant detail,' both writers and sociologists need material on which to base their thoughts and develop their arguments. Like a social scientist, a writer will not get far unless he/she has material to work with. And to have it, he/she certainly again applies similar methods of data collection as social scientists do. A good writer observes, experiences, reflects, and reports lived experiences in the first person singular (Brinkmann, 2009: 1389). While it is important to note that fiction writing does not (at least not always) follow the thoroughly rigorous writing approaches and methods of the social sciences, it does not likewise offer the complete freedom of imagination that one would assume. As Naguib Mahfouz (1982) argues, much research remains to be done on any work of fiction.

As for the relationship between the material, the hypothesis, and the findings of social science research, Theodor W. Adorno (1962) places the greatest emphasis on 'originality and audacity,' which are arguably two central elements of what writers of fiction call 'imagination'. In Hoggart's words, why should the writing of a novelist be less factual or less meaningful than that of a social scientist gifted with Adorno's 'originality'? If we were to accept that both writers of fiction and social scientists take similar approaches to writing, and if we were to agree that both novelists and social scientists address the same social issues, then cannot fiction writing in its broadest sense be just as valid as what we traditionally call scientific writing? (Brinkmann, 2009: 1391).

> All findings, whether in literature or in the social sciences, must be based on a set of agreed hypotheses, all rest finally on assent rather than proof, on a common conceptual frame with which we begin to make sense of the world

> (Hoggart, 1970: 272). [..] So, I do not see that a creative writer is inherently more likely to lead us astray in our understanding of society than a social scientist. The rules of his kind of work may not be as plain as those of the social scientist, but they are at least as numerous and probably more tricky (ibid: 274).

In short, it would be tempting to claim that the writer's 'significant detail' is the sociologist's scientific hypothesis, as Hoggart (1967) suggests, and that a good imaginative writer and a good social scientist use their imaginations to observe, reflect, and theorise about society. Sociologists use their theoretical and methodological imaginations to structure and build arguments, and then use digressions and footnotes to elaborate and give authority to their findings. Novelists, on the other hand, use their emotional imaginations to create characters and plots. While the former achieve originality through a critical examination of social reality, the latter achieve authenticity through detailed descriptions of settings, interactions, experiences, and feelings etc. (Brown, 1998). Some sociologists, however, and even more anthropologists, may follow a similar path as novelists. One possible difference, I contend, lies in the language used and the style of writing, which in the case of fictional writing takes on various forms of aesthetic representation reflecting an inexhaustible range of meanings and imagery, as compared to social scientific writing, whose writing style is assumed to be objective, correct, precise, 'unambiguous, and non-metaphorical' (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005: 1412). Nevertheless, social scientists interpret the collected data from a subjective viewpoint; this means that they cannot be completely objective or unbiased (See Hayden White argument on historical fiction, 2005). On the other hand, it is entirely inaccurate to think of fiction as a free writing enterprise, not subject to any constraints. As novelist and sociologist Ann Oakley (2019) suggests, fiction writing does not offer the complete freedom of imagination one might assume. Just as social scientists are obliged to develop a coherent flow of argument, novelists are dictated by the characters they create, who tend to take on independent lives of their own.

From this point of view, following Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), we can conclude that fiction and sociological (social scientific) writings differ only concerning the authors' claims for the text. Thus, it is the mainstream narrative or the rhetoric that make us value a particular genre over another and assign it claims of objectivity and truth. As Umberto Eco, a writer of both fiction and non-fiction, asserts, the differences lie primarily in the 'prepositional stance of the authors' (Eco, 1992, 140). Eco reminds us that when he writes a theoretical text, he attempts to draw a coherent conclusion from a 'disconnected lump of experiences' (1992: 140) (resulting in a 'scientific' text) or stage a play of contradictions (resulting in a creative work), thereby allowing readers to choose a conclusion or even to decide that there is no possible choice. Significantly, however, both forms of writing are ways for him to convey a 'lump of experience.' Similarly, Ann Oakley (2019), argues that the main difference between writing fiction and non-fiction for her is that there are no footnotes in the former. The same is true with anthropologist Margery Wolf (1992, 56), who once asked how 'one is to differentiate ethnography from fiction other than in preface, footnotes, and other authorial devices.'

Working from that premise, we can view writers as underground theorists/sociologists who use their trained sensibilities and imagination to get into people's minds and souls in ways that I argue complement and enrich traditional qualitative research. However, the most fruitful way of looking at the friction between social science and fiction is what Czarniawska (2010: 73) calls the 'Creative Borrowing' between the two fields. 'To the few wooden tongues developed in academic journals, we should add the many genres and styles of narration invented by novelists, journalists, artists, cartoonists, scientists, and philosophers (Latour, 1988: 173).' Indeed, we can trace the creative borrowings in the work of social scientists who use experimental forms of qualitative research that defy empiricist and positivist rhetoric, from autoethnography (Ellis, 2004) to investigative poetry (Hartnett & Engels, 2005) to creative ethnographies (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

> I have been taught, as perhaps you were as well, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, that is, until my points were organised and outlined. But I did not like writing that way. I felt constrained and bored. When I thought about those writing that way. I realised that they cohered with mechanistic scientism and quantitative research. I recognised that those writing instructions were themselves as a sociohistorical invention of our 19th-century fore parents. Foisting those instructions on qualitative researchers created serious problems; they undercut writing as a dynamic creative process, they undermined the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research was inconsistent with the writing model, and they contributed to the flotilla of qualitative writing that was simply not interesting to read because writers wrote in the homogenized voice of 'science' (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005: 1411).

In short, this is not to argue for replacing one genre with another, but for questioning the complementarity and compatibility of both fields of inquiry (genres). Literature, like other forms of social research, can be well written or poorly written. However, when it is well written, it enables readers to better understand themselves, their feelings and their world which can lead them to think and act differently, both of which are common and legitimate goals of social science research (Brinkmann, 2009:1392).

Finally, the above assumptions on the question of truth in fiction and the central role of the writer as an individual subject experiencing first-hand the effects of power in the context under study, and more importantly, as an underground sociologist, are put to the test as much as the natural flow of research allows.

Using literature as a Sociological Source of Data

To advance the ability to think conceptually, metaphorically, and thematically, the research challenges the traditional binary between fiction and non-fiction and suggests that the understanding of social processes (in this case the study of authoritarianism and subjectivation in Egypt) can be advanced through an understanding of literary narratives/materials. In my study, literature (selected novels) serves as a source of inspiration and knowledge (source of sociological data/understanding and material for theoretical and social inquiry) that I believe

would otherwise be inaccessible given the increasing levels of political repression and decreasing academic freedoms in the context under study.[8]

I draw on literary texts as a source of sociological knowledge to stimulate understanding and contribute to the development of a theoretical framework that addresses the social phenomenon under study. It should be noted that this study is neither an investigation of the literary representation of the question of subjectivation and power in Egypt, nor is it an investigation of Arabic or Egyptian literature. However, it uses fiction to explore and reason about the social phenomenon under study. While I generally use literature to generate research data, I treat the generated data more specifically as a theoretical resource, a form of imaginative social theory. That is, to bring Western social theory into dialogue with Egyptian literature, I use novels to generate, illustrate, and expand theoretical ideas about power and subject formation, to vary their perspectives, and to potentially open up new theoretical perspectives, drawing inspiration from David Beer's (2015) approach to *Fictionalising Theory*.[9]

[8] An example of the hostile environment for academics and scholars in Egypt is Walid Shobaky, a doctoral student at the University of Washington who was conducting fieldwork in Cairo for his dissertation on the independence of the judiciary when he was abducted by security forces in May 2018. Shobaky was accused of spreading false news and joining a terrorist organisation. Shobaky's arrest is reminiscent of the brutal murder of Italian PhD student Giulio Regeni, who was tortured and murdered in 2016 while researching independent trade unions in Egypt (for more information on Shobaky and Regeni, see Holmes and Aziz, 2019; Middle East Monitor, 2018; Mada Masr, 2018).

[9] By the fictionalisation of theory, David Beer (2015) means that fiction becomes an object of thought, a form of imaginative social theory, a space of reflection and inspiration to illustrate theoretical ideas, find conceptual blind spots, and above all, to breathe life into theory.

Theoretical Bearings: Primary Literature

This section provides only a brief overview of the main theoretical underpinnings that will inspire the discussion in the following chapters. For, as mentioned earlier, the analysis in each chapter will take the form of a nested reading of Western social theories along with a textual analysis of the novels. As I proceed with this section, it is important to emphasise that the study of subject formation is not possible without examining the operations of power or the political paradigm in which the subject is embedded. I will therefore provide a general overview of theories and approaches to power in what follows, and possibly attempt to situate the context under study and the works of Foucault, Arendt, and Agamben within this framework.

General Characterization of Power: Conflictual, Consensual, and Constitutive

The concept of power and the way power is conceived and exercised has long preoccupied scholars and thinkers in a variety of fields, from sociology to political science and from aesthetics to psychoanalysis. There is, however, no clear definition of power, which as such shares some features with the question of the subject discussed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, many theorists agree on a general characterization or dimensions of power: conflictual, consensual, and constitutive (Haugaard, 2012). In the conflictual dimension, power is constituted as domination (*power over*) and is exercised through command and obedience. It is a 'zero-sum' conception of power, in which the exercise of power by one actor limits the power or even the freedom of other actors, as in the classic definition by Robert Dahl (1961), who proposes that conflictual power is the capacity of an actor A to make a second actor B do something which actor B would not otherwise do. Dahl's view is consistent with what Weber (1978b) defines as the ability of one actor to overcome another despite resistance. Power in the consensual sense (non-coercive), on the other hand, can be understood as the power to act that people acquire by belonging to a social system (*power to*). In the Arendtian perspective (1970), power is not exercised through relations of command or obedience, but in a way in which both

the powerful and the less powerful come together to act in concert, bringing their potentials together to realize each other's inner powers. According to Arendt (1970:44), every exercise of power of one person *over* another consists in a form of violence, and it does not deserve the label 'power'; power deserves this name only when it is legitimate, i.e., when it consists in the ability of the group to act 'in concert.' This relationship is established in what Arendt (1998 [1957]: 200) calls 'a public realm or the space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence.' The third dimension of power is constitutive power which stems primarily from the work of Michel Foucault, who since the 1980s has moved definitions of power beyond notions of agency and conflict, which he sees as a misguided negative way of characterizing how power works (see Ansell and Torfing, 2016: 188; Philp, 1983: 32). One can assign two main characteristics to Foucault's form of constitutive power: The first is the intertwining of power, knowledge, and truth, and the second is the constitution of the *subject*, which in a sense develops as an effect of the first.

For Foucault (1982:781), the *subject* is simultaneously the object of power practices and technologies of reflection and self-definition, as stated in his definition of the subject mentioned earlier in this chapter; subject to someone else by control and dependence and subject to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. In his writing on Foucault and subjectification, Deleuze (1988:28-30) explains that the dimension of the subject in relation to itself can be understood as fold, so that this self-relation is seen as an effect of power relations and an effect of the self on the self, in other words, the inside as an operation that is not separate from the outside. Hence power, knowledge, and the apparatus of subjectification mediate the way the subject understands itself. Subjection can, therefore, be understood as the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject in relation to the self through which the subject is 'led to observe, analyse, interpret, and recognize himself as a domain of possible knowledge (Foucault, 1998:461).' It is through what Foucault calls the

dispositif (an ensemble of discourses, institutions, and philosophical moral propositions), human beings become both subjects and objects of power relations (Foucault, 1980; Deleuze, 1992).

To understand power as constitutive is to understand how Foucault (1977: 136; 2000; 2008) perceives power: For him, power is positive (productive) and relational, and is understood first and foremost: 'as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate, and which constitute their own organisation (1978: 92).' However, it cannot be understood merely as a system of repression or domination of one group over another. It applies itself to the immediate everyday life that categorizes the individual, marks him by his individuality, binds him to his own identity, imposes on him a law of truth that he must recognize and that others must recognize in him. It is a form of power that turns individuals into subjects.

Here, Foucault (1976:82) speaks of a power that he later calls 'biopower,' a power that, significantly, represents a 'profound transformation [of] the mechanisms of power' insofar as it differs from what Foucault associates with 'juridico-discursive' (sovereign) conceptualisations of power as repressive and negative (*power over*). More specifically, 'biopower' is the term Foucault uses to describe the new mechanisms and tactics of power that focus on life (i.e., individual bodies and populations). In his words, it is a productive power that exerts a positive influence on life and strives to 'administer, optimise, and multiply it by subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations' (ibid:137). Thus, while sovereign power, defined as the right over life and death, is about 'making die or letting live,' biopower, as Foucault notes, is about moving toward greater care for the lives and health of subjects, so that the sovereign right to kill and let live gives way to an inverted model that defines modern biopolitics: 'to make live and to let die (ibid: 136-138).' It should, however, be noted that for Foucault, the transition from sovereign power to biopower does not necessarily

preclude the presence of some elements of a repressive or deductive form of sovereign power, and thus we can read constitutive power (which is the focus of this study) as both *power over* and *power to*.

> Deduction has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimise, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them (Foucault, 1976: 136).

In the same vein, one might think that Giorgio Agamben's project in *Homo Sacer* (1998:9) may have something to say about the dichotomy of different characterizations of power described above. In a sense, his work represents a clear dissatisfaction with the seemingly reducible distinction between *power over*, *power to*, or *constitutive power*, and suggests that power is an ongoing process between inclusion and exclusion (Dean, 2013) in that he sees no disjunction between sovereign power (*power over)* and biopower (*constitutive power*). At first glance, this seems to correspond to what Foucault proposes, but a closer look reveals that Foucault's analysis focuses on the historical succession of power (from sovereign to biopower), whereas Agamben sees a close intertwining between sovereign and biopower, in the sense that one does not transform into the other, but lives in the other. According to Agamben (1998:6), the production of a biopolitical subject is the original activity of sovereign power. In this sense, biopolitics is at least as old as the sovereign exception (see also Mills, 2004:46). In a 2005 interview with Abu Bakr Rieger, Agamben explains how his approach differs from Foucault's:

> Foucault once said something quite beautiful about this. He said that historical research was like a shadow cast by the present onto the past. For Foucault, this shadow stretched back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For me, the shadow is longer. There is no great theoretical difference between my work and Foucault's; it is merely a question of the length of the historical shadow.

In *Homo Sacer* (1998:8), Agamben argues that sovereign power is linked not only to the ability to bear rights, but above all to the production of a naked or 'bare life,' that is, the life of *Homo Sacer*, a form of life that is included in the political realm solely in the form of its exclusion

(that is, of its capacity to be killed). Drawing simultaneously on Aristotle, Carl Schmitt (1985), and Walter Benjamin (1968), as well as on the figure of *Homo Sacer* from Roman law (a figure of a sacred man who is banished from the political community and can be killed by anyone with impunity), biopolitical power for Agamben cannot be understood in separation from sovereign power. What is at stake, then, is the nexus between constituent and constituted power (see also Attell, 2009).

While biopower, for Foucault (2003), is the assembling of populations of biological bodies, with the aim being a government of the living (by the living). For Agamben, it describes a condition of radical exposure in which the law is suspended by the state of exception, and bodies are surrendered to a zone of where they can be put to death with impunity. The state of exception, in Agamben's words (1998:174), materializes in the 'creation of a space in which bare life and juridical rule enter into a zone of indistinction...a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended.'

Hannah Arendt's (1951: 296) plea for the 'right to have rights' can be understood as a critical response to totalitarian rule, which, according to Agamben (1998:119), is exemplary of modern biopolitics and, more generally, of the modern biopolitical human condition. While her theory of totalitarianism, as Agamben (1998: 4) argues, lacks a biopolitical perspective, the main body of her work, dealing in particular with Nazi Germany (its biological racism) and the bureaucratisation of modern power, is fundamentally tied to a critique of biopolitics and the human condition of the biopolitical subject (Suuronen, 2018). The study of totalitarian rule, and the concentration camp is, in a sense, a study of the production of bare life and the state of exception, as Arendt implies in her two works *Essays in Understanding* (1994) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1968): The goal of totalitarian domination, Arendt argues, is to reduce human beings to 'undistinguishable and undefinable specimen of the species homo sapiens (1994: 305),' to the 'lowest common denominator of organic life itself (ibid: 198),' in order to

make murder 'as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat (1968: 443).' In an 'ideal' situation, death factories would merely process 'superfluous human material (ibid: 443)' that is nothing more than 'unqualified, mere existence (ibid: 301).'

The above overview is meant to argue that the works of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben have something in common despite their apparent differences: Their works are primarily concerned with the question of power, and not unlike others who have also dealt with this question, all three have dealt more extensively with the effects of power on the lives of subjects (the main concern of this study) and its forms, with the biopolitical manifestation being the most obvious. In other words, the various characterizations of power listed above, I argue, even if not addressed as such in the works of these three thinkers, converge in the form of biopower.

Strategies for Resistance

As indicated in his famous dictum 'where there is power, there is resistance' (1978: 95), Foucault considers self-care (1998), fearless speech, and speaking the truth, embodied in the figure of *parrhesia* (the right, duty, and courage to speak the truth (2001:27), as essential conditions of freedom and thus resistance. Arendt (1967), on the other hand, considers the pursuit of human rights, or the ability of people to think, will, and judge, and above all to speak the truth (factual truth) outside the power structure, as important in refuting the conditions of subjugation (the conscious *pariah* as an example of a truth-teller).

While for Foucault and Arendt truth telling (in its polymorphous form) can be read as an expression of freedom and a form of resistance, for Agamben it can be a matter of convenience. While Agamben acknowledges in the opening chapter of *Remnants of Auschwitz* (2002:15) that one of the reasons a prisoner survives the camp is the idea of giving a testimony and becoming a witness, he also recognises the use of silent self-withdrawal among camp inmates

as a tactical form of resistance and as a means of survival. Inasmuch as the terror of sovereign power would no longer affect its subjects, who cares about the power over life and death when one has lost the will to live? (see Christiaens, 2022). By registering indifference to bare life, the camp guards become powerless over the inmates, argues Agamben (1998:185). The formula of modern political order then changes from 'make die or let live' (sovereign) or 'make live or let die' (biopolitical), to let survive.

> The decisive activity of biopower in our time consists in the production not of life and death, but rather of a mutable, and virtually infinite survival (Agamben, 2002: 155)

In speaking of survival and adaptation techniques, it is worth referring to Goffman's work in *Asylums* (1961), which inspires my conceptual thinking as I proceed in the following chapters. The production of a self-mortified inmate is, as Goffman argues, one of the functions of the total institution, which in some ways has some parallels Agamben's figure of *Homo Sacer*. A person is self-mortified through a series of processes, including identity trimming (when he/she is reduced to numerical data held in the database and in files); role dispossession (when he/she loses the various roles he/she plays and becomes instead an inmate, a patient, or a client); imposition of degradation (when attitudes, stances, and forms of respect (deference) are often justified by necessity); and, above all, restrictions of self-determination (when it becomes difficult or impossible to develop and pursue interests, make decisions, or interact with others of one's own choosing) (ibid: 14-43). To defend the self against the forces of self-mortification, Goffman proposes a system of survival techniques that he calls primary and secondary adaptations. The primary adjustment is the outward and apparent acceptance of the inmate's role and self as a patient as defined by the total institution. A patient or inmate who has adopted primary adjustment, says, '… he is transformed into a co-operator; he becomes a 'normal,' 'programmed,' or built-in member (ibid: 189).' Secondary adaptations or adjustments, on the other hand, are purposeful resistance practices 'that do not directly

challenge the staff of the total institution but allow inmates to achieve gratification ... [through] forbidden means' providing the inmate with 'important evidence that he is still his own man' (ibid: 54-55). In other words, secondary adaptations are the informal practices that individuals use to 'circumvent the organization's assumptions about what they ought to do and what they ought to be (ibid:107).' These practices include: 'make-do's,' 'working the system,' 'avoiding hospital surveillance,' designating 'free spaces,' 'group territories,' and 'personal spaces,' 'creating fixed and portable stashes,' 'using undercover systems of communication,' and 'engaging in private coercion, economic exchange, and social exchange (ibid: 187-189).'

To conclude this section, and as a framework for my discussions in the following sections, I use the biopolitical state of exception as the equivalent of what has become known in recent years in Egyptian politics as *haybat ad-dawla* (translated as sovereign authority/majesty /reverence/prestige or inviolability of the state), defining the power paradigm in post-1952 Egypt. A central pillar of the long-standing Arab authoritarian order, *haybat ad-dawla* has been making a strong comeback in Egypt since June 2013 (for more on *habyat ad-dawla*, see Fahmy, 2013a; Asad, 2015; and Baheyya, 2013). It is a term that casts a constant and visible gaze of power similar to that of Foucault's panopticon (1977), but also casts an aura of uncertainty and mystery, on all power practises that in many ways revive Agamben's image of biopolitical sovereign power structure. For it embodies the image of a mythical structure or ruler (a sovereign power) that stands above a society and demands submission and obedience, whereby a state of emergency (exception) can easily be declared to preserve the *hayba* or majesty/supremacy of that ruler or mythical power. I do not intend to elaborate or theorise the concept of *haybat ad-dawla* as part of my study but use it merely as an introductory and suggestive term to initiate an analysis and stimulate a discussion of the exercise of power and the formation of subjects in Egypt, and possibly to trace its manifestations in my study. This is what the novels I have selected are meant to trace, read, and analyse.

Secondary Literature

This section may not read like a comprehensive literature review, as much of my literature is theoretical in nature, while the other is methodological, and both have already been covered in the previous sections of this chapter. Nonetheless, in this section I will primarily list the core literature that inspired my understanding of Egyptian politics and power relations, as well as other studies that followed a similar path as mine.

In his book *The Individual and the Authority Figure in Egyptian Prose Literature* (2018), Yona Sheffer examines and analyses the political conflicts between the individual and authority in Egypt from 1957 to the late Mubarak era. The book focuses on the conflicts and confrontations between the individual and authority figures as they manifest themselves, and on the characteristics of the people who confront authority. It discusses the various reasons that cause an individual or group of people to confront authority. It also examines how the conflicts develop, how they end, and what the short- and long-term consequences are for both the individual and the authority figures. Sheffer's work is a study of the literary representation of conflict between individuals and authority figures in Egypt. My work, on the other hand, is more sociological and theoretical in nature, using literature only as a sociological source of inquiry. However, the theoretical dimension, which is a central component of my study, is clearly absent from Sheffer's work. Although the focus is somewhat different theoretically and methodologically, Sheffer's work is a good inspiration for using literature to think about a political or sociological question. In a sense, Sheffer's work is of great importance in understanding the citizen-state dynamic, the dynamic I contest at the outset of my work and seek to test throughout.

Hazem Kandil, on the other hand, in his book *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen: Egypt's Road of Revolt* (2012), shifts Sheffer's focus from the struggle between individual and authority to the struggle between authority and authority, in which he examines the ongoing power struggle

between what he calls the three components of Egypt's authoritarian regime: the military, the security services, and the government. Kandil offers a detailed study of the interactions within this ominous triangle over six decades of war, conspiracies, and socio-political change, tracing the transition from military regimes to police-controlled regimes in Egypt. *Soldiers, Spies, and Statesmen* can be read as a systematic analysis of recent Egyptian history and has deepened my understanding of power dynamics and structures in Egypt. With varying emphases, however, my research can be seen as a continuation of Kandil's work in the sense that it examines the power structures and the persistence of the military regime in the post-2011 period and more to the present moment, but with a focus on the individual subject rather than the power structures themselves.

Kandil elaborates further, noting in *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime* Change (2016), the different trajectories that post-transition regimes can take and challenges the conventional view of authoritarian regimes as monolithic by analytically dissecting regimes into three constituent elements-a power triangle-and tracing the behaviour of these regimes over time considering the interaction of these constituent elements. Although the focus extends beyond Egypt to Iran and Turkey, Kandil's power triangle has shed new light on my thinking about authoritarian power, which in my work has more of a theoretical dimension that could potentially complement Kandil's political dimension. By viewing authoritarianism as an example of biopolitics, I reframe the study of authoritarianism within a contemporary debate about modern power structures.

Less focused on formal power structures, Asef Bayat's *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (2010) examines how ordinary people living under authoritarian rule can effect meaningful change through the practices of everyday life in the Middle East. Bayat argues that everyday social dynamics are transforming Middle Eastern societies in ways that are not usually acknowledged by Western scholars and/or authoritarian rulers in the region. In

his work, Bayat uses the term 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary' to describe the discrete and protracted ways in which ordinary people manifest themselves in their daily lives to survive hardships and improve their lives (80). In my thesis, I examine Bayat's quiet or silent encroachment as one of the techniques of survival, if not resistance, in response to the authoritarian power regime in Egypt. What are the precise manifestations of silent or quiet encroachment and what does it mean for individuals to use silence as a tactical form of resistance, not necessarily in the passive form implied by the word silent or silenced. In other words: How can agency manifest itself in the everyday life practices of ordinary people? And how does this contribute to a broader understanding of the subject in relation to power? In this way, Bayat's study illuminates and opens up new perspectives for my inquiry, which I use alongside a range of other practices of survival and resistance that my research seeks to explore.

In an attempt to blur the lines between literature and the social sciences, literary critic Samia Mehrez examines the relationship between history and literature in her book *Egyptian Writers Between History and Fiction: Essays on Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibrahim, and Gamal al-Ghitani* (1994), arguing that the two narratives are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but rather aim to transform reality and life into structures of historical meaning. By analysing the works of three leading Egyptian writers, including Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibarhim, and Gamal al-Ghitani, Mehrez, two of whom are examined in my thesis, presents a context in which literature becomes a kind of 'alternative narrative of history (77),' a discourse that not only comments on the history of a place but also creates a narrative about history. Mehrez's work is a great source of inspiration for my work, as it establishes a parallel relationship between literature and history, just as I argue between sociology and literature. In this sense, my work builds on Mehrez's argument and extends it beyond history to other areas of the social sciences. While not necessarily the goal of my work, the role of the writer as narrator and storyteller

bearing witness to history may unfold over the course of my study and prove interesting to explore in future work.

Chapter 2

The Politics of Terror Under Nasser: The Defeated Subject (1950s-1970s)

2.1 *Karnak Café* (1974) by Naguib Mahfouz

> Our entire world had gone through the trauma of the June war; now it was emerging from the initial daze of defeat [..] My beliefs in everything were completely shattered. I had the feeling that I had lost everything [says Isma'il, one of the protagonists of *Karnak Café*, 1974: 65-66].

My chapter begins on July 23, 1952, considered by many Egyptians to be the date that marks the beginning of modern Egypt. It is the date on which Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, along with eighty middle-ranking military officers known as Free Officers, seized power over the monarchy that had ruled Egypt for some 150 years in collaboration with the British (since 1882), taking control of the country's main military and civilian institutions and arresting military officers who did not comply (Kandil, 2016a: 235; Gorman, 2021:12).

This almost bloodless (white-armed) coup d'état, also known among Egyptians as the July Revolution or 'blessed movement,' would radically alter Egypt's political landscape in the decades that followed and lay the foundation for the exercise of power in the country (Gorman, 2021:12; Beinin, 2020). In his book *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (1959), in which he lays out the goals of the revolution, or at least the stated goals that were taught in schools from generation to generation, Abdel-Nasser emphasized the destruction of the British presence at the Suez Canal, the destruction of imperialism and feudalism, the establishment of social justice, and the establishing of a democratic system. Egypt was never a British colony, but a veiled protectorate. According to many historical accounts, the British occupation of Egypt (1882-1954) was motivated by strategic and economic aspirations to control the Suez Canal and thereby secure the trade route to India. However, to view the British occupation of Egypt solely in terms of securing the canal is to fail to recognise the far-reaching effects of the occupation on so many different aspects of Egyptians' lives (Galbraith and al-Sayyid-Marsot, 1978).

After the coup d'état or revolution, the Free Officers could have returned to their barracks, but this did not happen because the officers had apparently developed a great appetite for power (Mansfield, 1973: 670). Since that day, power has been exercised predominantly in an absolute and coercive manner, resulting in one of the most resilient and robust authoritarian military regimes in the region, exerting a far-reaching influence on all aspects of life, including the economy (Springborg, 2021:2). Constant surveillance —modelled after the British-developed *City Eye* or network of informant surveillance (Kandil, 2016a:235)—political imprisonment and torture were the most important means of control and coercion used by the Nasserist regime.

The monarchy was abolished in 1953, and Nasser succeeded Mohamed Naguib in power in Egypt from 1954 until his death in 1970, basing the legitimacy of his rule on the July 23 movement and his post-colonial nation-building project, which was centred on pan-Arabism and state socialism.[10] After more than 70 years of occupation, the withdrawal of British forces negotiated by agreement in 1954, finally took place in April 1956 (Gorman, 2021:13).

Nasser, described by a large segment of the Egyptian and Arab population as the leader of the Arab world, not only enjoyed very broad and considerable popular support, the likes of which no other modern Egyptian or possibly Arab leader has ever enjoyed, but his rule also led to a significant expansion of the coercive apparatus, the origins of which can be traced back to the British occupation in 1882 (Gorman, 2021:14; Kandil, 2016a:235). It was the British occupation that laid the foundation for a robust coercive institution in Egypt by building prisons, censoring the press, imprisoning, and deporting activists, and banning political parties

[10] General Mohamed Naguib was sworn in as the first president of Egypt following the overthrow of King Faruq by a group of army officers. One year later, Naguib was sacked from his post and placed under house arrest for nearly two decades. Some argue that Naguib was ousted out of fear of his massive popularity at that time and his desire to return the army to the barracks. Others, however, cite rumours that certain generals and politicians advised Naguib to get rid of the young visionary officers (Al-Hakim, 1985: 4), while some others argued that Naguib had sympathized with the Brotherhood (Anadolu Agency, 2015).

(ibid). The same colonial practices of repression were enthusiastically taken up by successive regimes in post-independence Egypt. Thus, Nasser did not necessarily need to create new coercive institutions as part of his nation-building project but appropriated those already in place for his own protection and survival (Spencer Hartnett et al., 2020:10). At the time of writing, the colonial-era Assembly Law 10/1914 is being used in conjunction with the 2013 Demonstration Law (sometimes referred to as the Protest Law) to suppress protests in Egypt (Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, 2017). The colonial provenance and legacy of coercive institutions in Egypt will be explored in more detail in the analysis of the novel *The Black Policeman* in the second part of this chapter.

Since the establishment of the 'Officers' Republic,' the Egyptian military has remained a critical powerbroker in Egyptian politics. Over the past sixty years, all Egyptian presidents have come from the military establishment, except for one year (July 2012-June 2013) when the country's first democratically elected (Islamist) president, Mohamed Morsi, came to power, and was then deposed in July 2013 after popular protests, backed by a military intervention led by the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, General (later Field Marshal) Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Against this background, *Karnak Café* (*al-Karnak*) (1974) (published in English in 2007) is set. The novella can be read as an illustration of the gradual disappearance of hope, citing psychological distress, moral loneliness, and alienation as possible general features that characterise subject formation in post-independence Egypt (Hafez, 1976: 74). *Karnak Café* was penned by Naguib Mahfouz (1911-2006), the first Arab Nobel laureate. Mahfouz is regarded as one of the first contemporary writers of Arabic literature. In his various writings, Mahfouz has portrayed Egypt and power relations on both the macro and micro levels and has been able to describe the socio-political transformation of Egypt in the 20th century. The fact that Mahfouz was part of the Egyptian bureaucratic system for most of his life as a government

employee and yet managed to distance himself from that system in his writings as an astute observer of life creates controversy among his readers and his critics (Mehrez, 1993). It is no wonder that his engagement with the government has been a site of criticism 'bureaucracy has taught him to be disciplined, orderly and to avoid problems'(Shoukri, 1988:12). However, Samia Mehrez (1993: 76) explains: 'he learned to do two things at once: internalise [the rigid system], even in his attitude as a 'free' writer, and attack it while shielding himself against it.' Mahfouz's subjectivity and his ability to engage, navigate, and observe while distancing himself from the authoritarian context he is narrating and analysing (both inside and outside) comes alive in his work. (Sazzad, 2017). The tightrope walk between being a rebellious writer and a state bureaucrat is never easy to strike or maintain, and can be seen through Mahfouz's persona as part of the contradictions embodied in the process of subject formation in Egypt.

Mahfouz never spoke publicly about the regime of power during Nasser's time and hid his criticism in his works. *Karnak Café* is one of those works in which Mahfouz depicts the vacillation between the pursuit of freedom and the fear of it in a post-colonial era, as well as the disillusionment of the generation that once rejoiced at no longer being mere subjects of a colonial or monarchical regime. In one of his interviews published in a book by the literary critic Raja'a al-Naqqash (1989:146), Mahfouz states:

> I can say with a clear conscience that I said whatever I wanted to say in my literary works, and I expressed all my thoughts during the period of Abd al-Nasser's rule. Any idea I could not express only I hinted to people. Clearly, one of the great advantages of art is that the artist can criticize and oppose and say whatever he wants indirectly.

On the basis of the above and at the beginning of my analysis, I argue that subjectivity in post-independence Egypt is largely shaped by the founding of the 'Officers' Republic,' that continues to provide the benchmark by which the credentials of the contemporary power regime are gauged today. *Karnak Café* is thus a good introduction to my study, for both Mahfouz's novella and my study share the same plot: The story of people who become subjects

of a coercive regime of power. The novella was ahead of its time in depicting the emergence of an authoritarian military dictatorship and a youthful spirit torn apart by institutionalised brutality and uncertainty. The depicted subtle effects of sanctioned torture and the abrogation of rights and freedoms unimpeded by the constraints of legality, as discussed below, are shockingly timely. For the above reasons, I have decided to begin my analysis with *Karnak Café*.

Karnak Café tells the story of three young Egyptians who were captured, controlled, and compromised by Nasser's regime of power. A regime that mastered coercion and manipulated popular consent by constantly alternating between rallying and persecuting the people in the name of the nation—a central power practise introduced by Nasser and adopted by subsequent regimes, as will be discussed in the next chapters (Salih, 2018). In an interview with al-Naqqash (1997), Mahfouz explained that in Karnak Café he employs an unnamed narrator to explore the accounts of two activists he met at Café Riche in downtown Cairo about their prison conditions and torture at the hands of Nasser's regime. Their accounts speak for an entire generation of the 1952 power regime that experienced its severity first-hand, but also for generations of subsequent power regimes that are still haunted by the many spectres of Nasser's authoritarian brinkmanship that ushered in the total rule of an endemic military regime (Sayigh, 2012).

***Karnak Café*: A place to which we have all been driven by a combination of ostracism and crime (6)[11]**

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes how he originally discovered *Karnak Café* in Cairo, attracted by the quiet charm of Qurunfula, a formerly famous belly dancer and owner of the café. Qurunfula embodies both the freedom and expressiveness and the nostalgia and

[2] This subheading and all subsequent subheadings in this study are direct quotations from the novels.

faded glamour of Egypt's past (Goldie, 2007). The Café is both a meeting place and a salon where political ideas are exchanged. The café is both a meeting place and a salon where political ideas are exchanged. In Cairo, the café (coffee house or *Ahwa* in Arabic) has traditionally been an urban social centre for the Egyptian working and middle classes, particularly men (Tam, 2018). It is a deeply rooted social, cultural, and political institution and a place for stories, truths, lies, gossip, dominoes, and backgammon, all coloured by the light haze of hookah, water pipe, or (sheesha) smoke that hangs in the air of any traditional Egyptian gathering place (Kaaki, 2007). Cairo's coffee houses have provided Mahfouz with the material for many of his novels through observation and exchange. In 1960s Egypt, the coffee house was the social media network and platform of the time, where people from all walks of life (politicised and non-politicised) came together to exchange ideas and views. It is the place where people sought refuge from the pain of loneliness, escaped the gaze of the military and looked out for each other and/or informed and spied on each other (Dana, 2016). *Karnak Café* features various combinations of Foucault's (1977) space of surveillance and Arendt's (1963) space of appearance. It is a social space with horizontal power relationships between equals who share life stories and experiences (a space of appearance in Arendt's sense), but also a space where the gaze of Nasser's power regime can penetrate, divide, and control people (a space of surveillance in Foucault's sense). The games of visibility—as expressed in the words of Khalid Safwan, the face of state oppression in the novella, 'I simply see what there is to be seen (77)'—involve the controlling function of Nasser's regime.

> All the people sitting there inside the café had buried deep inside them some kind of bitter experience, whether humiliation, defeat, or failure. [..] What is the point of criticising something with a whole load of drunks around? Bribery, you say? Pilfering, corruption, coercion, terrorism? [..] Or so what? Or it is an inevitable evil. Or, how utterly trivial (9).

Our glorious revolution has turned into a siege (62)

At the café, the narrator becomes a regular clientele among a larger crowd that represents an eclectic mix of the old, young, defiant, tractable, and every political persuasion that speaks to a cross-section of the Egyptian society during the early 1960s. In the crowd of the café there is a group of old people who were ardent admirers of the regime of Nasser, each in his own way and for his own purposes. Fearing the regime, they withdrew from political discussions, pretended to ignore the politics of terror to which they were all subjected, and immersed themselves in their own private lives and concerns (26). Among the avid frequenters of the café is a group of young university graduates, including Hilmi Hamada, an idealistic communist, Isma'il al-Shaykh, and Zaynab Diyab, both of whom studied law and come from modest social backgrounds. They are all filled with an overwhelming sense of national pride and enthusiasm for the Free Officers Movement or the 1952 Revolution, for what it proclaims to be an anti-colonial and socialist justice movement. Apart from the ruling class—the monarchy, the big landowners, the local urban business class, and their legal and journalistic auxiliaries—there was no one in the country who did not resent the public and personal behaviour of the monarch and his corrupt entourage (Al-Hakim, 1985: 1). Most Egyptians welcomed the 'blessed movement' of the officers. Seven decades after 1952, it is clear that the goal of revolution, as Tocqueville (1955) suggests was not to overthrow the old regime, but to restore it, as has been observed by the French Revolution. This happened through the consolidation of power in the hands of a privileged state apparatus that established a new sovereign in the form of a military ruling elite (Sayigh, 2012). Nasser consolidated power in his hands by outmanoeuvring his rivals in March 1954 and secured his hegemony several months later when he fulfilled a major promise by signing a treaty securing the evacuation of British forces by June 1956 (Beinin, 2020). Sabry Hafez (1976:68) best describes the decade following the founding of the Free Officers movement as follows:

> It was a decade of confusion, a decade of numerous huge projects and the abolition of almost all political activities; massive industrialization and the absolute absence of freedom; the construction of the High Dam and the destruction of the spirit of opposition; the expansion of free education and the collective arrest of the intellectuals; the reclamation of thousands of acres and the catastrophic detachment of the Sinai peninsula from Egyptian territory in the defeat of 1967; severe censorship and the emergence of evasive jargon among the intellectuals; the deformation of social values and the students' and workers' upheavals; the enlargement of the public sector and the pervasive growth of corruption. During this decade, there was no public activity not subject to official control, everywhere one encountered not living but official beings concealing their individual personalities beneath a carapace of conformity, people who acted out social roles and repeated, automatically, slogans that were often contrary to their real hidden opinions.

For those young people of Mahfouz's *Karnak Café*, as for many young Egyptians back then, modern history began with the 1952 revolution. 'They were the true children of the revolution' (73). A few years later, they all felt let down and disillusioned with the revolution and Nasser's regime, and even with Nasser himself. This sense of disillusionment, I argue, forms the basis of the relationship between power and people in post-independence Egypt and was exacerbated by the defeat in the Six-Day War against Israel in June 1967.

> My only allegiance is to the July 1952 Revolution. But when it comes to the situation today… Ismail fell silent and started shaking his head, as though he did not know what to say next. For a long time, he went on, I have considered Egyptian history as really beginning on July 23, 1952. It is only since the June 1967 War that I have started looking back earlier than that (43).

On three separate occasions, the young people disappear—they are arrested by Nasser's regime and imprisoned for extended periods. Rumours of arbitrary arrests and cruel torture make the rounds. Prison becomes an experience of homeland as Safinaz Kazim (1986) notes in her work *On Prison and Freedom*, but even more as a metaphor for society, where daily life is constantly monitored and controlled (Sabry, 2015: 9).

We were all living in an era of unseen powers-spies (19)

Months later, youth returns, but things have not returned to normal. The atmosphere has been completely poisoned, and the café has become, as the narrator says, 'one gigantic ear (28).' Mahfouz is, in a sense, evoking what the British called the 'City Eye'— a modern version of

the *basaseen* (onlookers) structure that had existed in Egypt for centuries (Kandil, 2016a: 235). This was basically an extensive network of informants, or more precisely, ordinary people who, for a modest reward, reported suspicious activity; these included beggars, porters, vendors, cab drivers, telephone operators, and numerous others (ibid). At *Karnak Café*, the informants could have been one of the café patrons, a waiter, or a worker. The image of the unverifiable gaze of power conjures up the symbol of authority, which, as Foucault (1977: 201) suggests, 'brings about a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power' by warning those who are subject to the gaze of power of the consequences of transgression, thus creating a kind of self-disciplining with a deterrent effect. With 'the one gigantic ear,' Mahfouz demonstrates how the gaze, the notion of hearing and not hearing (of seeing and not seeing) functions as a means of disempowerment, as a form of loss of individuality, and above all as a means of subjectification. The gaze as an instrument of power has long been used by both colonisers and the governments and rulers that followed them. The gaze implies an asymmetrical, hierarchical power relationship between the one who is seen and the one who sees. However, the inversion of the gaze, or the reversal of this equation, is to challenge and resist the hierarchy of power, as in the famous quote by Frantz Fanon (1965: 26) about veiled women in the Algerian context: 'The woman who sees without being seen frustrates the coloniser.' Years before Foucault (1977: 171) coined his famous phrase about panoptic power, 'the eyes that see without being seen,' Mahfouz's narrator describes, though he cannot reverse the gaze, how it feels to be subject to an omniscient power that triggers a sense of disempowerment and subjugation:

> We were all living in an era of unseen powers-spies hovering in the very air we breathed, shadows in broad daylight. Whenever darkness envelops us, we are intoxicated by power and tempted to emulate the gods; with that, a savage and barbaric heritage is aroused deep with us (19) [..] We began to be suspicious of everything, even the walls, and tables (25). If we absolutely cannot avoid talking about some topic of national importance, then let's do it on the assumption that Mr. Khalid Safwan is sitting right here with us (29).

The experience of being heard, watched, and gazed at by an intrusive power that makes one behave as if the power figure were present, is a good illustration of what Foucault (1977: 202-203) envisions as the subject taking responsibility for the constraints of power by inscribing the power relationship within him/herself in such a way that he/she becomes the principle of his/her own subjugation. The paranoid, suspicious, and self-censored atmosphere under Nasser has not changed much in Egypt today. In an atmosphere not so different from Mahfouz's *Karnak Café, Le Monde Diplomatique* editor-in-chief Alain Gresh and Egyptian journalist Sara Khorshid were arrested in a cafe in central Cairo in 2014 after a woman reported them to security for discussing politics in public. What shocked Khorshid (2014), who later left the country, was not the fact that she was held by the police, but the fact that a fellow Egyptian, a woman she had never met and had nothing to do with, was watching her and reporting her for doing nothing but discussing politics in public and with a stranger. While an informant traditionally spies on others in exchange for money, the panoptic function of informants has evolved over time into a kind of subsidiary power in which subjects play a role in their subjugation by allowing power to inscribe itself in them and pass to others. To acknowledge the techniques by which power is exercised, which Foucault (1976) calls the 'intelligibility of power,' is not necessarily to endorse those techniques. When people feel feeble and worthless, they look for all kinds of means to make themselves feel valuable. One of these is proximity to power, even if that means spying on and denouncing others.

> [..] What was the point of all that if peoples were so feeble and downtrodden that they were not worth a fly, if they had no personal rights, no honour, no security, and if they were being crushed by cowardice, hypocrisy, and desolation? (25)

All dreams come to nothing, and everything dies (44)

The experience of imprisonment and the surveillance system has changed the young patrons of the café in subtle and profound ways (80). Their social relationships were compromised to reinforce the power regime (DiMeo, 2012: 8). It no longer seemed possible for them to come

together, to act in concert, or pursue a common goal. The intention was to break their spirit and reshape their social network to become alone in the crowd. What the regime had done to them was a blow to all the principles of the revolution. With palpable cruelty, they felt politically and existentially disillusioned, lonely, and abandoned, and were forced to rethink their system of beliefs and realise that their earlier enthusiasm was a whitewash of defeat and oppression. Isolating people, as Arendt (1976) notes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and then turning them in their lonely isolation against all others and against themselves, is a way of besieging people that ultimately makes them vulnerable and susceptible to the same regime of power that drove them into isolation in the first place.

> They were all so thin; it looked as though they had just completed a prolonged fast. Their expressions were sad and cynical; at the corners of their mouths there lurked a suppressed anger. Once the conversation had warmed up a bit, these outward signs of hidden feelings would dissipate, leaving them with their own thoughts and ideas. However, once the veil was lifted, all that remained was a sense of languor and a retreat from society (29).

The narrator follows how the brief ardent excitement and political enthusiasm of youth slowly give way to a sense of loneliness, distrust, fear, and disillusionment. He vacillates between his admiration for the great things he believes the revolution has accomplished and his utter abhorrence of the use of terror and violence (30). Like many other Egyptians then and now, the narrator of *Karnak* Café finds solace by clinging to explanations of irresistibility and necessity that justify the use of extraordinary (repressive) measures as an 'inevitable' or necessary evil of political and social upheaval (9).

> There is no judicial hearing and no defence, there is no legal code in the first place, but people keep saying that we are living through a revolutionary process that requires the use of extraordinary measures like these (16). [..] Never in all our long history have we been in such a sorry state…At least in the past, we used to have the law as a haven that was all we needed. Even during the very worst periods of tyranny, there were always voices raised in opposition (37).

There is undoubtedly a close connection between necessity and violence, to which the long history of political thought testifies (DeCaroli, 2013). The necessity of political violence, or its

irresistibility as a means for historical or revolutionary change, could however, be seen as a self-negating (defeating) formula for the attainment of power. That is, the use of sovereign power techniques (use of emergency and extraordinary measures) to establish a new revolutionary regime spells doom for the change sought.

One of the clearest expressions of the relation between necessity and violence comes to us from Arendt (1973:113-114) who argues that projects in which the use of violence among those subjected to it is seen as necessary for the liberation of people have become obsolete and must be distinguished from the active rejection of oppression presenting itself as necessary or from its passive acceptance as inexorable (see more Tocqueville, 1994 and Asad, 2015:187).

> Violence justified and glorified because it acts in the cause of necessity, necessity no longer either rebelled against in a supreme effort of liberation or accepted in pious resignation, but, on the contrary, faithfully worshipped as the great all-coercing force which surely, in the words of Rousseau, will 'force men to be free'—we know how these two and the interplay between them have become the hallmark of successful revolutions in the twentieth century, and this to such an extent that, for the learned and the unlearned alike, they are now outstanding characteristics of all revolutionary events (Arendt, 1973: 115).

In the case of Egypt, the use of violence played a constitutive role in establishing and consolidating power after 1952. Egypt's prolonged state of emergency (referred to by some as the unexceptional state of exception) in Egypt has arguably long been based on the idea of necessity (El Deen, 2017). A few years after taking office, Nasser introduced Law 162/1958, also known as the 'Emergency Law,' which granted the state a number of extraordinary and extrajudicial powers that remained in effect—with brief interruptions in 1964, 1980, and 2012—until its repeal in 2021 (ibid).[12] In a sense, this state of exception became the norm, or it formed a new norm, so that over time it became difficult to distinguish between the norm and the exception, which in some ways seems reminiscent of Agamben's (2005) account of the

[12] A detailed discussion of the afterlife of the state of emergency in Egypt follows in the next chapters.

exception becoming the rule. In his book *The Struggle for Egypt*, Steven A. Cook (2011:82) describes the extent of Nasser's state of emergency:

> The law gave the government extraordinary powers under a state of emergency. These included censorship and closure of newspapers and periodicals, restrictions on union activities, and strict limitations on political organizations, which could only meet at the discretion of the Ministry of Interior. The law also established a parallel judicial system, called State Security Courts, intended to adjudicate crimes related to public safety and national security. These courts, which do not exist in any of Egypt's founding documents, lack basic guarantees such as due process and limit a defendant's right to appeal.

The generation of fear and the use of force was therefore a central feature of the Officers' Republic of exception. In a sense, violence became so closely linked to the construction of the post-independence subject in Egypt (an argument that will guide us in the next chapters). Through the expropriation and confiscation of land, wealth, spirit, bodies, and personal freedoms (Fahmy, 2013b), Nasser was able to establish himself as the new sovereign.

When thinking of Nasser's power regime, one can take a cue from the words of Evelyn Baring, First Earl of Cromer, known in Egypt as Lord Cromer (long time British Consul General in control of the imperial apparatus in Egypt between 1883 and 1907), who firmly believed that autocratic rule was inevitable because the Egyptian people were flawed, deficient, and accustomed to despotism and thereby must be subjugated. Like Cromer, Nasser could not imagine that his subjects would ever govern themselves: 'Free institutions in the full sense of the word, Cromer wrote (1916: 25), must for generations to come be wholly unsuitable to countries such as India and Egypt... It will probably never be possible to make a Western silk purse out of an Eastern sow's ear' (see also Porter, 2012:157; Osman, 2010 and Kabesh, 2013:15). By portraying the Egyptian/Oriental mind as deficient, Cromer establishes himself as a superior and as an authority on the subject (Said, 2003). Along with other liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill (1963), Cromer was among the proponents of liberal democracy in the Western world, while advocating imperialism and despotism among non-Western peoples.

In their inconsistency, however, they are consistent, at least in favouring their peoples. Despotic rulers, on the other hand, who came to power through revolutions or at least popular support, turned on their peoples and denounced them for their inability to self-determine. In essence, Nasser, like Cromer, viewed Egyptians as subjects in need of idolised leadership. ‘Everything was taken by a single hand and emanated from a single head,’ as described by Tawfik Al-Hakim, one of the pioneers of the Arabic novel and drama in Egypt (Al-Hakim, 1985: 48). Under Nasser, people were unwilling to risk publicly expressing an opinion different from that of the idolized leader, who possessed a degree of sanctity and grandeur that allowed him to pass exceptional decrees and suspend laws without debate or opposition unprecedented in Egypt’s modern history (ibid: 24-25, 48). It is this persona that has led to the construction of a certain pathological state of subversion towards an idolised leader; a subjectivity based on fear, the fear of breaking with oneself by breaking with the leader, and the fear of the leader himself. My relationship to Nasser was pathological, the lyricist-poet and cartoonist Salah Jahine (2018) said in his last press interview: ‘To love someone to the point of him spreading in your soul and becoming part of your psychological constitution and a psychiatric condition of yours, so that the person’s rise or fall, his collapse or triumph or defeat reflects on you—that is no doubt a pathological condition.’ To echo Joan Didion’s (1983) description of El Salvador in the 1980s, Egypt under Nasser was gripped by a ‘consensual hallucination.’ According to Khaled Fahmy (2020), Nasser never trusted his people but used them. In another account, Egyptians were used as pawns or chess pieces (Rabie, 2017). From this perspective, I argue that the *good subject* (borrowing Louis Althusser’s term) of Nasser’s regime as well as of subsequent military regimes is no different from the colonial subject of Cromer. The subject who is ‘complacent with his lot’ and, to quote an Arabic phrase, ‘*māšy ğnb ālḥyṭ*’or ‘walks next to the wall,’ meaning that he keeps his head down, minds his own business, does not meddle in the affairs of those above him, and feeds his family (Khalil, 2012: 12). As a new

kind of patriarch: a pharaoh, but a more grass-rooted one, people rallied around Nasser and believed, or pretended to believe, that he was really a kind of demigod (Rakha, 2020: 14). Thus, oppression and subjugation under Nasser was passed from people to people and by the people. Similarly, in Egypt today, al-Sisi is trying to position himself as a grounded patriarch rooted in the people, as I will explain in the final chapter of my study.

Such a military-authoritarian power regime, centred around the person of an idolised leader, offered the people a debased choice: renouncing their civil and political rights in exchange for economic and social rights, which included, above all, free education, and health care, as well as subsidies (especially for food and fuel) (Fahmy, 2015: 73; Ibrahim, 2021: 3). While this form of authoritarian contract, or rather bargain (trade-off between social and economic rights on the one hand and political and civil rights on the other), can be seen as a kind of modified Lockean social contract, it is in some respects no different from John Locke's (1980) vision of the expropriation of American Indian land, which itself emphasises a colonial philosophy.[13] For Lord Cromer (1908:6), Egyptians were happier with solid finances, low taxes, honest administration, and better irrigation. The genuine grievances of the colonised subject, in his view, are material grievances about taxation, land, food, and labour, which to him are all that really interest the ordinary Egyptian. 'No one could get really worked up about nationalism if he or she was well-fed' (Cromer, 1916: 5, 253). This draws attention to the reproduction of hierarchies and narratives from the colonial period to the present and makes it necessary to think about possible connections between then and now, not necessarily to make a linear connection, but to think of immersive and haunting experiences that are absent present in Egypt today. In other words, to think that the past lives on in the present and is deeply rooted there (Salem, 2020). I use the word 'haunting' to illustrate the act of being tied to historical and social effects (Gordon, 2008:190). In attempting to situate January 2011 within a historical

[13] For more on the concept of authoritarian contract, see Neundorf and Pop-Eleches (2020: 1849).

trajectory, the moment Egyptians took to the streets in 2011 can be epitomised as an uprising against the ghosts of colonial history that continue to shape postcolonial power structures (The Officers Republic), with the aim of reasserting Egyptians' entitlement to both types of rights (Fahmy, 2015: 73). Writers such as Sonallah Ibrahim, Ibrahim Abdel Meguid, and Gamal al-Ghitani declared the 2011 mass protests to be an uprising against *Nizam Yuliu* (the July regime or the Officers' Republic of 1952) (Khalifah, 2013: 29).

They have completely lost the ability to be happy (30)

Haunted by the dynamics of disappearance and reappearance in the café, Qurunfula wondered if there was any point in continuing to be sad or anxious when oppression was as regular as sunrise and sunset (33). 'They will come back,' she says, 'and they will sit here in our midst like so many ghosts. When they come back. I swear I am going to rename this place the Ghosts Café' (33). Her words resonate with a bitter sense of normalisation and suffocating conformity to the prevailing coercion, combined with a sense of utter despair and despondency that permeates the small society of *Karnak Café* and, more generally, Egyptian society. 'He has become a shadow of his former self. He completely lost the ability to be happy (30),' Qurunfula describes Hilmi Hamada, with whom she had a love affair, upon his return. Indeed, the motif of ghosts permeates the café and the entire society, suggesting not only a hollow remnant of a once complete human being, but also a bare life in the words of Agamben (1998), one that has been stripped of everything except mere physical existence, one that is in some sense absent, despite its presence (DiMeo, 2012: 6). Not only were their bodies controlled, but their souls were largely defeated. If there is one description that best defines subjectivity under Nasser, it is the growing sense of self-defeat.

It was the third wave of arrests that coincided with the 1967 Six Day or June War: *Naksa* (defeat against Israel), as it was euphemistically called. The term *Naksa* literally means 'setback' or 'relapse' and was coined by regime forces to downplay the defeat and escape

responsibility, despite it being a major and humiliating event. According to historian Khaled Fahmy (2020), the war claimed 10,000 lives, one-tenth of the fighting troops, and 15,000 wounded and captured. The entire Sinai Peninsula, 6% of Egypt's total area, was lost. More than 80% of the military material was either destroyed or abandoned. The *Naksa* is a pivotal event in the modern history of the Middle East, the effects of which continue to shape events in the various countries of the region today. It also refers to the second Nakba—the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip during the 1967 war, which marked the beginning of Israel's illegal military occupation of these territories (BADIL Occasional Bulletin, 2004). However, the term *Naksa* represents a far-reaching defeat. Just as the Egyptian army suffered a catastrophic defeat in 1967, the people were defeated by a political regime and a deified leader who controlled them, spied on them, and turned them into mere passive objects of power (Al-Zabn, 2017; Fahmy, 2020). The June defeat, or *Naksa*, stalled the generation's ambition and, according to Arwa Salih (2018:19), led to a wave of collective self-questioning and alienation. In Egypt today, *Naksa* epitomizes a lived experience, one in which self-defeat is experienced through the minutiae of daily life. It captures the state of fear and self-worthlessness as Egyptians continue to face violations and threats that affect their lives and shape their subjectivity. We can therefore draw inspiration from scholars who describe an ongoing Nakba (catastrophe) in Palestine and think through an ongoing Naksa in Egypt (Sallam, 2018).

We are a force in control of everything: Friends are rewarded, and traitors are punished (59)

Zaynab and Isma'il return, but Hilmi does not, having died under torture like many others (57). Isma'il and Zaynab recount their interrogation by Khalid Safwan (the face of state oppression),[14] who first falsely accuses Isma'il of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and

[14] In his interview with Raja'a al-Naqqash (1997: 262), Mahfouz maintains that the fictional character of Khalid Safwan was inspired by the General Hamza Bassiouni, former commander of the military prison under Nasser.

then of being a Communist.[15] Safwan had the three young people arrested and tortured in horrible conditions; Zaynab was raped to debase Isma'il, with whom she had a love affair. The young regulars of the café clearly suffered not for the principles they believed in, but for ideals that were in fact contrary to those of the regime, even if at some point they were passed off as the same ideals of the regime, namely the values of the 1952 revolution including freedom and justice (DiMeo, 2012: 7).

> [..] 'Here we were, thinking you belonged to the Muslim Brothers.' And I turned out to be innocent, 'Isma'il replied to Khalid Safwan emphatically. But what was lurking just below the surface was even worse, says Safwan. I believe in the revolution, Isma'il said fervently, that is the only true fact there is. Oh, everyone believes in the revolution, Khalid said sarcastically. In this room, feudalists, wafdists (liberals), and communists have all avowed their belief in the revolution (55)

Safwan turned bonds of friendship and devotion into relationships of distrust by forcing the youths to report and spy on each other without the other's knowledge. Ismai'l and Zaynab were forced to report on their colleagues, including Hilmi, who was subsequently killed under torture. The conditions for their release, as the narrator recalls, were 'an informant with a fixed salary and a tortured conscience (59).' Exploiting existing social bonds and turning them against their bearers is an important instrument of Nasser's regime of power and at the same time a technique of subject formation. It is precarious, however, because it penetrates deeply into and reaches the private and personal sphere, infiltrating the population and creating a widespread atmosphere of distrust and suspicion, of betrayal among friends, neighbours, and colleagues, in what Arendt (1951:431) calls the collaboration of one part of the population in the denunciation of another part (the political opponents). It is not that anyone could in good conscience spy on a stranger, but when this happens to people we are connected to, it hits all the harder on self-perception and respect, which is what authoritarian regimes seem to aim for.

[15] The Muslim Brotherhood and the Marxist Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL) initially supported the 1952 revolution/military coup (all the other Marxist organizations opposed it). However, both groups became its enemies within a year and their members consequently suffered repeated imprisonment and torture (Beinin, 2020).

Here, surveillance seems to have two main functions: a disciplinary, self-inhibiting one, as Foucault (1977) suggests in *Discipline and Punish*, and a social one that breaks bonds and permeates both the private and the collective, as Arendt (1951) suggests in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Trapped in an endless state of self-shaming and punishment, Zaynab becomes both a spy and a prostitute, as she recalls (78). The degrading form of abuse Zaynab experiences at the hands of the security forces demonstrates the power of the state over her honour and her body. In Egyptian and Arab culture, honour is closely linked to a woman's body and is determined by several structures of domination: the family, the community, and the state (Baron, 2006: 1). In modern times, the concept of family honour was elevated to the national level, creating what some call 'national honour,' a term closely related to the national prestige or '*haybat ad-dawla*' mentioned earlier (ibid: 2). As an expression of this, Egypt is often depicted as a woman in the visual and literary imagination. In *Karnak Café*, Mahfouz depicts how Nasser's regime transforms the pure, virgin nation into a prostitute through oppression and intimidation (DiMeo, 2012: 8).

The spirit of Zaynab Diyab was not absent from the mass protests in Tahrir Square in 2011. Her spirit lives in the 18 female protesters who were arrested by the Egyptian military and forced to undergo so-called 'virginity tests,' a form of degrading punishment for taking part in the uprising (Amnesty International, 2011). On the other hand, Isma'il's worldview was completely shaken by the experience of imprisonment, collaboration with the authorities, spying, and torture, followed by the political and military defeat of the Nasser regime in June 1967. His sense of integrity and self-honour was affected, as much as Zaynab's. As he recalls his feelings, Isma'il tells the narrator:

> I certainly believed they had authority over me. You can add to the equation the terror factor that had totally destroyed my spirit and also my own profound sense of shame. I could not manage to convince myself that honour meant

> anything anymore. I had to act in a totally reckless manner, and that was no easy matter when you consider not only my moral make-up but also my spiritual integrity. I started meandering around in never-ending torment. What made it that much worse was that, as far as I was concerned, Zaynab was a changed person too.

The use of terror and surveillance as hallmarks of Nasser's power regime was associated with a degree of uncertainty that is an essential feature of being subject to such a power regime. In a sense, uncertainty and terror feed off each other. None of the young people knew why they had been arrested, or when it would all be over, or when any form of life would emerge from what Ismai'l describes as 'the all-encompassing corpse of a place' (in reference to prison). Despite the bitterness, emptiness, and darkness that Ismail expressed, he was able to see despair as an encouraging opportunity. Echoing Gramsci's expression in *Prison Notebooks* (1992), [1947] Isma'il was an optimist because of will. In a conversation between Isma'il and the narrator, Isma'il says:

> But there is one thing that I need to tell you: when suffering pushes someone too far, he can still get the better of it. Even in moments of the direst possible agony, he can still leap up and express his concerns with a level of recklessness that can be regarded as a sign of either despair or power–both are equally valid (49).

Zaynab, in contrast, haunted by moments of fear and submission, loses faith in herself, and in the revolution and what she believed it represents. (74).

> However, we had previously thought that we had all the power in the world, that feelings had been severely jolted by the time we had emerged from prison. We had lost much of our courage and along with it our self-confidence and belief in the workings of time. We had now discovered the existence of a terrifying force operating completely outside the dictates of law and human value (74) [..] My faith has been uprooted from its foundations. I have come to believe it is a castle made of sand. We seem to have turned into a nation of deviants. All the costs in terms of life–the defeat and anxiety–they have managed to demolish our sense of values (80).

Struggling with the fear of aloneness, of her own defeat and powerlessness, Zaynab becomes dependent on the approval and recognition of others, and therefore tends to take refuge in what Eric Fromm calls (1941: 183, 203) 'automaton conformity,' submitting to the forces of oppression and domination that offer her security and 'relief from doubt.' The old clientele of

the café, on the other hand, gradually adopted a more insouciant attitude, retreating into the past and visiting an old haunt of self-deceiving nostalgia for the good old days that had been forgotten. It is as if a reference or longing for the past could make their present more bearable. Nostalgia seems to be an escape for them and a technique of adaptation to survive the conditions of the present. In other words, the relationship to time and memory seems to be central to the experience of the older generation, in contrast to that of the young, whose experience before July 1952 was an 'obscure and inexplicable period of ignorance (8).'

I found that I was afraid of genuine freedom (83)

At the end of the novella, the atrocious Khalid Safwan, the intelligence chief (in the novel) and sadistic torturer to the point of rape and murder, enters the café after serving a three-year sentence. As part of the corrective measures following the military defeat, Safwan was convicted and imprisoned (99). After his release, chance, or perhaps the intention to reconcile with his past and paint a new picture, leads him to the Café Karnak, where one of his victims recognizes him and reveals his identity to the narrator, and instead of being lynched immediately, he is gradually accepted by the café's patrons. In an attempt to reconcile with his victims, Safwan finds a place next to the ghosts of those he once interrogated and tortured, where he preaches and speaks about his new worldview, based primarily on renouncing dictatorship and violence and embracing the values of freedom and science (96-99). His allegiances and narratives have entirely shifted. Dominated by his strivings for authority and control, Safwan consciously believed that the start had been all innocent and tyrannical forces had corrupted him (92). Safwan blames all Egyptians for the atrocities of the Nasser regime, condemns the dictatorship, and advocates political freedoms. He portrays himself as a victim and wins the appreciation of patrons through witty political commentary and a concrete plan of action for the country's future. 'There's nothing like suffering to bring people together (93).'

In his speech, Safwan indeed seems aware of the divisive and shattering effect of coercive power on people's minds.

> So, there is the philosophy of Khalid Safwan, he said with a yawn. I have learned its principles from within the deepest recesses of hell. I am proclaiming it here today in Karnak Café, a place to which we have all been driven by a combination of ostracism and crime (96).

In a sense, Safwan's image and speech is a reiteration of SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann's figure, linking obedience, lack of conscience, and evil deeds. Like Eichmann, who saw himself as a pure bureaucrat who acted and carried out orders thoughtlessly, Safwan believed that he was only doing his job to protect the revolution and its symbols, at the top of whom is Nasser. However, to view Safwan as normal and thoughtless figure who committed evil acts without evil intentions, as Arendt (1963a) notes about Eichmann, misses the point the novella is trying to convey. While Eichmann indeed accepted the idea of racial purity and supported it through his work, Safwan likewise espoused the idea of a leader and national security above all else, so both were strongly committed to the ideology of their regimes, making it difficult to refute any moral accountability on their sides. But how could Arendt define the boundaries between normal/banal and evil when the former depends on the latter and is to be defined in reverse. That is, neither Safwan nor Eichmann can be considered normal, thoughtless, pure bureaucrats when they commit evil acts. Instead of Arendt's figure of banal evil, Mahfouz presents Safwan as a figure of 'undiluted evil,' a spectacle of power, a limb that represents the powerful and through which power passes to the less powerful. In other words, Safwan, the face of state oppression and the ominous harbinger of Egypt's future in Mahfouz's fiction, represents a power centre whose source was ultimately Nasser himself.

According to P. J. Vatikiotis (1978), Nasser had complete personal control over the various security services, which competed to prove their loyalty to him; to this end, they invented conspiracies to claim they were protecting him. A side effect of this competition was that thousands of Egyptians were imprisoned and tortured in the crackdown on political dissent,

and those who were not imprisoned, tortured, or exiled rallied unanimously behind the leadership and headed toward a dark abyss (Fahmy, 2015: 77).

In *Karnak Café*, Safwan was held accountable (at least cosmetically), while Nasser's failure that led to the catastrophic defeat of 1967 was never questioned. In his book, *The Sacred March: The Step-Down Protests and Worshipping Abdel-Nasser*, Sherif Younis (2005) questions the event known in Egyptian history as the 'step-down protests' of June 9 and 10, 1967, when Egyptians took to the streets demanding that Nasser reconsider his decision to step down as leader after his defeat in the Six-Day War. Younis was concerned with the question of how a dictatorship could gain such popularity that the people could chant the name of a defeated leader even below the threshold of total defeat and give him power again. I argue that one answer to Younis's question was given by Zaynab, who, although she had lost her faith in the revolution and all that it promised, joined the step-down protests along with many others of her generation. Years before Younis poses his question, Zaynab expresses that she can no longer bear to shoulder responsibility when she realises that she was 'actually afraid of genuine freedom (83).' Although freedom is often seen as a privilege rather than a cause for fear, many people living under authoritarian regimes fear freedom because with freedom they risk being rejected and labelled as outsiders, and if they do not belong, they are overwhelmed by their insignificance, as Fromm (1941) says. Since fear, an instrument of authoritarian power regimes plays a central role in shaping one's self-image and worldview, there is always an enemy image to be afraid of, be it an external enemy, fear of oneself, or the power regime itself. Fear means susceptibility to authoritarian ideas, it promotes conformity and obedience, while freedom brings about the opposite, which of course these regimes do not want.

For Zaynab, freedom seems to have isolated her, and this isolation became so unbearable that she sought refuge in belonging and clinging to the group, as Arendt (1953) asserts. The alternatives Zaynab faces are either escape from isolation and the burden of freedom into

conformity, dependencies, and submission, that promise relief from uncertainty, or advance to the full realisation of freedom and the endurance of its consequences (see Fromm, 1941).

> It was by sticking together that we continued to seek refuge from the sense of isolation and loneliness. It felt as if we have made whole series of decisions about how to protect ourselves: against the blows of the unseen we would cling to each other, in the face of potential terrors we would share out opinions; when confronting overwhelming despair we would tell grisly sarcastic jokes; in acknowledging major mistakes we would indulge in torrid bursts of confessions; faced with the dreadful burdens of responsibility we would torture ourselves; and to avid generally oppressive social atmosphere we would indulge ourselves in phony dreams (36).

The novella ends on a hopeful note with Qurunfula keeping an eye on Munir Ahmad, a new idealistic and innocent young man, for resistance and ambition never disappear forever, and resistance and submission live side by side.

In conclusion, Mahfouz describes only what happens in a small part of downtown Cairo in a particular historical episode, but it is clear that he disavows and exposes the self-defeating autocracy and dictatorship of the 1952 regime (96) by showing how despotism (a colonial underpinning) is central to Nasser's postcolonial regime, implying that existing practices of power can lead to nothing more than the formation of ambivalent subjectivities that challenge binary subject categories (passive versus active subjects).

Through episodes of disappearance, torture, absence, and loss, the novella shows the effects of the tyrannical power of the 1952 regime on consciousness and belief formation. The subject produced by the Nasser regime is not portrayed as either a 'docile subject' produced by the machinery of disciplinary practises exemplified by the omnipresent eyes of the Nasserist regime, as Foucault's (1977) technologies of power analysis suggest, nor as an autonomous, self-forming subject, as Foucault's (1988) technologies of self-analysis suggest. In general, the novella serves to articulate three different perspectives on the subject: An expendable subject constituted through a system of appropriation, control, and coercion (Hilmi Hamada). A counter-hegemonic subject constituted through a proactive dimension of agency within power

(Isma'il), and finally a self-destructive subject formed through the interplay of technologies of coercion and consent, resulting in a new subjectivity, that of the degrading, dishonouring, and shaming body (Zaynab). This new subjectivity, as embodied by Mahfouz's protagonist Zaynab Diyab, explains the shame and discomfort felt by those who have forcibly consented to surrender their consciousness, agency, and integrity to control and constant observation, and to be used against one another.

Some might read *Karnak* Café as an attempt to say that the conditions of power subjectivity under Nasser's Egypt emerge at the point where the subject's agency in relation to the regime of power is actively compromised or impaired, whereas I take it to mean that the productive and liberating dimensions of subordination operate side by side with the repressive forces of conditioned subjection.

In reflecting on what it means to be a subject under Nasser's regime, and what characterises subsequent military regimes to this day, I argue that it is the pursuit of sovereign domination. The novella *Karnak Café* therefore provides an entry point and an overview that can pave the way to understanding the evolution of power and its effects at the level of individual subjects in post-independence Egypt and enable us to read the history of contemporary Egypt as the history of the 'Officer's Republic.'

2.2 *The Black Policeman* (1962) by Yusuf Idris

> What could be more piteously strange than someone who has lost the basic sense of security which comes from being a human being among others? [Says the narrator of the *Black Policeman*, 1962: 71].

A decade before Mahfouz wrote *Karnak Cafe*, Yusuf Idris published his novella *The Black Policeman* (*al-Askari al-Aswad*) (1962, published in English in 1990), which parallels *Karnak Café* in its depiction of state terror and the forms of subjugation embodied in it. The novella is set in late colonial Egypt after the World War II and before the Free Officers Movement of 1952, a time of unrest against the then prevailing formula of power-sharing between the Egyptian monarchy and the British occupiers. Despite the British Unilateral Declaration of Egyptian Independence in 1922 and the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936,[16] which officially ended the 54-year British occupation of Egypt, British domination and interference in political and constitutional life remained, with the British holding real power behind the throne until the overthrow of the monarch in 1952 and the final withdrawal of troops in 1956 (Vatikotis, 1991; Zain, 2019).

Written and published in 1962 under Nasser, *The Black Policeman*, despite its flashback to before 1952, can be read as a perfect example of the era of Nasserism, a novella about oppression by malevolent powers—colonial, but mainly contemporary authoritarian powers. Drawing on a true case of brutality by the Egyptian political police that came to light in the Egyptian press in the late 1940s, Idris uses the colonial period as the setting for the novella, possibly to circumvent censorship and express dismay at Nasser's regime by moving the action to the period before 1952 and commenting on events that were taking place at the time of writing (DiMeo, 2012: 4). What Idris presents in *The Black Policeman* is above all an attempt

[16] Britain unilaterally declared Egypt's independence on February 28, 1922, but reserved rights in certain areas, such as protecting foreign communities in Egypt and defending the country against foreign aggression (Vatikotis, 1991). For Egyptians, the unilateral declaration was more of a perpetuation of British control over Egypt (Sirrs, 2010: 13). The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty is a treaty signed in London on August 26, 1936, between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Egypt, establishing a 20-year military alliance that allowed Britain to impose martial law and censorship in Egypt in the event of an international emergency (Hurewitz, 2011). The treaty was unpopular in Egypt and was unilaterally revoked by the Wafd government in 1951 (ibid).

to make connections between the past and the present and to show how post-independence regimes maintained colonial nation-building projects, including structures of coercive rule, under the guise of independence and how this affects the formation of post-independence subjectivities.

In making connections between the postcolonial and late colonial periods, Idris in the novella adheres to Albert Camus' (1957: 11) saying in his lecture 'Create Dangerously,' 'for the artist there are no privileged torturers.' Idris' dilemma, like that of many other writers of his generation, can be seen as follows: How can one write under a regime that controls the written and spoken word? Or as Egyptian writer Sonallah Ibrahim (1966) put it: 'How can you write oppositional art when the regime in power has already stolen your best lines?' I argue that the temporal opacity embodied by this novella provides Idris with a safe space in which to express his disenchantment with Nasser's regime of power without overtly articulating it. Moreover, he represents a timeless present in which the present and the past are so fused that no clear distinction exists between the two and the present becomes a mere manifestation of the past (Bloch, 1977: 88; Kabesh, 2015: 349).

Yusuf Idris (1927-1991) was a practicing physician and playwright and novelist who is celebrated as the father of the Arabic short story and is considered one of the pioneers in depicting social, political, and psychological aspects of characters. Idris broke with traditional Arabic literature by mixing colloquial dialect with conventional classical Arabic to reach the impoverished masses and appeal to a broad spectrum of Egyptian society (Kurpershoek, 1981: 55; Raslan, 2018: 178). Unlike Mahfouz, whose subjectivity was fed in part by the balancing act between his role as a writer and as a state bureaucrat, Idris was a dissident critical of the regime, not only in his writings but also in his own life (Darwish, 1991). After joining the anti-British secret organisation 'Executive Committee for the Armed Struggle' in 1951, Idris helped raise funds and organise training camps for guerrilla fighters in the Canal Zone. Because of his

activism, he was suspended from university and imprisoned twice, two months in 1949 and three months in 1952. A staunch leftist, he initially supported Nasser's reforms but was later imprisoned for 13 months in 1954 for expressing his critical political views. After his release from prison, Idris joined the Algerian guerrillas against the French occupation and was wounded in battle (DiMeo, 2016: 87). Despite repeated imprisonment under both the monarchy and the Nasser regime, Idris never ceased to be critical in speech and writing (ibid: 3). In an interview with Cairo Television in 1966, Idris explained the ease with which he portrayed his characters as real people by saying that he spent his time sitting in Cairo cafés with ordinary people, who were also a source of inspiration also for Naguib Mahfouz (Darwish, 1991), again pointing to the means by which a fictional writer collects or generates his data, which are no different from those used by a social scientist, as outlined in the introductory chapter of my study.

The Black Policeman can be seen as an autobiography of Idris himself, with the main protagonist Shawqi bearing distinct similarities to Idris. Like Idris once did, Shawqi works as a government health inspector and deals primarily with poor clients. During his medical studies, Shawqi, like Idris, was active in the political opposition, which landed him in prison (DiMeo, 2016: 102). The target of Shawqi's political opposition was the same as the one Idris fought against during his student days: the occupation armies loitering in the country (Idris, 1962: 57).

The Black Policeman possibly alludes to the skin colour of Egyptian policemen under British rule to maintain the dividing line between colonisers and colonised, but also to the black-clad security forces that served as a recognisable symbol of oppression by colonial and subsequent postcolonial Egyptian regimes. As Franz Fanon (1963:37) writes in *The Wrteched of the Earth*, 'in the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens,

the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression.'[17] This role seems unbroken in postcolonial authoritarian regimes. There was a reason that the 2011 mass demonstrations took place on January 25, Egypt's Police Day.[18] Not surprisingly, much of the anger was directed at the police, as emblematic of repressive power and an institution of everyday governance that censors, controls, and operates at the micro level of the social body by infiltrating every aspect of it (Ismail, 2012: 436; Amrani, 2011).

The emergence of the coercive police as an instrument of power can be dated to the turn of the twentieth century, when the nationalist movement in Egypt had developed into a serious threat. Given their position as de facto rulers of Egypt, the British discovered an important new mandate for the police, political intelligence, which was a loaded mandate synonymous with torture, intimidation, indefinite detention, censorship, and unbridled authority (Sirrs, 2010: 8-10). This intelligence service, later known as the Central Special Office (CSO), originally established to defend colonial rule against the nationalist movement, forms the basis of postcolonial intelligence and political policing (Spencer Hartnett, et al, 2020:13; Tauber, 2006: 605). Official documents describe the unit as 'a thoroughly organized service' for the collection of all information concerning secret political societies and persons known or believed to be political agitators (Sirrs, 2010: 8). This unit developed a degree of brutality and ruthlessness over time, inflicting ready-made accusations on political opponents of the colonial power, Great Britain, and its allied monarchy (Fahmy, 2012: 357). Prior to the seizure of power, the Free Officers had consistently called for the dissolution of the Special Secret Service and reaffirmed this policy after being in power. Two days after the revolution/coup on July 25, 1952, the new prime minister declared that the army would 'terminate the system of political

[17] It is worth noting, however, that there was no appreciable British settler population in Egypt.
[18] January 25 is the day that commemorates the sacrifices of the police officers massacred by the British in Ismailiya in 1952, a town midway along the Suez Canal (Osman, 2011). Later in 2009, 25 January was to become known as the country's Police Day (Amrani, 2011).

police and informers because it was unhealthy and produced bogus information (Creswell, 1952; Sirrs 2010, 25)'. Internal security and intelligence reform, however, soon proved to be as important a political concern for the Free Officers as it was for the British. Moreover, the threatening opposition to the 1952 regime was the same as that of the previous regime: dissident military officers, communists, and the Muslim Brotherhood (ibid). Instead of dismantling the coercive apparatus, the Free Officers expanded and further strengthened it. The post-independence regime viewed the political police as an 'instrument of government' and a means of the new Officers' Republic worth preserving (Lacouture, 1973:153). Behind the scenes, the regime set about strengthening the capabilities of the apparatus and bringing it back to life. One of the regime's first decisions was to reincarnate the secret political police apparatus as the General Investigations Directorate (GID; in Arabic *Mabahith al- 'Amn*) (Spencer Hartnett, et al, 2020: 15; Sirrs, 2010: 29). While the Directorate covered the core mandate of its predecessor, GID took control of the former regime's mid-level intelligence officers as well as its archives (Spencer Hartnett, et al, 2020: 15; Sirrs, 2010: 31; see also Creswell, 1952; Sirrs, 2013: 233). Despite the frequent name changes of the apparatus, its modus operandi has been maintained by successive power regimes, centering on two main features: increased public surveillance (an invisible gaze) through a centralised nationwide informant network that is carefully mobilised, and pre-emptive repression (based on fear and threat theory) that includes public intimidation and coercive interrogation, thus enabling unbridled authoritarian power (Spencer Hartnett, et al, 2020: 15; Sirrs, 2013: 236).[19] Widely enacted as an instrument of power, a mode of punishment or revenge, and a tool for extorting confessions by the post-1952 regimes, torture has been a staple of the coercive apparatus in Egypt (Sansom, 1965: 224;

[19] The name of the Police Intelligence Apparatus has changed from the General investigations Directorate (GID) under Nasser to the State Security Investigations Service (SSIS) under Sadat, then to the National Security Force (NSF) under Mubarak and finally to the Egyptian Homeland Security after the 2011 uprising (see Sirrs, 2013).

Sirrs, 2013:236).[20] Through the above discussion, post-independence authoritarianism in Egypt can be traced back to colonial institution-building projects dictated by the interests and security threats of colonial powers (Spencer Hartnett, et al, 2020: 3). This provides a haunting testimony of the historical entanglements that link Egypt's post-independence fate to its pre-independence experience, and a good context for the novella of *the Black policeman* that embodies this haunting effect. In other words, the heavy shadows of the colonial apparatus of coercion still linger in post-independence Egypt, shadows that we may not see, but whose presence we feel, nonetheless. Against this background, the following analysis of the novella is to be read as a commentary on the human condition under the coercion of power that transcends the limits of time (Cobham, 1975).

Self-terrorisation: A whole generation was scattered (58)

Like Hilmi, Zaynab, and Ismail in *Karnak Café*, whose experience of imprisonment is intermingled with their experience of the post-independence homeland, Shawqi in *The Black Policeman*, a young doctor who led the pre-1952 student resistance to the monarchy and British occupation, was arrested and humiliated by the secret police without trial or formal charges. Like Mahfouz, Idris employs an unnamed narrator, Shawqi's fellow student, who recounts Shawqi's changes since his release. Just as the narrator found it difficult to understand how state terror could neutralize Shawqi, he found it difficult to understand how the same coercive apparatus could transform Abbas al-Zanfali (the black policeman), who was part of their generation that yearned for independence, into a sadistic torturer (DiMeo, 2016).

> [..] there was a war of nerves with its attendant rumours and a prevailing sense of fear, and our faculty seethed with the secret police. A whole generation was scattered, some to prison, some into exile in the countryside or far-off towns and cities, and some inside themselves digging great holes there where they buried their rebellion and their beliefs and covered them over. [..] We were

[20] Among the practices frequently listed by human rights organisations are use of electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body; waterboarding; hanging detainees in excruciatingly painful positions; sexual violence or threats of sexual violence against detainees and/or their families (Human Rights Watch, 1992: 69–113).

> living in a reign of terror and surely such a reign's principal achievement is to succeed in making each of us responsible for terrorising himself, keeping his own mouth shut and submitting to the existing state of affairs (58).

Shawqi is one of the victims of al-Zanfali (the black policeman), a master torturer of the political police who was notorious for his sadistic treatment of prisoners. Al-Zanfali became a symbolic figure for all the misfortunes that befell his generation - the reign of terror and armed struggle(68). Shawqi was once tortured by al-Zanfali from dawn to dusk, an incident that became widely known as an exemplar of the latter's viciousness (77). Like the ghosts of *Karnak Café*, *The Black Policeman* suggests that the repressive power regime had the ability to transform Shawqi into a subjectless empty being, an isolated powerless phantom absorbed by his alienated existence, but it also had to subject the torturer al-Zanfali to what Syrian writer Yassin Al-Haj Saleh (2020) calls *taghyib*, a concept that describes a process by which people are actively disenfranchised, incapacitated, or rendered absent from public space, meaning that they can no longer think for themselves or represent themselves (thoughtless subjects).

Although a connection could be made between Saleh's (2020) concept of t*aghyib* 'absent-mindedness' and Arendt's notion of thoughtlessness as a banal evil, al-Zanfali, like Safwan in *Karnak Café*, does not necessarily embody what Arendt calls the ridiculousness of the man who commits the acts of horror. As Arendt asserts (1963: 67), the dilemma of banality arises at the boundary between 'the unspeakable horror of the acts and the undeniable ludicrousness of the man who committed them,' but in considering various forms of committed terror, as in the case of al-Zanfali, it becomes clear that this simple and straightforward relationship between thoughtlessness and the commission of evil acts does not explain much of the complexity of the commission of terror. In a sense, the issue is not only whether the person committing the acts of terror has mundane, banal, or radical motives, but also the effects of those acts on the victim and the perpetrator alike, with those effects then shaping, feeding, and

explaining the motivations. This is to suggest that between the banal and the evil lies a broad spectrum filled with various forms of subjectivities, motivations, and power dynamics.

Unlike Shawki, whose existence is grounded in the right to reject, accept, or confront aggression because it is an inseparable part of his being, as is ‘his living flesh,’ as the narrator recalls (74), al-Zanfali, ‘who has always been too busy chasing power and authority (83),’ constructs his entire existence in and around the elimination of his individual self in an absolute identification with his master (his existence becomes his beingness or lack of being). In the words of Erich Fromm (1941:151), the ‘tendency to lose oneself is translated to getting rid of the burden of freedom by submitting to a person or power which he feels as being overwhelmingly strong.’ In this case, any threat to the existing power becomes a threat to al-Zanfali’s existence, accordingly, his desire to exist becomes ‘the desire of the powerful other’ as Jacques Lacan (1977:12) suggests in his seminar VI on *Desire and its Interp*retation. Identification with and desire to belong to those at the top of the hierarchy is a constant in al-Zanfali’s career (86). This desire to belong to the powerful majority manifests itself, as the authors of *The Authoritarian Personality* (1964: 429) suggest, in the acquisition and internalisation of authoritarian values. In his quest to rise above others, escape the shackles of his social status, and climb the social ladder, al-Zanfali seeks to conform and submit to the existing power regime (83-84). In this perspective, al-Zanfali cannot be reduced to either a thoughtless, obedient executioner of state orders or a small cog in the regime's bureaucratic machinery (banal bureaucrat), as Arendt suggests. Al-Zanfali thought hard (even if the outcome of his thinking was the decision to renounce his right to think), rationalised the right to obey and approved the role of the ‘representative perpetrator’ (to use Dana R. Villa’s (1999) term). As a result, he turned away from the pain of others and allowed the *Taghyib* process to operate on him, thus describing a more complex Eichmann-type figure. This seems consistent with Arendt’s (1978c: 210) thesis of the ‘great criminal of the twentieth century,’ whom she

describes not as a group of political extremists but as the common man who was willing to conform his behaviour and sacrifice his convictions, honour, and human dignity to the murderous extreme, if only to provide for his family.

> People who had watched him working on his victims said that he did not look human, or even animal; and yet no machine ever had an expression of savage enjoyment as it worked (73). The most horrible thing was to watch him hitting someone, to see his enjoyment at the destruction of a living creature, a human being, changed before his eyes into a heap of terrified flesh crying out in blind fear. Then you knew that this only encouraged him to take more delight in his task, to hit harder and harder in pursuit of the ultimate pleasure (75).

The figure of al-Zanfali, essentially portrayed by Idris as a figure of authority or coercion in colonial/postcolonial Egypt, leans closely on the authoritarian 'pseudo-masculine' ego ideal characterised by determination, independence, decisiveness, and willpower (Adorno et al. 1964, 430), with 'repeated assertions of independence' often serving as a defence 'against strong feelings of dependence, passivity, helplessness, and sometimes even self-contempt'(Adorno et al., 1964: 440).

We have been trapped within theses bottlenecks of our fears (64)

The Lacanian conception of desire can be reversed in the case of Shawqi, whose desire to exist (his ability to enjoy freedom as the only thing that makes him human) fundamentally contradicts the desire of the power regime. Flashbacks to his university days show Shawqi as an energetic political dissident fighting against the occupation and the forces of repression (56).

In attempting to understand the fall of a former revolutionary into passive surrender, the narrator traces the lingering effects of state terror on Shawqi's changing subjectivity. Shawqi's transformation involved a redefinition of his relationship to himself and to his social networks, including his torturer with whom he has a brief confrontation at the end of the novella.

> The Shawqi who had entered prison had not come out again. The man who had come out of prison was another person with other characteristics-even my use of the word person is no more than a kind of simplification (70) [..] His eyes bore a mark, an imprint of something that had not been there before. [..] The

> spell-binding power in Shawqi's eyes had died, and all that was left was a dull glimmer, a mere indication that life was present (60).

Shawqi's changes went beyond mere oppression and intimidation and instead extended to a profound restructuring of his entire subjectivity, something like a metamorphosis he underwent in response to the forces of power that subjugated him (DiMeo, 2012: 4).[21] Shawqi is transformed from an autonomous subject endowed with enormous willpower and charged with saving his country and changing the destiny of the people (56) into an absent figure deprived of all agency and dignity.

> What had happened to him was something different, a change more like a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, or the transformation of wood into ashes by fire (69) [..] Having once lost his human security as a human being, could never retrieve it, and become one of us again (96).

Idris' use of the term 'loss of human security' lends Agamben's (1998) abstract concept of bare life more vividness and a rights-based view, I argue. Whereas bare life, as Agamben (1998) suggests, is a form of life reduced to a mere biological formula, a status or category of life made visible by the removal of all predicates and attributes (De la Durantaye, 2009: 203), the loss of human security is nothing other than an emphasis on the nakedness of life in its exposure to an absolute power regime. According to the definition of the United Nations General Assembly (2012), human security is defined as the right to freedom and dignity, the right to live free from fear, distress, and despair. In contrast to those who enjoy a dignified life, 'a qualified life' in Agamben's sense, those who lose the right to a life free of fear are, in effect, embodiments of the figure *of Homo Sacer* or bare life.

Shawqi's ruthless and inhumane treatment of patients, especially toward police officers who demand medical certificates, shocks the narrator, who cannot associate such behaviour with the courageous, concerned, and compassionate activist Shawqi once knew (60-61). Shawqi is

---

[21] For a change to be described as a metamorphosis, it requires a presuppose of the original form, so for something to turn 'metamorphically' into something else, some aspect of the original remains (Mikkonen, 1996: 310). Although in many modern metamorphosis stories the connection or continuum between the two things may be problematized or challenged (ibid).

an example of the transformation, very common in authoritarian contexts, of idealistic fighters for freedom and justice into functionaries of the status quo. He retreats into his cocoon of silence, isolating himself from his family, friends, and especially politics—a transformation fraught with horror and alienation. Prison poisons Shawqi's relationship with society, but more importantly with himself, as Erving Goffman (1961:14) describes the process of 'mortification of the self' achieved through a series of abasements, humiliations, and self-exposures. According to Goffman (1961), becoming an inmate in a total institution involves a process of 'mortification of the self,' meaning that inmates are subjected to degrading and humiliating treatment designed to eliminate any trace of an individual identity (pruning of the self). A person's self-mortification occurs through the following processes: 1). Role deprivation or dispossession: one loses the various roles one plays in civil society and becomes instead an inmate, patient, or client; 2) Programming and identity pruning. The self is often reduced to numerical data stored in the organisation's database and files; 3). The expropriation of property, names, and one's 'identity equipment,' that is, the artefacts that identify who we are; 4). The imposition of degrading postures, attitudes, and forms of respect; 5). The disruption of the usual relationship between the individual and his/her actions/behaviours. 6). The restriction of self-determination, autonomy and freedom of action. It becomes difficult or impossible to develop and pursue interests, make decisions, or cooperate with others of one's own choosing. This is due not only to one's own physical or mental weaknesses, but also to the bureaucratic controls of the organisation.

Every blow affects the whole of you, your sensibilities, your human dignity (74)

Shawqi's mortification removed every trace of his human security, his social and civic self, and, above all, his individual subjectivity, reducing him and his self-concept to the status of a 'non-subject' (see also Goffman, 1963). Such an altered experience causes a formerly gregarious champion of rights to become suspicious and wary of others, so that he is left

convinced that his fellows, his avowed enemies, were lying in wait for him and would not rest until he was destroyed and worn down (70). Goffman's self-mortifying subject and Agamben's bare life subject seem to be embodied by the newly emerged Shawqi. One can thus say that the self that comes into existence as bare life is inherently mortified. By separating himself from and turning against his own world, Shawqi's metamorphosis has an important class dimension, for it entails turning against the lower-class patients with whom he was once associated and whom he was supposed to serve (61). Through his imaginative literature, Idris offers a testimony that brings Agamben's notion of 'bare life' into conversation with Goffman's work on 'self-mortification,' illuminating both in literary and insightful ways.

> Feelings of shame and humiliation tear at you and dissolve your spirit with the destructive ferocity of acid poured on it, because you are not dying and do not want to die but cling obsequiously to life (75). The pain is agonizing because it attacks you from the inside. Every blow affects the whole of you, your sensibilities, your human dignity (74). Silence in the face of pain is more unbearable than the pain itself, especially if it is you who must impose silence upon yourself (75).
>
> Although he appeared human in the superficial aspects of his behaviour, it no longer seemed possible to classify him with the rest of humanity, sane or insane, sick or deviant. Having departed from the rest in order to live in accord with an extraordinary impulse: not to procreate, grow, or even merely survive but to run away (70).

Shawqi's 'self-mortification' had the effect of impairing his ability to stay in touch with his surroundings. Running away had become the sole purpose of his existence, but Shawqi had to isolate himself while continuing to live among people, creating a state of 'absence in presence,' similar to that of Zaynab in *Karnak Café* (70-71).

> He could wander free and untrammelled like a mystic or a holy man. It had to take place while he continued to live among men (70) [..] He created the illusion that he was a human being just like the rest of them, desiring to differentiate himself from them only by appearing stronger and more self-assured (71).

According to Idris, running away was reciprocally constitutive of his inability to exist while turning against others in his solitary isolation. This seems consistent with Arendt's (1951: 474-476) conception of loneliness, in which a person feels abandoned by all worldliness and human

society even when surrounded by others. ‘In isolation,’ Arendt (1951:475) writes, ‘man remains in contact with the world as the human artifice.’ Isolation may be the beginning of terror for Arendt, it is certainly its most fertile soil, it is always its result. Once isolation has taken root, terror alienates the helpless individual from the common world, from his fellow human beings. Loneliness, however, is an even more extreme state of ‘uprootedness’ and ‘superfluousness’ that completely destroys the individual’s private life and ability to think (ibid: 475). Abandoned by ‘all human society,’ even abandoned by himself, the lonely person is left feeling that he has no place in the world, even when surrounded by others. The distinctive feature of totalitarianism, as Arendt (1951: 475-476) understood it, was that it destroyed both public and private life, leaving the lonely individual politically and existentially homeless. Loneliness can also be translated as a state of abandonment, which is what she meant when she said that loneliness leaves the individual with no one-not a single person, not even himself/herself-to recognize and guarantee his/her ‘unexchangeable’ identity, or to verify his/her perceptions and experiences of the world. Although Idris cogently adheres, in his novella to Arendt’s premise about the use of isolation and terror through which the conditions for loneliness are created, it seems that he ascribes to Arendt’s terms a kind of ethereal representation that suggests a haunting aspect that continues to overshadow all that remains. As if Idris suggests that there is no escape from the alienation caused by the regimes of terror, no possibility of wholeness or synthesis (Raslan, 2018: 181). While Arendt (1978b: 19) suggests that being and appearing coincide: ‘Nothing and nobody exists in this world whose very being does not presuppose a spectator,’ Idris insinuates that there is an apparition (an ethereal state of being) in the protagonist’s ‘lack of being.’

> Sometimes it seemed to me that he would have liked best to fade away into some kind of ethereal state of being in which he would not have had even the responsibility of finding for himself a space to occupy on the surface of the earth, nor to have borne the burden of being looked at by his fellow men (65).

Seeking refuge in conformity: All the time he was eaten up by terror (70)

To escape the unbearable feeling of his powerlessness and to fill the inner void, Shawqi renounces his individual integrity and identifies with the authoritarian figure by becoming the mirror image of his torturer, in what Fromm (1941: 183) calls ‘automaton conformity,’ just like Zaynab who took refuge in conformity. His misfortune is that he must continue to live among those who frighten him. He was in an intense state of insecurity, made worse by his terrible, raging fear of every living thing (72). Shawqi becomes obsessed by doubts. ‘Mankind to him was no more than a pack of dogs or wolves, devils from whom there was no escape (71).’ As a doctor in the Regional Medical Bureau, Shawqi enjoys mistreating and inflicting cruelty on those under his charge. He becomes a chronic liar, cheat, and kleptomaniac (61). He injures himself, as the narrator claims, not to defend himself but to merge with his surroundings and adapt to the lurking danger (72). For his new being, that emerged from prison and had few connections with people, he still used his human mind and everything that his life as a human had given him. True, he deviated from them and became fundamentally different, but he expended an unusual amount of energy and ingenuity to conceal these differences deep within himself so that he appeared more conformist than the others and surpassed them all in his normality (72).

Abbas al-Zanfali (the torturer), on the other hand, has also changed. He has become a remnant of a man plagued by depression, nightmares, opium abuse, and violent outbursts (85-92). The narrator notes that his descriptions of the wrecked policeman virtually match those he gave of Shawqi, right down to the lifeless eyes (92). Furthermore, al-Zanfali, who is portrayed as impotent, treats his wife with violence and at one point uses his violence against himself (88). Al-Zanfali’s cruelty is a boomerang that comes back to him, as one of his neighbours says to her friend when she sees him biting into his own flesh: ‘Human flesh, my dear, once a man tastes it he always wants more. And if he cannot get hold of anything else, he will even eat his

own' (Idris, 97). The suffering he inflicted on the prisoners rendered him powerless and unable to engage with life. As Arendt (1951: 474) reminds us, impotence is the hallmark of isolation: 'Isolation and impotence, i.e., the fundamental inability to act at all, have always been characteristic of tyrannies.' al-Zanfali's impotence as portrayed by Idris, functions as a powerful metaphor for powerlessness, loss of vitality, isolation, and self-defeat (64). The two men (Shawqi and Abbas al-Zanfali), who were previously subjects of admiration are now objects of loathing and contempt (Sheffer, 2018: 215). Both struggle with their self-alienation, and in their struggle for existence (each in their own way) they become the mirror image of the other. While al-Zanfali's submission to authority can be read as a primary adaptation to his passivity, helplessness, and struggle for self-recognition, Shawqi's moral looseness and conformity can be seen, in Goffman's (1961) terms, as secondary adjustments aimed at immunising himself against the plague of authoritarianism (or against what he perceives as the destructive forces lurking around him).

Let the torturer carry on torturing. He will end up turning on himself (96)

Much like *Karnak Café*, *The Black Policeman* leads to a confrontation in which a torture victim confronts the inquisitor who tortured him. Hardly coincidentally, Shawqi is assigned to perform a medical examination on al-Zanfali, who has since collapsed, to determine his unfitness for duty before he is dismissed from the service (66). When Shawqi enters al-Zanfali's room, he is full of vitality, so it seems to the narrator that Shawqi has returned to his former self (96). In contrast to the confrontation in prison, this time the two exchange roles in a theatrical performance. Shawqi rages against al-Zanfali, showing the scars on his back and recounting the horrors he experienced at the hands of the policeman as he curls up in his bed and cruelly punishes himself (93). The brief confrontation between Shawqi and his tormentor raises hope in the narrator's heart that he can restore his old comrade. 'Surely now I would leave the room in the company of the person whom I had despaired of ever bringing back to life (92).' Shortly

thereafter, the narrator implies that Shawqi will never return to his old nature and that what he saw was nothing more than a brief regaining of consciousness before death. ‘The change in him seemed to the narrator to be irreversible (96).’ ‘Having once lost his human security as a human being, could never retrieve it and become one of us again (96).’ Nonetheless, Idris leaves a space of hope for Shawqi’s self-reclamation. Following the confrontation with his tormentor, Shawqi begins a writing project about torture and how it is a double-edged sword in the hands of the torturer-those who hurt others do long-term harm/damage to themselves (96). Once unwilling to confront the past, he now scrutinises it (DiMeo, 2012: 5)

> Do you know that when you hurt somebody else you hurt yourself without realizing it? Let the torturer carry on torturing. He will end up turning on himself, Shawqi says (96).

Throughout the novella there is tension as the author hints at the agency of the main characters and their struggle for existence, but at the same time suggests that it is compromised by the repressive regime of power. This in turn leads to a classic discussion of the problem of agency and power. While Idris expressed scepticism about the manner in which Shawqi (the tortured) and al-Zanfali (the torturer) lost their agency, he was equally concerned about the apparent self-transformation that both underwent (power has called into question the existence of both the torturer and the tortured as living subjects). In some parts, the author seemed to declare the ‘subject’ dead, the thing that holds a pessimistic view of the subject as passively controlled by the regime of power and its institutional arrangements, lacking the autonomy to determine its own destiny. In other parts, the subject is reborn/resurrected and seeks to assert its lost autonomy and cling to its civic self. In Shawqi’s case, the combination of secondary adjustments (withdrawal, moral loosening, and running away) speaks to an agentic instrumental act performed to build his new, non-viable self (to reconcile with his lack of existence) and to merge with his environment,what Goffman (1961: 151-152) calls a ‘shameless game of civic apathy.’ Being unable to survive the role of ‘representative

perpetrator' (Villa, 1999), al-Zanfali, on the other hand, imposes a moratorium on himself. This moratorium evidences a high degree of self-alienation that leads to a break with his old self and, more importantly, with the institutional arrangements and power structure with which he once identified. Ultimately, both the torturer and the tortured adhere to Arendt's paradoxical assertion in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951:300) that 'it seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a man.'

In sum, both *Karnak Café* and *The Black Policeman* suggest that violence and terror play a constitutive role in the production and maintenance of power and, consequently, in subject formation. This is a perspective that is in some ways more consistent with Foucault's constituent power than with Arendt's communicative power. While Arendt (1970) distinguishes between power and violence, power is created and maintained through communicative practices, and violence can only destroy these practices, not create them. Foucault's (1977; 2000 [1981]) conception, on the other hand, allows for violence to play a constitutive role in the exercise of power (violence as an instrument of power and as its effect, although for him the exercise of power is not violence in itself). I argue that what Mahfouz and Idris present is a form of power centred on the use of coercion and violence that ensures the establishment of a durable, resilient authoritarian power regime, but also of a subject whose inner self is so terrorised that it is often split between attempts at resistance and escape into conformity and self-isolation. Plagued by alienation and disillusionment, Nasser's political subjects, as explored in *Karnak Café* and *The Black Policeman*, became estranged from their surroundings and themselves. Under the gaze of Nasser and the naked coercion of his power regime, they had no choice but to remain behind bars or wither away in a tomb of subjugation, in some cases to seek ways of survival and resistance (El Sadda, 2012: 120). Isolation and loneliness, as depicted in both novels, became the psychological hallmark of Nasser's regime.

Both novels show a fixed pattern of a present-absent subject, a solitary subject who has lost the only thing that maintains his/her integrity: the ability to belong to a group and to believe in him/herself, independent of the power regime and its interests (Salih, 2018: 26, 28).

Chapter 3

Infitah and Neo-Liberal Authoritarianism Under Sadat: The Naked Subject (1970s-1980s)

3.1 *The Committee* (1981) by Sonallah Ibrahim

> I felt completely naked before the committee, not only in the physical sense but figuratively, too. I was entirely at their mercy [says the unnamed narrator of *The Committee*, 1981: 24].

This chapter begins with the accession of Anwar Sadat (1970-1981) to the presidency as sitting vice president following the sudden death of Nasser in September 1970. Sadat was a member of the Free Officers, although he was not initially as prominent in the group as Nasser and others, but over time he took on a public role as a fiery and articulate propagandist for the 1952 movement (Alterman, 1998). His appointment as vice president in 1969 was due, according to several commentators, to the fact that he was not seen as a political threat to Nasser (Gorman, 2021:15).

Sadat's assumption of power took place against the backdrop of Israel's ongoing occupation of Sinai. The successful crossing of the Suez Canal by Egyptian ground forces in 1973 (Yom Kippur War or October War) and their rapid advance to the strategically important Sinai passes made Sadat a national hero and gave his regime the legitimacy it had previously lacked (Salih, 2018). Sadat used his new position to negotiate a cease-fire with Israel, consolidate his power, and, in just a few years, break off relations with the Soviet Union and tie Egypt firmly to the United States. This process eventually led to a rapid and unregulated neo-liberalization of the economy (what became known as *al-infitah al-iqtisadi* or open-door policy and to the 1978 Camp David Accords with Israel, which resulted in the 1979 Egyptian Israeli peace treaty (ibid).

The *infitah* programme (codified in Law 43/1974) began in 1974, about four years after Sadat came to power, a programme that promoted the unregulated integration of the Egyptian economy into the world market. With the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

and the United States, Egypt transitioned from an economically moderate socialist country into a neo-liberal one. Sadat increased foreign direct investment between 1974 and 1981, encouraging it through all sorts of tax and legal exemptions (Waterbury, 1985). The *infitah* led to the enrichment of the bourgeoisie and foreign companies that invested in Egypt at the expense of the majority of the Egyptian population. It triggered a 'liberalisation of consumption' without alleviating the burden on Egyptian families. The cost of living increased, crime rates skyrocketed, as did unemployment and other forms of social grievances (Brownlee, 649-650). The regime's response to the challenges of the social question was to forge further alliances with the economic elite, promote political demobilisation, and use coercion against the population to suppress any opposition (Beinin, 2009).

Nasser's post-independence authoritarian bargain (trading liberal political rights for social welfare), however, morphed under Sadat into a form of deceptive/semi/neo-authoritarianism (breaking up Nasser's single-party system and putting on a liberal (open) façade characterised by a multiparty system while ensuring that power cannot fall out of the hands of the ruling establishment (Ibrahim, 2021: 3; Ottaway, 2020; Waterbury, 1991). A single-party system, Ghandi and Przeworski (2006: 15) argue, may not be sufficient to co-opt a sufficient portion of the opposition. However, a multiparty system can be an effective instrument of dictatorial rule if it can be tightly controlled by the dictatorship. Although Sadat was said to have welcomed the model of Western liberalisation, as Wren (1978) suggests, he could not tolerate the inconveniences (unbridled political opposition) that it entailed.

As Arwa Salih (2018: 30), an Egyptian communist and feminist and long-time student leader in the radical student movement of the 1970s, asserts, the Sadat regime represented a continuation of the Nasser regime rather than a decisive break with it. Like Nasser, Sadat was a patriarch, a patrimonial leader: 'I take pride in being the father of the Egyptian family,' Sadat says in one of his speeches (cited in Wren, 1978 and Salih, 2018: 41). The idea that both Nasser

and Sadat were patrimonial leaders, who enjoyed absolute sovereign power is seminal for the country's subsequent regime leaders and is reminiscent of Max Weber's patrimonial figure (1947: 341-358): a patrimonial ruler is a patriarch who rules his domain through an administrative structure which has emerged as an extension of the ruler's household kinship group such that administrators are tied to the ruler by bonds of paternal authority and filial dependence. Both were concerned, to varying degrees, with maintaining a balance between redirecting the flow of patronage and eliminating their critics and potential challengers (Springborg, 1979: 49).

It is against this background that *The Committee* or *al-Lajna* by Sonallah Ibrahim (1981, published in English in 2002) should be read. The novel traces the lives of Egypt's middle class and emerging shady elite in the early 1970s. It was a time of abrupt transition between two historic and pivotal moments in Egypt's post-independence history. The rapid transition from an anti-colonialist, nationalist order characterized by the moderate socialist economy of the Nasser era (1953-1970) to an increasingly Westernized order characterized by open market policies triggered a sense of heightened ambivalence and precarity. As Salih (2018: 19) puts it, we found ourselves in a completely new situation that made us superfluous. A popular joke from the early 1970s best captures the sense of drift and uncertainty: As President Sadat sits in the back seat of his limousine, the story goes, his driver asks whether he should turn right or left (Radwan, 2016: 265):[22]

> "What would Nasser have done?" asks Sadat.
> "He would have turned left," replies the driver.
> "Then signal left and turn right," replies Sadat.

[22] The political joke, as a 'safety valve' became particularly significant in Egypt after 1952. Political jokes emerged as a means of criticising political leaders and their policies at a time when other (open/traditional) channels of political expression were closed (See Egon Larsen 1980: 3 and S. Shehata, 1992: 75 on *The Politics of Laughter in Egypt*).

Whereas *Karnak Café* and *The Black Policeman* focused on the politics of terror and the gaze as instruments of power and subject formation, *The Committee* is more concerned with the manipulation of knowledge and the humiliation of experiencing surveillance and censorship that followed Sadat's open-door (*al-infitah*) policy (Aulas, 1982; Irwin, 2001). *The Committee* is steeped in the power dynamics of late 1970s Egypt and can be read as an allegory depicting the degrading effects of Sadat's neo-liberal authoritarianism, but also the possibilities of exposure and resistance through knowledge acquisition. The question the novel raises as I read it, is: Can complete submission to power and authority be followed by a revival of the subject's agency? Can agency arise from submission? And what role might the quest for knowledge play in this?

As with Mahfouz and Idris, Sonallah Ibrahim's subjectivity as the author of *The Committee* cannot be separated from the text. His life experience as an intellectual, dissident, and writer is meant to add nuance and context to the reading and analysis of the novel. Ibrahim, a novelist, social critic, and short story writer known for his criticism of authoritarian power structures and his leftist and nationalist views, which are clearly expressed in his works, has been called the Egyptian Kafka. In 1959, Ibrahim was arrested as part of the political purges ordered by President Nasser (Attar, 2009). He spent five years in prison, during which he was subjected to mistreatment and torture, and during which he decided, above all, to become a writer. It was the experience of subjugation that made him the resistant writer he would become. In 2013, Ibrahim publicly declined to accept a 100,000 Egyptian pound literary prize from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. He said, 'We have no theatre, no cinema, no research, no education. We only have festivals and conferences and a trunk full of lies. I publicly decline the prize because it is awarded by a government that in my opinion, lacks the credibility of bestowing it (El Rashidi, 2013).' Samia Mehrez (2008, 76), a Cairene academic who is one of Ibrahim's best

readers, makes a case for Ibrahim as an 'autonomous anomaly' within the Egyptian cultural sphere, which is predominantly dominated by the state.

In one of his articles in which he talks about his literary experiences, Ibrahim (1980:103) writes: "*The Committee* is not a piece of reality shaped by the fingers of the artist to become a new reality, rather it is from the beginning a completely parallel reality. It is firmly rooted in both autobiography and Egyptian politics." The use of allegories and absurd elements in the novel can be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to avoid with this novel the fate of Ibrahim's earlier novel *That Smell*, which was banned in Egypt for twenty years.

I begin my analysis in this section by arguing that the term *committee* is a coded term that means more than a bureaucratic body to most Egyptians. The term has a compelling character. It is as much a spectacle of power as it is a representation of a bloated bureaucracy. Every Egyptian must have had the experience of standing before a committee at some point in his/her life. There is one committee that can change your fate and another committee that becomes your fate, as in the case of Sonallah Ibrahim's committee, which we discuss in more detail below.

A good starting point for understanding why the word committee is so associated with power dynamics and bloated bureaucracy in the Egyptian context is found in the novel *Land of Hypocrisy* (Ard al-Nefaq) (1987) by Yusuf al- Siba'i, which was later adapted into a famous Egyptian film. In it, the story is told of Oweiga (a government employee) who hands his boss a file full of paperwork that consumes nearly 400 hours of work, all because of a lock that was not installed when the company offices were renovated 18 years earlier. To search for the lost lock, Oweiga forms a committee that orders the creation of a subcommittee and eventually another internal committee to investigate the matter. The 400-hour file detailing the work of the various committees likely serves to cover up the state funds that Oweiga misappropriated

by unsuccessfully searching for the lost lock, which cost only 44 piasters (see also Shawky, 2014).[23]

The Committee sets clever traps for everyone it interviews (7)

While Oweiga's committee is meant to ridicule the Egyptian bureaucracy, Sonallah Ibrahim's committee is about the humiliation one experiences when standing before a committee that, in this case, represents the Sadat regime and the power of its economic elite and neo-liberal policies. In both cases, the committee is a symbol of the power exerted on the one who stands before it. The novel tells the story of an unnamed seemingly powerless narrator who appears before an ominous and powerful committee composed of members with military and civilian backgrounds. Most of the committee members wear large dark glasses to hide their eyes (7).

As the subject of visibility, the narrator has the committee and its members constantly before his eyes, but he is never able to discern who is looking at him or how exactly he is being looked at any given moment behind the glasses. The embodied spirit of Foucault/Bentham's panopticism suggests that the surveillance and gaze of the Sadat regime was nothing more than a continuation of the same practices of the Nasser regime, albeit by different means. Although it is never made clear whether the narrator was merely summoned or whether he set out voluntarily, it is repeatedly emphasized that his freedom of choice is an essential part of what later turns out to be a process of subjugation and humiliation (9). It is as if one has the freedom to go along, but once inside, one is trapped. In a sense, Ibrahim's emphasis on the narrator's free choice to appear before the committee attempts to illuminate the authoritarian possibilities of the neo-liberal dream of the Sadat regime-and perhaps the neo-liberal dream in general. This highlights the inherent contradictions of neo-liberal practices that, on the one hand, promise and demand people's freedom and rights, but, on the other hand, tacitly deprive them of their

[23] Please note that 1 Egyptian pound is worth 100 piasters.

fundamental rights and possibly erode all these rights for a new right: the right to buy goods and services in the privatized services market (Lorenz, 2012:602).

It is also not clear what outcome the unnamed narrator hoped to achieve by appearing before the committee, but he had an overwhelming desire to gain its approval. It serves to give meaning to his existence by exposing himself and his life to the scrutiny of the committee members, thereby subjecting himself to the hostile and humiliating inspection of the committee (El Sadda, 2012: 125). He has spent an entire year preparing for the appointment, and most importantly, learning the working language of the committee (which is clearly not Arabic), without knowing much about what to expect. The reference to the language of the committee is a possible allusion to its universality: it represents not only a national body but also a multinational and local economic elite, a conglomerate of global and local powers under the guise of Sadat's neo-liberal regime. The uncertainty surrounding the committee, its mandate, and the narrator's appearance before it illustrates the forms of precarity associated with the Egyptian *infitah* and the effects it has on individual subjects. The narrator is indeed a subject of surveillance and humiliation, but the plot shows a kind of agency for his subjection that I call *tactful or detached submission*, that is, submission to an authority without being fully inscribed or invested in its power relationship. In other words, one thinks independently of the power regime but acts in accordance with it.

> I tried to form a clear idea of the committee's work by searching out others who had appeared before it. Although I was sure there were many, I could only get in touch with a few. Most denied ever having gone before the committee, or even denied all knowledge of its existence. The only thing I came up with was that there was no set method of the committee's work (6). When I tried to gather information about the committee members, I found a shroud of secrecy veiling their names and jobs. Everyone whom I asked regarded me with anxious and pitying looks (7).

I felt completely naked before the committee: I was entirely at their mercy (24).

While his attempts to learn about the committee are met with an 'iron curtain of secrecy,' his life is known to the committee members in minute detail (Mehrez, 1994: 47). 'We know almost

everything about you from the papers before us (13).' The meeting begins by inquiring about the narrator's talents and intellectual abilities. Given the sophisticated surveillance techniques they use to find out everything about him and the secret reports that already exist about him, the narrator finds it futile to talk about himself and his talents (10). The committee's questions are ambiguous, its orders are humiliating, arbitrary, and often seem pointless (14). Not long after the meeting, the narrator is asked to dance. In response to the committee's command and without hesitation, the narrator pulls off his tie, wraps it around his waist, and begins what is obviously an oriental dance (commonly known in English as a belly dance or *Raqs Sharqi/Baladi* in Arabic). He goes on to impress the committee with how professional he could perform. In the Arab world, male belly dancing is often seen as erotic and undeniably feminine, which in turn is seen as demeaning and especially shameful if asked of a man. The feminine and erotic archetype of belly dance was discussed by Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), in which he pointed out that Western artists and writers project a gendered erotic subjectivity onto solo dancers (in the Egyptian context, oriental or belly dance (*baladi*) and their expressive gestures). In fact, the Orientalist representation of belly dancing became so deeply embedded in local culture that the Egyptian elite disavowed the roots of its expressive culture as much as it disavowed performance by male public dancers. This disavowal was reinforced by widespread Islamic views that viewed solo dance as erotic and sinful (Roushdy, 2010; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2003).

> Without hesitation I acted, hoping speed and finesse would testify on my behalf. I made a point of putting the knot on the side, as professional belly dancers do. I began to undulate, lifting my ankles a little off the ground. Glancing down at them over my shoulder, I raised my arms above my head and twined my fingers, framing my face with my arms. I danced energetically for a little while (13).

Shortly thereafter, the narrator is forced to theatrically show his fealty to the members of the committee by undressing: 'Then he ordered me to take off my pants, so I did [...] Meanwhile, their eyes settled on my naked parts (15-16).' The invasive assault on the narrator's body

continues as his masculinity (in a purely biological sense) comes under scrutiny. ‘We have reports here saying you could not perform with a certain woman (15).’ To exonerate him, he is asked to bend over for a rectal examination (16). The committee member conducting this examination triumphantly turns to the committee chair and says, ‘Did not I tell you?’—an allusion to the presumption about the narrator’s sexual orientation (ibid).

It is not only the gaze of the committee members that is cast upon the naked parts of the narrator, but rather a socio-economic and political gaze. More specifically, it is the gaze of Sadat’s power regime which skilfully combines some of the central tenets of neo-liberalism with authoritarian measures aimed at co-opting, coercing, and/or creating consensus among oppositional groups (Alkodimi and Omar, 2010). In the words of Hoda El Sadda (2012: 126), it is the gaze of a globalized world in which ‘former colonizers have joined forces with local dictators and corrupt ruling elites to secure their control over the world’s population, especially those in the so-called global South’ (globalisation has ushered in neo-colonialism). Echoing Agamben’s (2000) concept of the naked/bare life, the narrator becomes a naked subject vis-à-vis the unverifiable, clothed sovereign who stares at him from behind the dark glasses of the powerful. Ibrahim’s allegorical use of nakedness to depict an all-encompassing process of humiliation by Sadat’s neo-liberal regime of power suggests a connection to Agamben’s conception of the bare life as *Homo Sacer* stripped of all rights. In *What Is an Apparatus? and Other Essays* (2009), Agamben suggests that a poetic or metaphorical formulation could be used to say that naked life is a *Homo Sacer*—the message Ibrahim seemed to convey in *The Committee*. The very fact that the narrator was not given a name is an emphasis on the deprivation of his identity. The assertion of nakedness and the thorough examination of the narrator’s body in neo-liberal Egypt (naked buttocks, felt a finger inside my body) (16) seems, on the one hand, to demote the body to the status of a biological vessel and, on the other hand, to emphasise that the body is no longer private but intricately subject to the gaze and intrusion

of power (Agamben, 1998; see also Jackson and Scott, 2002). The same meaning is conveyed by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2012: 27), in which they argue that what matters most to a capitalist society is the biological, the somatic, and the corporeal. More specifically, the narrator's body becomes a relational, spatial, and heterotopic site, to use the Foucauldian term that embodies/allegorizes the intrusion of global forces and powers into the local (bodies as heterotopic spaces to be invaded and conquered). This allows for speculation about the heterotopic nature of bodies as sites of power and control. In other words, viewing bodies as heterotopic spaces explains the space in which the self and the other become entangled (Johan Loos, et al., 2021:.21). Complementing Foucault's analysis in *Of Other Spaces* where he opined that the bodies seen in the mirror constitute a spatial heterotopia, the novel suggests that the bodies themselves are 'heterotopic' spaces upon which power operates. Indeed, the use of bodies (as non-productive instrument of use), defined primarily by their exposure to power, is central to Agamben's theorisation of bare life and sovereignty: 'The secret substratum of power, is therefore the body of subjects (Agamben, 2000: 5; see also Agamben 2016).'

This speculation about the centrality of bodies and bareness in power relations speaks to the core of the debate between Foucault and Agamben about sovereign power and biopower. But it also possibly points to the intersection between the two models of power. As Agamben's (1998: 83,6) main theses state, 'the production of bare life becomes the original activity of sovereignty,' or alternately, 'the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.' Following the same train of thought, Ibrahim's novel presents nakedness and sexual humiliation (an enormous taboo in the Arab/Muslim world) as a condition under which an assemblage of neo-liberal authoritarianism confronts bodies in their fundamental and fragile form. Under the conditions of the Egyptian *infitah*, bareness becomes a 'form of life' characterised by the possession of bodies defencelessly exposed to exploitation and humiliation

by an emerging economic elite (a patrimonial state patronage network) on the one hand and the coercion of the ruling regime on the other (see also Ferrarese, 2018:127; Springborg, 1979: 49). In contrast to Agamben (2000: 171), whose writings suggest that the form of life is a counter-figure to the notion of bare life as the form of exception (a form of life is a style of life in which bare life is undistinguished and undistinguishable, Ibrahim in *al-Lajna* suggests that nakedness itself is the form of life under the Egyptian *infitah* (rendering bodies bare is both a form of life and a technique of domination). This suggests a capitalist dimension to Agamben's concept of the *Form of Life* and the *Use of Bodies*.

Although Ibrahim's novel was written long before the US invasion of Iraq, it invites us to think of the similarity between the US army's methods of intimidation and humiliation at Abu Ghraib, where prisoners were forcibly stripped and sexually humiliated, and those of *The Committee* (Serio, 2015: 94). The centrality of the body and the strong emphasis on the production of naked/bare life by the biopolitical (neo-sovereign) is arguably what connects the two.

People as containers that are disposed of after their contents have been consumed (21)

While remaining naked, the narrator answers the question of the most momentous event for which the twentieth century will be remembered (16). He decides that the ultimate symbol of the century is Coca-Cola—or Cacoola, as it is locally called (banned by Nasser's regime and reintroduced to the Egyptian market under *infitah*)—and gives a long presentation in which he associates this product with wars, modernity, but above all with definitions of masculinity and critiques of neo-liberalism, which empties subjects and turns them into objects of consumption ('transforming workers into machines') (18). Coca-Cola is used by the narrator as a blatant symbol of the hypocrisy and exploitation by the globalised neo-liberal order into which Sadat's Egypt has been incorporated (See El Sadda, 2012: 125; Alkodimi and Omar, 2010: 59). In a

way, the novel alludes to the subjects of a neo-liberal regime becoming consumable, like a can of Coca-Cola that is simply thrown away when its contents have been used up.

> We will not find, your honours, among all that I have mentioned, anything that embodies the civilization of this century or its accomplishments, let alone its future, like this little bottle (18-19). It may have been Coca-Cola that first shattered the traditional image of the ad, previously a mere description of a product. Thus, it laid the cornerstone of that towering structure, that leading art of the age, namely, advertising. Certainly, it broke the long-standing illusion of a relationship between thirst and heat through the slogan: Thirst knows no season (20).
>
> The image of the American man opening a can of Coca-Cola with his teeth became a symbol of manhood and bravery. However, the can's importance is…overweighed by something more significant. It inaugurated the age of the empty: a container to be discarded after its contents have been consumed (21).

He is further put to the test, for the committee does not seem satisfied with his answer and asks him to tell them about the Great Pyramid. He tells a long story about the architectural complex of the pyramid and concludes that it is more than likely that the Egyptians enlisted the help of the Israelis, as this requires a high level of knowledge and creativity (27). By taking the standpoint of an Israeli narrative that clearly contrasts with the Egyptian and historical narrative, the narrator is obviously trying to flatter the committee members by telling them a story that he thinks they would like to hear, and in this way win their approval (EL Sadda, 2012: 126). After the interview, the narrator waits for a reply and, after a few months, receives a telegram saying, 'We await a study of the greatest contemporary Arab luminary (31).' He was very confused about the nature of the assignment. After pondering the meaning of the word *luminary*, which in Arabic has the double meaning of *brilliant* and *stealing*, and after considering a variety of possible figures from the various fields of politics, art, and science, the narrator determined that it was a particular famous person known by the title al-Duktoor or Doctor who embodies both qualities (38). (Doctor in Egypt is not just an academic title, but an honorary title borne by thousands in Egypt, referring to a person of high rank or education).

> After I examined the telegram, looking for the traps for which the committee was notorious. I found plenty of them. First, the study did not have a set time

> or length. Did they want a quick sketch…or an academic study hundreds of pages long? Likewise luminary was not defined [..] I consulted a dictionary and found that in the committee's language, luminary has one meaning: having the characteristics of reflecting light. But in Arabic, it has multiple meanings. It is used to mean lighting and lighting; to mean theft, as in light fingered [..] But the most luminous can be the one most given to lying. Apparently the current popular expression "the original shine" is dervied from this latter meaning. This phrase first became famous as the brand name of a new shoe polish and then over time evolved into an epithet for anyone addicted to deception, exaggeration, and pretense (33).

Al-Duktoor, as described, rose from a poor family to become one of the richest men in Egypt and built up an extensive network of relationships with people in top positions in the administration and security apparatus (53). He meddled in all sorts of political and business affairs and never missed an opportunity to profit from the open-door policy, so that his influence became considerable throughout the Arab world (39-40). His life story is typical of the accumulation of wealth by close-fisted groups who profited from *infitah* through deceit and opportunism (England, 2003: 116). Al-Duktoor, as portrayed by Ibrahim, is emblematic of Frantz Fanon's National Bourgeoisie (the nouveau riche of *infitah*); a miserly group that ensures that Western business only passes through their hands without passing on the benefits to the rest of the population (the natives in Fanon's words) (Noah, 2017: 63). Fanon reminds us in *The Wretched of The Earth* (1963: 152) that the role of the national bourgeoisie is not to change the nation, but to serve prosaically as a conveyor belt for capitalism, a kind of second-generation bourgeoisie after the first generation of Western imperialists has transformed much of the world into a vast market, and which emerged in almost all post-independence states. Similarly, Malak Zaalouk (1989: 11) argues in his work *Power, Class and Foreign Capital in Egypt-The Rise of the New Bourgeoisie* that the national bourgeoisie is 'an influential parasitical group that dominates political and economic institutions and serves as the interlink between local and international capital.'According to Zaalouk, Egypt's neo-colonialist era is characterised by the emergence of the national bourgeoisie, which established itself as the ruling class of Egypt today. The narrator uses the term 'indigenous nationalism (22)' to mock

the hypocrisy of the national bourgeoisie or local capitalists such as the so-called al-Duktoor, whose main interest is to promote the influx of foreign products into the local market while appealing to local consumers with national rebranding and announcements (see also Alkodimi and Omar, 2010: 61). In 'The Political Emancipation of the Bourgeoisie' *in The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951:viii), Arendt similarly emphasised that the bourgeoisie of today is deeply involved in the affairs of power or politics, it has adopted and pursued a political project of 'expansion for expansion's sake,' just as it had always adopted the mantra of 'profit for profit's sake' in its private ventures. This manifested itself in what Arendt calls imperialism (not just conquest).

As the plot suggests, gathering information about al-Duktoor was not easy, for records are sparse'or were carefully hidden.' The narrator's searches of all the leading Arabic newspapers over a period of thirty years proved fruitless (44-45). Even when he finally finds a file on al-Duktoor in the archives of one of the major dailies, he comes across blank, dated sheets and nothing but glue marks on which the missing clippings from newspapers and magazines had been pasted (46), a scene reminiscent of various scenes in Orwell's 1984.

> I had misgivings about this matter of missing sections. I decided to continue the research to confirm my suspicions. When I returned the next day, I was surprised by a new sign prohibiting non-employees from using the library. The same thing happened lock, stock, and barrel at the other newspapers, from the secret razor to a decree preventing me from using their libraries. I resorted to the National Library and gave the authorities a list of the issues I wanted to see from the daily papers and weekly magazines. After waiting a few hours, I was informed the issues I had requested were currently at the bindery (47).

Would a drowning man let go of a life preserver? (83)

Finally, the narrator manages to find alternative sources and obtain information about the life of this mysterious man. He learns many unsolved mysteries, connections and relationships — up to the role of al-Duktoor in the reintroduction of the capitalist symbol, Coca Cola, in Egypt and the connection between the return of Coca Cola to the Egyptian markets and the scarcity of tap water, its almost total disappearance during the day and its dark, blackish colour (like

almost elsewhere in the world). As the narrator nears the completion of his research, members of the committee surprise him with a visit to his home to inquire about his accomplices and dissuade him from continuing his research (64).

The research process that the narrator had to go through in order to obtain information about his enigmatic figure reveals the close relationship between power and knowledge. In fact, it is the entire plot that calls into question the relationship between knowledge and power. The committee feels palpably threatened by the narrator's findings about the symbolic figure of the neo-liberal Sadat regime and its national bourgeoisie. It does everything in its power to thwart his efforts, from removing all articles that might be relevant to him from newspaper archives, to restricting his access to the library, to attempting to intimidate him by taking away his privacy (Serio, 2015: 93; Radwan, 2016: 267). The restrictions imposed by the committee on the narrator's quest for information and knowledge reflect the censorious climate of the Sadat regime, but more importantly, the disturbed relationship between knowledge and power in the country. Successive regimes of power in the country have always had an array of laws that suppressed access to information and freedom of expression and maintained data control in the name of protecting national security (see AlAshry, 2022).

The narrator, whose appearance before the committee was initially aimed at restoring meaning to life and who initially felt powerless in the face of the committee, was ultimately unwilling to abandon what he had learned and return to the painful void in which he had been living. It was only through the information he gathered about Sadat's neo-liberal subject that he realised that the conditions of his bareness could be challenged, if not reversed, suggesting a close connection between freedom and turth seeking: 'All my gleanings made it easy for me to perceive many things I had not understood before (83).' He is no longer interested in submitting to or complying with the committee's demands. He has certainly begun to trust in a future shift of power. As Foucault (1980) suggests, 'we cannot exercise power except through the

production of truth.' Truth telling or speaking truth to power (a phrase credited to civil rights movement Bayard Rustin in 1942 and has become an important theme running through the works of many scholars such as Foucault, Edward Said, Albert O. Hirschman Butler and others) proves to be an empowering element and a life-sustaining condition for the narrator (Said, 1993). 'Would a drowning man let go of a life preserver (83)?' The truth that the narrator seeks may correspond to that which Herbert Agar describes in *A Time for Greatness* (1942) as 'the truth that makes men free is for the most part, the truth which men prefer not to hear.' The narrator's counter-narrative—which reads as a critique of the hypocrisies that characterise the official dominant narrative—challenges the power of the committee and offers him a glimmer of hope and the possibility of relative independence from the committee (Serio, 2015: 95; England, 2003:116).

> Actually, a change had come over me in the last months. Formerly I had been bored with everything. My presentation to the committee and the pursuit of any opportunity that would promote my talents was only an attempt to renew my interest in life. However, the research on the Doctor soon engrossed me so much so that I began to dread death and pray that God might avert traffic accidents and heart attacks until I finished it (57).

The committee's visit to the narrator's home was a last-ditch effort to get the narrator to change his mind about the subject of his study. 'We suggested you substitute another personality. The committee will not oppose any alternative whatsoever (79).' It seems that through the information gathered by the narrator, the members of the committee (who represent the ruling elite) and al-Duktoor (who represents the national bourgeoisie and the embodiment of neo-liberalism) are actually at risk of being denounced through the information that the narrator was able to gather and use as a means of resistance (Noah, 2017: 64). After a long presentation by the narrator and a defense of why he considers al-Duktoor the most luminous contemporary Arab figure, the committee finally leaves, designating one of its members (whom he calls al-Qasir, meaning 'the short one' and translated as 'Stubby' in the English translation) to stay behind until the narrator has made a decision on his subject (76). Stubby's presence is nothing

more to the narrator than an extension of the committee's humiliation and surveillance. 'You must get it into your head that I will stay here until this thing is wrapped up, even if it takes more than a year (78).'

I am simply stating the truth (118)

In Orwellian fashion, Stubby follows the narrator around his apartment, invading his privacy and going so far as to sleep in the same bed with him and accompany him to the bathroom. When the narrator protests that his privacy is being taken from him even in the bathroom, he is told, 'if you must wave other people's dirty laundry in public, can you expect to wash your own in private? (92).' Stubby further scoffs the narrator by pointing out the rectal examination the narrator was subjected to at his first meeting with the committee: 'Have you forgotten I saw your bare backside under conditions less dignified than answering a call of nature (92).' The novel establishes an inverse connection between the truth telling and upholding the right to privacy and personal security (right to life). The more the narrator insists on continuing his investigation and speaking the truth (which he regards as strictly objective, involving nothing but proven facts and logical explanations (69)), the less privacy and protection he enjoys and the more bare his life becomes. By acknowledging that speaking the truth is both a necessary condition for the narrator's freedom and a considerable risk for him, the narrator becomes a '*parrhesiast*.' This implies a fundamental shift in the narrator's relationship to himself and suggests a new understanding of self-care in relation to knowledge production and truth-telling (see also Posselt, 2021). According to Foucault (2001:19, 27), *parrhesia* is a form and an activity of truth telling in which a speaker expresses [his/her] personal relationship to truth and risks his/her life because he/she recognises truth telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as him/herself). It is a form of criticism and should always come from the powerless, as Tamboukou (2012: 853) suggests.

> I thought back over where my life had been heading before the committee intervieweed me and how I suffered humilation at its hand. However, I did not

> forget the assigned research had given some meaning to my life after a long spell of hopelessness (105).

The novel depicts the narrator's existential transition from a naked subject resisting powerlessness through assimilation and conformism to an active agent or a subject of a discourse on truth and a bearer of a *parrhesiastic* (emancipatory) function. In other words, the transition from bare (naked) life to dignified life is achieved, as the novel suggests, through the telling of truth as an activity. Bringing Foucault into dialogue with Arendt, one could argue that Foucault's *parrhesiastic* figure bears similarities to Arendt's (1978a) figure of the rebellious *pariah* (the courageous truth-teller). In her short essay, *The Jew as Pariah*, Arendt (1978a) paints a portrait of four *pariah* figures: (a) the schlemihl or lord of dreams, the people's poet as expressed in the poetry of Heinrich Heine, (b) the conscious *pariah* as illuminated by historical figures such as Bernard Lazare, (c) the always suspect and this is where Charlie Chaplin's cinematic hero comes in, and (d) the Kafkaesque hero. Like *parrhesia*, *pariah* symbolizes the courageous different attitudes and roles in dealing with the oppressive and arbitrary effects of political power that affect human subjects and their relationships (see also Tamboukou, 2012). While truth telling is the central tenet of Foucault's *parrhesiastic* figure, courage is the underlying principle of Arendt's figure of the *pariah*, which in turn is a necessary precondition for truth-telling. I argue that the resistant subjectivity of the narrator only emerges through the combined lens of Foucault's *parrhesia* and Arendt's conscious *pariah*. The practise of *parrhesia-pariah*, that is, the act of truth-telling described as audacious and risky, is what gives the narrator a meaningful *Form of Life* that corresponds to Agamben's understanding of the term. The novel suggests that the practise of truth-telling represents a clear distinction between the narrator's previous form of bare life and his (new) evolving form. The distinction, however, cannot be read as an exclusive alternative, but as a connection, an evolutionary process that does not precipitate one form of subjectivity (a form of life) once and for all. This,

in turn, is in clear contrast to Agamben's proposed separation between biological and political life and its forms (see Saidel, 2014).

After being monitored and harassed by Stubby for several days, it has become clear to the narrator that he is not willing to give up his research or change its subject or focus (104). Having no doubt that he is to be sacrificed, when he happens to notice Stubby hiding a revolver in his underwear, he decides to launch a preemptive attack aganist him. By deciding to kill Stubby, the narrator feels liberated and powerful: 'For the first time in a long time, I felt strength and purpose permeate my being (107).'

In an atmosphere of mourning, the narrator stands before the committee for the last time. As we learn, the room is filled with flowers from the most powerful figures of the region and the world, who offer their condolences for the loss of one of their members (108). Unlike the first time, the committee was made up of a combination of civilians and officers, but this time it seems to the narrator to be made up exclusively of officers, a clear indication of the militarised nature of the post-independence political regime in Egypt (111). The narrator did not regret the killing of Stubby, nor did he deny it. He rejects accusations of conspiracy or irrational contortion. 'In as much as the result was preordained, there was no harm in protecting my dignity and meeting the inevitable with pride and disdain (116).' He explains that the killing of Stubby was in self-defence, and that his real reproach is the desire for knowledge he developed through his research on al-Duktoor. Unlike the first time, he is no longer afraid of the committee and does not try to impress them, even when he is threatened with torture to make him reveal the names of his accomplices and all the details of the conspiracy. Courageously, he explains why the threats, although harmful to him, would ultimately prove counterproductive.

> I know the methods you refer to. Certainly they would force me to admit anything. But what I would admit in such a situation would not necessarily be the truth. You would always remain in doubt (132) [..] I am not selling

> anything, although today anything can be bought and sold, as the study I undertook on the Doctor proved to me. I am simply stating the truth (118).
>
> When I appeared before you the first time, my only goal was to obtain your approval, since I understood it was the only way to develop and demonstrate my talents, especially as the most gifted people had already appeared before you. The developments that came afterward were basically due to a desire for knowledge (117) [..] I am the victim of my own ambition and on the other of a passion for knowledge (123).

Whether he knows it or not, as Arendt suggests in her essay on *Truth and Politics* (1967: 13), the narrator, here the truth teller, has actively begun to act. Through his actions and responses, the narrator confronts the committee and challenges its established power. Ibrahim's narrator as such bears some similarities to Camus's *Rebel* (1951:22), who, once he finds his voice, as Camus suggests—'even if he says nothing but "no"—begins to desire and judge.'

> What is a rebel? A man who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation. He is also a man who says yes, from the moment he makes his first gesture of rebellion. A slave who has taken orders all his life suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command. What does he mean by saying "no"? (Camus, 1951: 21)

Faced with the accusations of conspiracy, deception, and murder, the committee decides to inflict the harshest punishment on the narrator (134). The narrator leaves the meeting confused about the nature of the punishment and asks the guard on his way out:

> "Could you tell me the committee's harshest punishment?" The narrator asks. He shook his head and said firmly: "The committee is not a court." Rectifying my statement I said: "I know. What I am looking for is the harshest punishment from their point of view?"
> He said: "That depends on a lot of things." I said: "Naturally".
> He said: "Every situation is unique" I said: "Of course."
> He said: "In your case? which I have followed with great interest? There is no punishment more severe or rigorous than eating".[24]
> I asked in astonishment: "Eating? Who does the eating and what does he eat?"
> He looked at me for a while, then getting up, said deliberately: "You eat yourself" (consume in the English translation) (135-136).

[24] In popular Egyptian culture, people are said to 'eat each other,' meaning that they fight each other and are ready to destroy each other to protect their interests. It is also said that 'he eats himself,' meaning that he destroys himself out of anger and frustration. Egyptian Poet Fouad Haddad (2015) writes: 'ālnas btakl bād msh wakl' (People are eating each other..I will not eat).

After the guard disappears, the narrator wishes he had another chance to tell the committee that he made unforgivable mistakes from the beginning. He should not have stood before the committee, but against it. Every noble effort on this earth should be directed toward eliminating it (156).

> When I visualised the details of the last interview, I regretted my complaisance and how, before the whole committee, I had lost the glibness and courage which were part of me when dealing with individuals, like Stubby, the giant on the bus, and the physician. [..] I wished I was standing before the committee members again, I imagined myself facing them confidently (155).

As Arendt suggests in her essay on *Truth and Politics* (1967), truth-tellers are outsiders, pariahs, and are subject to exile and/or death. The novel ends on an Arendtian note: the protagonist raises his wounded arm to his mouth as proceeds to eat himself. 'I lifted my wounded arm to my mouth and began to eat myself (158).' In bringing the novel to this abrupt end, Ibrahim's narrator seems to bear some resemblance to Kafka's *pariah* in *The Castle* (1926), who dies trying to insist on having rights. Similarly, the narrator's self-cannibalistic act is an attempt to resist the forces of neo-liberal authoritarianism. At the moment of death, he is more alive than ever (Stone, 2002: 158). His end can be read as an act of defeat and submission, but also as the culmination of the agency he ensues between his first and his last meeting with the committee (155). In his final soliloquy, the narrator explains that his failure to overthrow the committee's power regime is a natural consequence of his imprudent attempt to challenge the committee at an inopportune time and place (156-157). His fate is predetermined from his first encounter; everything is reduced to consumption under this regime, including people, but he likes to believe that his current defeat is temporary, and he remains hopeful for what will eventually happen, even though he will no longer be around to witness it.

> From my investigations of history and cases similar to mine, I perceived that via this very process—an ongoing process of change and transformation—your group will gradually lose what authority it has, while the power of those like me to confront and resist it will grow (156).

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the transition from a state of nakedness to an active state of revelation and rebirth is a kind of confirmation that the forces of subjugation and resistance live together, that they can exchange places and give power to the other, and that knowledge plays a central role in this transition. In other words, the process of submission is, at its deepest level, synonymous with liberation, even when it is not meant to be and does not seem to be, as in the death of Ibrahim's narrator.

3.2 *The Heron*, 1983 by Ibrahim Aslan

> Why do not you write, and say it all?
> Because you are no longer you?
> Because the river is no longer the same river? Answering yes, he felt despondent. Because you are not you.
> And what you are looking at is not your river anymore. It is discarded dishwater.
> You will be healed the day you pour out your heart and wet your lips with it...
> But you are content enough with the salt of tears in your mouth. And the taste of alcohol and thirst [says Yusif al-Naggar, the narrator of *The Heron*, 1983: 136].

The Heron (*Malik-al-Hazin*) by Ibrahim Aṣlan (1983, published in English in 2005) builds on the same spirit as Ibrahim's novel *The Committee*, discussed earlier in this chapter. *The Heron* depicts the growing power and rise of the new economic elite and the new bourgeoisie figures whose influence on economic and political life changes the dynamics of social mobility and the practices of daily life of ordinary Egyptians. The original Arabic title of the novel is *Malik al-Hazin or Malik the Sad,* an allusion to the heron in one of the stories of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (a collection of famous oriental stories originally written in India and translated into Arabic around the 8th century). The sadness is found in the characters of the novel and manifests itself in a series of contradictions. Most obvious is the peculiar humour in the language and actions of the characters on the one hand, and the subdued silence on the other, both of which can be seen as reactions and survival adaptations to subvert the effects of Sadat's capitalism (Ziada, 2016).

The novel is set during a long winter night that preceded the *Intifadet Al-Khobz* or Bread Riots —the infamous mass uprising of 18 and 19 January 1977—which was directed against Sadat's decision to lift the government subsidies for basic foodstuffs, a prerequisite for receiving funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.[25] For some, the bread riots were the culmination of various efforts instigated by the working class and the

[25] On June 18, 1977, President Sadat gave a speech to Public Transportation Authority workers where he preached the inevitability of sabotage: "This is not a popular uprising. This is a thieves' uprising, *Intifadet Al-Harameya*" he declared. "They are among you. Discard these elements." For more on the Bread Riots see John Waterbury,1983: 229-231; Youssef, 2017).

Egyptian left between 1968 and 1976; for others, they were a swift reaction to the neo-liberal economic policies of the Sadat regime (Khaled, 2022). The riots were effectively quelled, but public anger nevertheless forced Sadat to restore food subsidies (McDermott, 2014: 54). However, the political prospects of the unrest were nipped in the bud. Reportedly, about 800 people were injured, 160 killed and about 5,000 detained. The police were reinforced, and neo-liberal policies were less and less challenged in the years that followed (see Kandil, 2012; Soliman, 2021).

While Mahfouz draws his inspiration from his walks around the city and the materials he collects in cafés, Idris and Sonallah Ibrahim use their own life experience and observation of their surroundings to comment on events in their literary work. Ibrahim Aṣlan (1935-2012), considered one of the most remarkable writers of the 1960s generation, also writes from an insider's perspective. Although he is not from the Imbaba district, he has spent most of his life in this popular neighbourhood, which has become the focus of most of his works. In the prologue to his book *Something of this Sort* (2007), Aslan wrote: I am now peeled off Imbaba as a dry, yet living bark is removed from its mellow stem, and patched somewhere else (translated by Nesma Gewily, 2018). Shortly before then-President Hosni Mubarak stepped down in 2011, Ibrahim Aslan declined an invitation to meet with him. Aslan claimed he was sick, when in fact he spent all night with his friends at a cafe in downtown Cairo, mocking the idea of meeting a dictator (Mahmoud, 2012). *The Heron*, which happened to be Aslan's first novel, was included in the best 100 best novels list in Arabic literature according to the Arab Writers Union (2010). The novel was adapted into one of the famous and popular Egyptian movies Kit Kat.

The Heron presents an array of stories, personal reflections and intricate events that take place in the working-class neighbourhood of Imbaba and its notorious Kit-Kat Square (a bustling

slum on the outskirts of Cairo).[26] The early demography of Imbaba consisted mainly of rural migrants who settled in waves on the outskirts of the capital Cairo. Later population growth and immigration, while more urban in origin, came from the underprivileged communities of the city to consolidate Imbaba's disenfranchised and overcrowded neighbourhoods (Ziada, 2016: 50).

The ghosts of Fanon's (1963) work on the dialectic between centre and periphery, Bayat's (2012) work on the city inside out, and Henri Lefebvre's (2000) work on the production of space and everyday life are palpable in Aslan's novel. The latter even goes so far as to claim that space becomes a contested field in the shadow of an authoritarian neo-liberal regime. It is synonymous with everyday life, an external extension of one's existence and a particular form of domination that transforms everyday life into a spatial organisation. In the words of Lefebvre (2000: 58-59): 'Just as everyday life has been colonised by capitalism, so too has its location and social space.' By shifting the focus to the periphery, *The Heron* challenges the notion of a passive, provincial haven of power imported from the centre, suggesting that the periphery is a heterotopian counter-space that serves as a site of confrontation and critical distance, fostering the development of a new self-consciousness independent of the centre (see Ramadan, 2012: 115).

In his novel, Aslan clearly links the concept of the urban periphery and its relationship to the centre to the formation of a mute subject. In some ways, this takes a different path than the classic dialectic between centre and periphery, which is often viewed through a revolutionary or violent lens, with the periphery rebelling against the centre and its politics of marginalisation, as in Fanon's work (1963) on the 'use of violence' and the 'formation of the

---

[26] The Kit Kat is the main square in the neighbourhood of Imbaba located in Giza west of the Nile, across the river from the wealthier posh neighbourhood of Zamalek and part of Greater Cairo. As of 2005, Imbaba was listed as the 13th largest slum in the world, with a population of more than one million inhabitants (Alex, et al. 2020). That neighbourhood, Kit Kat, is still known after one of the more infamous cabarets from the colonial period, the Kit kat Club, which was the favourite haunt of King Farouq, until 1952 (ibid).

revolutionary subject.' Unlike Fanon, who assumes that the structural relations between periphery and centre forge a common consciousness and lead to violent revolt, most of the characters in Aslan's novel remain on the fringes of the violent bread riots, creating a consciousness of apparent distance, silence, and forbearance. In a sense, *The Heron* represents the nuanced dynamics of the periphery and its contradictory stances at different levels of engagement, the everyday dynamics that I argue Fanon's works fail to capture.

For Aslan, the silence embodied by the sad heron represents not only a psychological response or survival mechanism for the disenfranchised population of Imbaba (which becomes emblematic of other marginalised, informal urban milieus in Cairo), but also a generative, resilient sensibility, a form of subtle/benign resistance in the everyday struggle against a neo-liberal authoritarian regime. It is the silence of people disempowered by their class, even in the speaking contexts of their daily lives. Aslan's depiction of the state of being in-between and retreating into silence is made very clear in the figure of Amm Omran (Amm is a title derived from the Arabic word for paternal uncle, often used to refer to older men, either in a sarcastic or friendly manner), who stands on the roof of his house, outside his room, looking out at the city skyline:

> His wooden room was in the rear of the small rooftop with its cramped, covered toilet. Amm Omran walked forward and stopped behind the large wooden chair. He looked out over the buildings' rooftops, Kit Kat Square, the large yellow Khalid Ibn al-Walid Mosque, and the three thoroughfares that led into the neighbourhood... the flooded asphalt, the nearby river covered by a layer of light mist, the trees on the opposite bank, the bright lights in the windows, and the closed balconies of the massive Zamalek apartment buildings stretching off into the pitch-darkness of night. Then he opened the door and turned on the lights. He shut the door tight behind him (127).

One might read the novel as an exploration of the question of silence and its agentic use as resistance. As Foucault (1978: 27) argues in *The History of Sexuality*, 'there is not one silence, but many silences.' Aslan's silence is clearly not a silence of complicity, oppression, or submission, but a self-imposed silence that I call a *quotidian strategy for deferred direct action*,

in which silence is chosen as a strategic decision to postpone confrontation with power until the time is right. The novel indeed problematizes the opposition of speech and silence. While the inhabitants of Imbaba use silence as a site of struggle and resistance, they are anything but silent in the abstract sense of the word. The silence in *The Heron*, then, is not to be understood as an absolute stance opposed to voice or speech, but rather as an embodiment in the actions of daily life. It is a confused, inhibited language that sullenly expresses itself in muteness, to use the words of writer, poet, and psychotherapist Paul Goodman (1972). In one of his soliloquies, Yusif al-Naggar, the main character of *The Heron*, recalls the student protests of 1972.[27]

> You wrote about the singing growing louder and louder like a roar pouring through the wide streets that opened onto the square…You wrote about that, but you did not mention that no matter how much you tried to join in, you could not raise your voice and sing, and you wondered what was stopping you since no one could hear you or distinguish your voice from the others anyway, and you chanted a line or two from that anthem you love, but something like embarrassment held you back (76).

By recounting the nightly stories of the residents of a working-class Cairene neighbourhood who, apart from Yusif al-Naggar, seem to have no life outside the neighbourhood, the novel offers a more nuanced view of a moment of inactive versus active resistance to Sadat's socioeconomic and political order, characterised by the blurring line between silence and apathy, engagement, and detachment. By drawing on a fishing analogy to symbolise the struggle against autocracy, Aslan points to the possible conflation of silence and apathy. Echoing the heron in the book's title, Aslan's main character Yusif al-Naggar learns that fishing (resistance) depends on precise timing, on when to pull the line (134).

> Among all possible signals, the true and the false, there is only one signal on the float: the moment the fish forgets itself, the moment when the fish understands everything, the moment the bite and the cork and your eye and your hand all become one. How many times have you been fooled and tensed

[27] In 1972, university students organised protests against Sadat's regime as part of a broader student movement, demanding the return of the occupied Egyptian territories and a war against Israel (Beinin and Vairel, 2013: 38).

> your whole self, and the moment almost arrived, but the fish had finished the bait and swum away? But how many times did you seize the moment, the moment of pouncing, knowing that if you had jumped one second sooner, or delayed longer, the fish would have gotten away? This signal should become an inspiration for us all (135).

The shadows of the heron appear in the characters of the novel, all of whom exchange stories and wait for the next day and what it may bring, including Yusif al-Naggar, an autobiographical character of Ibrahim Aslan, a moving observer and flâneur of a bustling city who engages in self-reflection throughout the novel (Ziada, 2016). Like herons fishing on the banks of the Nile, the characters wait and watch, seemingly detached and alienated, what is happening in their local community. Some seek refuge from the pressures of life on the Nile, for the Nile has a deep-rooted symbolism for urban migrants with lingering rural ties (ibid: 43), others watch helplessly the changes taking place in their neighbourhoods under the guise of neo-liberal policies, knowing how to escape the traps, like herons, but unable to act and save themselves, while others are busy amassing personal wealth to be part of what is perceived as progress (Ramadan, 2012: 99). The coffee house of Imbaba, as depicted in the novel, functions as a microcosm of the larger Egyptian society and is one of the few public places in the neighbourhood where people can easily gather and meet to discuss their daily and public affairs (Aslan, 1983: 112). With the sale and demise of the coffee house to the harbingers of Sadat's neo-liberal order (the central plot of the novel), people's relationship to the place and to each other is called into question. Like Mahfouz's coffee house, Aslan's coffee house is a refuge, a place where the memories of the neighbourhood are kept, but also a place that people identify with and that identifies with people.

In his non-fiction book *Shi Mn Haza Alqabil* (Something of this Sort, 2007), Aslan distinguishes between the coffee house in the city centre and others in popular neighbourhoods. The former attracts strollers and daters, but 'the latter is not for strangers, but for neighbourhood residents who sit in groups inside the coffee house, at the entrance and on the

sidewalk.' 'Every evening, the coffee house gets its character from the cliques (groups) of people who occupy the same seats. And if you have ever noticed that this character is distorted, you know that this is due to the absence of one group or another (104).'

Together, they had seen good days and bad ones, with the bad seeming to go on forever (12)

The novel opens with the impending day of the handover of Awadallah's coffee house to its new owner, Ma'allim Sobhi (the title Ma'allim is a working-class salutation for uneducated, non-professional merchants and others), who bears a strong resemblance to al-Duktoor in *The Committee*. The once-poor poultry merchant, who accidentally wins the lottery and becomes a wealthy, exploitative tycoon, manages to take possession of the coffee house through bribery and violence (99-100). 'He was creeping and spreading like a cancer through the neighbourhood. He would buy old houses to demolish them' as Amir (the son of the late community leader to whom the coffee house was rented) notes (45). Like many others who accumulated quick wealth through Sadat's policies in the early 1970s, Ma'allim Sobhi wants to demolish the entire building that houses the ground-floor coffee house to build a high-rise that would change the spatial configuration of the neighbourhood and the network of power and social relations that go with it (14).

The struggle for the loss of the coffee house, the main *ahwa baladi* (traditional coffee house) in the neighbourhood, is one of the central events of the novel. The novel presents the struggle for space as material for articulating the struggle against the regime of power and the effects of what is popularly known as *infitah sadah madah* or the (chaos of *infitah*), which reinforces socioeconomic inequalities and pushes people further to the periphery (see also Ramadan, 2012: 121). The Imbaba neighbourhood, with its streets, alleys, a river, Kit Kat's main square, and its main coffee house, is thus at the centre of Aslan's narrative, in which space and people's everyday lives interpenetrate in many ways. On the one hand, the space takes on its character

from the people who inhabit it and are enmeshed in a relationship of dispossession and repossession that entails a kind of precarity; on the other hand, the people project their feelings, often sadness and frustration, onto their space.

> They say you sit near the waters of streams and creeks and that if these waters were to dry up, grief would overwhelm you, and you would fall silent, mournful (2).

To decipher Aslan's power-space entanglement, an appropriation of Arendt's (1963) concept of the space of appearance and Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopic spaces suggests itself. Despite the seemingly different accounts, Arendt's conception of the space of appearance, as reflected in Amm Omran's use of a loudspeaker to narrate the living history of the neighbourhood and its coffee house (115-118), bears striking similarities to Foucault's pursuit of heterotopic spaces. While the first refers to the horizontal relationships that allow people to peer freely into one another, disclose their individuality and escape the roles and rules that normalise, observe, regulate, and/or repress them in other social spaces of control and surveillance.[28] The second, as Foucault suggests, is much more than a place or site; they are the significant other, spaces that constitute another, different space outside of normal society that can mirror and invert, influence and contest the societies it reflects. In a sense, it can serve as a counter-space for the disempowered to recognise and challenge their conditions of marginalisation. Both concepts are treated imaginatively in *The Heron*, not only as places in themselves, but more importantly, as events of life experience, as liminal realities that open up the possibility of confrontation and resistance at various levels of expression and engagement. On the one hand, the coffee house stands as a physical embodiment of an episode of anti-neo-liberal waves of change in the country. On the other hand, it is a temporal refuge, a kind of 'transitory community' navigating between utopia and reality, and above all a battleground

---

[28] An interesting application and critique of Arendtian ideas about the space of appearance can be found in Cristina Beltrán, *Going Public* (2009).

between the guardians of the new and the old order (Bayat, 2017: 118), and therefore qualifies for Arendt's and Foucault's appropriation of a *heterotopic space of appearance*.[29]

They could not belong to anybody else (12)

The actors who occupy it, however, are not the politically engaged in the Arendtian sense, but the disenfranchised and the non-collective actors who share everyday life practices and deeds. They appropriate power through their mere physical presence in a particular public space that emphasises their togetherness (in this case, the coffee house). Their presence in this public space allows them, on the one hand, to be recognised as present beings and, on the other, to forge identities and build solidarity. In contrast to Arendt's concept of power (1970: 44), defined as coordinated group action or 'action in concert,' Aslan's account of power manifests itself in the absence of an organized movement or collective political actors who resist power through their dispersed/mundane everyday life practices, in what Bayat (2010: 33) calls *quiet encroachment of the ordinary* defined as the 'silent, protracted but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied, powerful, or the public in order to survive and improve their lives.' Aslan, however, adds an empathetic perception to Bayat's model, a quality of humour and navigation that evokes a sense of liveliness and dynamism to the stillness of everyday life. This quality is most evident in the uncanny ability of Shaykh Hosni to navigate spatial constraints and social relationships despite his blindness (Shaykh is a term for an elderly man or patriarch, often associated with religious clergy in Egypt) (160). He rides a bicycle and motorcycle, pilots a felucca (boat) on the Nile, escapes arrest by the police even though sighted accomplices cannot and guides other blind men through Imbaba by pretending they are in the company of a sighted man to earn a coin or two and smoke hashish (46-47 and 65,9,10). Humour, as portrayed by Aslan and highly valued by many in Egypt, can also be seen in

[29] Other Egyptian writers have followed the same path, portraying cafes as places of freedom. Egyptian writer Ibrahim Abdel Meguid (2013) emphasised in one of his interviews that freedom can only be found in a café.

connection with silence — it can be understood as filling a space where something meaningful or more serious/relevant should have been said (MacLure et al., 2010:497; Winegar, 2021). ‘Shaykh Hosni never actually said that he could see. However, he did imply it (22).’ The omniscient and all-seeing quality of Shaykh Hosni's blindness is so telling (see also Ziada, 2016: 56). Just as the novel’s depiction of blindness can be seen as an allegory for the collapse of moral sight (vision) under the Egyptian *infitah*, Shaykh Hosni’s omniscience speaks to navigating the unknown. An affirmation of existence and presence and an admission that there is something to see and know, even if it is not spoken. In other words, Shaykh Hosni’s omniscience is, I argue, emblematic of what Bayat (2010: 1) calls the ‘art of presence.’

> The art of presence signifies the ability to assert collective will in spite of all odds, to circumvent the constraints, utilizing what is possible, and discover new spaces within which to make oneself heard, seen, felt, and realized. The effective power of these practices lies precisely in their ordinariness, since as irrepressible actions they encroach incrementally to capture trenches from the power base of patriarchal structure, while erecting springboards to move on. Conventional social movements with identifiable leaderships may be more readily prone to repression than such dispersed but common practices by a large number of actors whose activism is deeply intertwined with the practices of daily life.

The demolition of the coffee house signals the transition of Imbaba’s urban space from an Arendtian space of appearance (a space of communal exchange) to a space of disappearance (a space of commodification), leading to a decoupling of public space from the social activities of its inhabitants and thus to a gradual disappearance of communal ties. We see Ma’allim Sobhi’s workers (described as celebratory harbingers of the new order) dip their hands in the blood of a freshly slaughtered calf and inscribe the walls of the café to mark the new order and bless the new enterprise (139). Thinking of the metaphorical bloody handprints, one thinks of the economic violence of Sadat’s neo-liberal order and its alienating effects, as well as the destruction of community that Aslan skilfully depicts in Ramadan’s actions, who buys government-subsidized flour and sugar with a business license and then sells them on the black market (62), and the exploitative machinations of the unemployed Shawqi and Faruq, including

the pimping of Fatma and Fathiya to the wealthy Sulayman (109-111). And above all, it is about opportunism, what the powerful and the precariat have in common-they are linked to a new society in which opportunism becomes a way of life and a form of self-expression to survive.

The café was nothing but the last gasp of this huge body softly passing before you (143)

The loss of the coffee house in *The Heron*, which can be equated with Arendt's loss of public space or the space of appearance, combined with the news that an Italian foreigner was laying claim to ownership of Imbaba (another allusion to the effects of *infitah*), forced the inhabitants of Kit-Kat Square to turn in on themselves, reinforcing the sense of alienation and dispossession (Aslan, 1983: 10). However, the characters' reactions are muted despite the loss (Ziada, 2016). A few nostalgic regulars gather for the last night of the coffee house (112), but only two characters, Amir (the son of the deceased community leader to whom the coffee house was rented) and Abdallah (*al-Qahwagi* or the coffee house waiter), take the floor and actively express what the loss means to them and the people of Imbaba. And only the latter expresses his anger violently by hitting Ma'allim Atiya, the current tenant of the coffee house, with an ice pick to punish him for giving the coffee house to Ma'allim Sobhi (139).

> This is what Amir thought while standing silently under the huge camphor tree and staring at the old walls of Awadallah's café, now decorated with bloody handprints. It was lost because one Ma'allim attacked another Ma'allim and ended it all. But the attack was probably really directed against the café. No. It was directed at you. Against your world. Your exhausted, depleted world. Yes. The cafe was nothing but the last gasp of this huge body softly passing before you as if it were a cloud pulsing with colours and shadows. Its memory would always be in your heart. But what a waste (141-143).

Abdallah, who cannot imagine life after the loss of the coffee house that preserved for him the network of the community and defined its sense of belonging and togetherness, says:

> You see, this cafe you are in became a cafe at the same time I became a waiter, he told a customer... In sum, without Awadullah's café, there is no Abdullah. What would he do then? When he got up in the morning and could not come

> here, where would he go? How would he survive?... He sold me out and sold everybody out (102).

Silent-self withdrawal: You are drunk. No, you are just wounded (155)

Throughout its single day-narrative, *The Heron* depicts the unprivileged working-class community of Imbaba in a seizing moment between an internal explosion (the symbolic loss of the coffee house) and an external one (outbreak of bread riots). Having lost the centre of their community life to the harbingers of the new neo-liberal order, Imbabans continued to retreat to their narrow streets and alleys, where they pursued their ordinary, everyday practices of providing themselves with the necessities of life and making the most of the opportunities that presented themselves. When the bread riots broke out near Imbaba, violence erupted. Protesters reportedly blocked railroad tracks on the outskirts of Imbaba and even set fire to a train and a car. Others attacked the Imbaba police station, located near Heron's coffee house (Sa'ad, 2002). Nevertheless, such protests remain in the background of Aslan's novel. As depicted in the novel, only four characters are involved in the riots: Faruq, Shawqi, Gaber, and Qadir's son Abduh (148). Most of the other characters, however, are absorbed in their everyday affairs and remain uninvolved or are only marginally involved, even when they are close to the action. Usta Qadri (the title Usta stands for a skilled worker, especially in transportation), the character who is familiar with the English language because of his years of working with Englishmen in Macroni's company, bursts onto the scene, lost in an imaginary battle and reciting the words of Macbeth rather than riot calls. 'Hang out our banners on the outward walls; the cry is still, they come. Our castle's strength will laugh a siege to scorn (149).' Shaykh Hosni, on the other hand, embarks on a humorous adventure to retrieve his walking stick and wonders about the egg he stole from a neighbour's chicken coop (153); Amm Omran observes events while sitting on the rooftop terrace and throwing a woollen blanket over his shoulder (156). Other younger characters, such as Amir, Sulayman, and Khalil, the owner of the furniture shop, do not participate and prefer to stay away. Even Yusif, the writer, the young

intellectual and the character with the deepest understanding of the alienating power structures (Ziada, 2016), when he first sees the downtown demonstrations, despite his sympathy, prefers to get drunk alone in a bar rather than participate (72). He spent the first night of the riots picking up the empty tear gas canisters, counting the buckshot, and collecting the US-made tear gas canisters, noting their colours, materials, and serial numbers before pocketing the collections (151-152). It is possible that Yusif is gathering evidence to preserve memory and retell the story of the event in minute detail (an allusion to his suspended or deferred action). Although Yusuf's silence throughout the novel is metaphorically expressed in his inability to write, he also shows clear signs of selective mutism.

> Yusif would come and slump in his chair sitting silently the entire time. He would look at any old thing without uttering a word. He might spend his whole evening like that, notes Amir (57).

Yusif is the true embodiment of the heron in the title of the novel, who fails to seize the opportunities of revolution, writing and even romance (Ramadan, 2012: 126). But is it not the case that Aslan implicitly questions whether the capacity for self-reflection is in itself an assertion of subjectivity and agency? After the violence subsides, Yusif attains a moment of clarity in which he decides to break out of silence and become aware of his ability to speak and say what he wants to say through writing. For both Yusif and the narrator of Sonallah Ibrahim's *The Committee*, silence is followed by a moment of fearless speaking (*parrhesia*), which marks the transition from exercising resistance through silence to exercising power through speaking (speaking from silence). In one of his soliloquies, Yusif states:

> [..] Write a book about the river, the children, the angry crowds taking revenge on the storefront windows, and the trees along the Nile Road and the advertisements for products and films. Say that you saw them with your own eyes setting fires. And that everything, even the green river weeds, responded to them. Write that you walked on the carpets of glass covering the city and its sidewalks. Say that eyeglasses were crushed over the eyes of men, that even the vanity mirrors in girls' purses were broken, that if a young man were to have taken the mirrors, the river would have parted for him. Write about the cafe and Omran and everybody: Write about the world of insomnia, the smoke, the trees at night, and the little birds. The afarit (demons) of Imbaba (154-155).

> Imbaba, that sad, adulterous woman. You are drunk. No, you are just wounded (155).

Aslan's silent self-withdrawal bears similarities to Agamben's (1998:185) theory of silent resistance. In it, Agamben argues that the Auschwitz prisoners (Muselmann) exercised a 'silent form of resistance' by isolating themselves from the outside world so that the terror of sovereign power could no longer affect the victims. Agamben's 'silent form of resistance' can be seen as the refusal of the powerless to acknowledge the power exercised over them by 'moving in an absolute indistinction of fact and law, of life and juridical rule, and of nature and politics.' A kind of isolation, a withdrawal, an indifference, or retreat that makes one disappear while still alive, as Baudrillard (2017) suggests in an interview with Paul Shutton. Aslan presents a very dialectical form of resistance in *The Heron*. He goes so far as to combine what Jean Baudrillard calls the 'art of disappearance' with what Bayat calls the 'art of presence,' arguing that the fulfilment of disappearance is simultaneously an appearance. Although the two terms may seem contradictory, they underscore the complex and all-encompassing nature of the processes of resistance at the level of subjective experience. What Aslan proposes in the novel is a symbolic, or in Baudrillard's terms a reciprocal exchange between appearance and disappearance (one should not equate appearance with visibility and disappearance with invisibility, but rather with presence and absence in public realm) (see G. Smith and B.Clarke, 2015: 125-126 on the symbolic exchange). Not surprisingly, both Baudrillard and Bayat use the term art to emphasise the effort put into the processes of presence and absence. In other words, the way presence is asserted through absence (here, silence and isolation) becomes a work of art.

In conclusion, Aslan's contribution to the question of subjugation, resistance, and agency can be observed on two perspectival levels: a) A silent self-closure, which lies both in isolation from the outside world and in the cultivation of various nodes and expressions of muteness in

concrete everyday interactions. b) An active engagement and confrontation (in this case, the nationwide bread riots).

Being present but feeling absent, as in *Karnak Café* and *The Black Policeman*, and being present but pretending to be absent to emphasise one's presence, as in *The Heron*, or being present in absence, as in *The Committee*, are three different forms of the interplay and dialectic between absence and presence. This theme seems to run through most of the novels examined so far. It alludes, on the one hand, to the effects of the politics of terror and repression, in which people, archives, evidence, and other things disappear and possibly reappear in a different quality or form, and, on the other hand, to the ways in which people feel and communicate their own existence (one can exist in absence and one can be absent in presence).

It is the figure of the writer that emerges as the concluding theme of this chapter, who seems to stand in opposition to the repressive forces of power. The writer, as portrayed in both *The Committee* and *The Heron*, embodies the ability to speak the truth and the power of resistance. However, the emphasis on the compelling relationship between silence, submission, and resistance, and the shifting of subject positions along these three aspects as portrayed in both novels, is a dynamic, not necessarily linear process, as ruptures can always occur.

Chapter 4

In-Operativity and Listlessness Under Mubarak: The Silent Subject (1980s-2011)

4.1 *Chronicle of a Last Summer* (2016a) by Yasmine El Rashidi

> I wonder if my position is too often ambiguous. A position of trying to weight things and assess and be objective is sometimes a clear position, and sometimes no position at all. I think a lot about what it means to be a witness, the responsibility of it. I wonder about my writing if fiction is a political statement or simply no position. Is the silence of objectivity and being an observer, witness, the same as complicity? [Says the unnamed narrator of *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, 2016a:152].

Silence features prominently in debates about resistance and complicity with authoritarian regimes. Silence as a product of coercion and oppression, silence as an act of resistance, silence of apathy, and silence of denial. Due to the ambiguity of silence, its meaning raises questions in different contexts and between different social groups, even within the same society. While *The Heron* treats silence as a subtle means of survival and resistance, Yasmine El Rashidi, in *Chronicle of a Last Summer: A Novel of Egypt* (2016a), addresses what she calls the silence of objectivity, asking the question, "Is the silence of objectivity and being an observer and witness the same as complicity (152)?" Is it banal evil to remain silent in the face of an autocracy? Or is it a tactful and living strategy, as in *The Heron*. But the silence in *The Heron* was the silence of the disenfranchised population, the silence of those disempowered by their class, whereas in *Chronicle of a Last Summer* it is the silence of the powerful, the educated, who can speak the truth or as they say, swim against the tide. Indeed, different groups, classes can speak different truths, and in different ways and by different means, so the choice of *Chronicle of a Last Summer* serves to give a sense of what silence means to different classes and how it manifests itself and what it means to speak truth to power. For the less privileged, there were not many alternatives other than to remain silent and immerse themselves in the mundane practices of life to survive the conditions of life without necessarily accepting them but, to use the metaphor of the heron, waiting for the right time to catch the fish. While in *The Heron* the informal urban space of Imbaba is at the centre of the plot and its characterization, in *Chronicle*

of a Last Summer the neighbourhood of Zamalek, a posh enclave and an island in the Nile River, juxtaposed with the working-class neighbourhood of Imbaba, is the most vivid character of the novel.

Yasmin El Rashidi is an Egyptian writer who writes regularly for the *New York Review of Books* and is the Middle East editor of *Bidoun*, a quarterly arts and culture journal. El Rashidi's novel, originally written in English and published in 2016, is in some ways an autobiography, and the fact that it was first written and published in English can also be seen as an attempt to circumvent censorship. *Chronicle of a Last Summer* was longlisted for the 2017 PEN Open Book Award. While her novel is not strictly autobiographical, El Rashidi (2016b) wanted, as she says, to capture the way Egyptians became as mute as they were and perhaps still are.

The novel's narrative spans 30 years between 1984 and 2014, falling mainly within the three decades of the rule of Husni Mubarak (1981-2011), Egypt's longest-serving dictator, who assumed the presidency after the assassination of President Sadat in 1981 and ended his 30-year iron-fisted rule in 2011 with an 18-day popular uprising (revolution).[30] It is a one-dimensional experience of which the narrator and her generation, to which I also belong, are aware. I remember that during my school days, portraits of Mubarak hung high on the walls of our classrooms, that no one could stand higher than him, in the teachers' rooms and sometimes in the hallways. I do not recall any teacher explaining to us why his photos had to be on the walls. No one seemed interested in asking about it, and no one had the courage to explain, but I can say with certainty today that his shadow accompanied us throughout our childhood and adolescence. His photo embodied much of his character, for he always wore a certain smile, deep or simple, I could not tell. We called him *la vache qui rit* or the laughing cow, after a

[30] The term 'revolution' is controversial both in the context under study (Egypt) and in international scholarly debate, as it is often understood as the beginning of an impending positive period or development, like the term 'Arab Spring.' Although I am aware of this ambivalence and debate, in my study I have chosen to use the term 'revolution' synonymously with the term 'popular uprising' to describe the events of 2011 as the people who participated in the events, myself included, would like to call it.

popular French cheese. I also cannot remember if we liked him so much at the time that we compared him to the cheese we liked, or if we did not like the cheese and it was early political cynicism. In short, it is the story of a generation that knew only one ruler, at least for the most vivid time of their lives.

Unlike his predecessors, Mubarak embodied the reserved personality of a 'bland military technocrat in civilian garb,' as some like to describe him, compared to Nasser, who was widely regarded as charismatic, and Sadat, who was described by many as 'flamboyant' (Barfi, 2018; Gorman, 2021:16). Despite his low-key profile, he ruled the country for nearly 30 years, making him the longest-serving ruler in Egypt's modern history since Muhammad Ali Pasha (1805-1848), the 19th-century Ottoman viceroy who is considered the founder of modern Egypt, and one of Africa's longest-serving dictators (Kandil, 2012). Mubarak's rule did not represent a significant break with the prevailing type of authoritarian bargain adopted by his predecessors, particularly the hybrid model of authoritarianism introduced by Sadat (Richards and Waterbury, 1990). As discussed in previous chapters, Nasser's authoritarian bargain or full authoritarianism (which was based on a trade-off between liberal political rights and social welfare) morphed under Sadat into a kind of neo-liberal (hybrid) authoritarianism (whose main features are privatisation and open market policies, while maintaining the minimum or main tenets of Nasser's social welfare, with a dynamic interplay between preventive containment and overt repression) (Waterbury, 1991; Ottaway, 2020; Ryan, 2001). This hybrid form of authoritarianism, which some refer to as 'electoral authoritarianism' or 'competitive authoritarianism,' persisted under Mubarak (Shehata, 2018; on the concept of competitive authoritarianism, see Levitsky and A. Way, 2010).

To consolidate his power, Mubarak employed a number of strategies: First, he was able to maintain elite support for his continued control of the state through an extensive patronage network from which a small business and military elite rapidly benefited while an

unprecedented proportion of the population became increasingly poor (Marfleet, 2013: p.114). Second, Egypt's continued adherence to the 1979 peace treaty with Israel brought in substantial foreign aid (from the United States), which offset some of the country's economic deficits (M. Perkins, 2010). Third, by maintaining a fiercely loyal security apparatus, especially among the civilian security forces (the police), Mubarak was able to control and suppress internal opposition. Finally, Mubarak used electoral politics as a tool of governance to (a) exude an aura of legitimacy at home and abroad and (b) control the political scene by allowing opposition figures to organise and join parties and preventing them from pursuing other-potentially more threatening-means of opposition, while routinely intimidating or barring candidates of different ideological persuasions (Ottaway, 2010; Trager, 2013: 7). Backed by control of the media, a largely compliant judiciary, manipulation of the electoral process, and a prolonged state of emergency (discussed earlier) in which, as Agamben (2003a) argues, the exception became the rule, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) continued to dominate successive parliamentary elections,[31] emphasising that a multiparty system was only a facade and that in reality a one-party system existed (Gorman, 2021: 17; Marfleet, 2013).

In short, Mubarak's tactics were clear: opening controlled spaces for political and media venting for the exhausted middle class, while massively suppressing underground and activist movements (Naeem, 2021: 122). One reason for Mubarak's long tenure is what some call 'stability' and others call 'stagnation,' which kept Egypt from war, maintained peace with Israel, and allowed the country to benefit from American aid. Stability was and is (as will be discussed in the next chapter under Sisi) an important selling point for dictatorial regimes, especially for Egyptians whose culture places great value on permanence.

---

[31] The National Democratic Party (NDP), founded by Sadat in 1978, was one of several empty political structures that notionally represented a system of political pluralism (Marfleet, 2009). Much of the party's dynamism, particularly in the last decade of Mubarak's rule, was the result of its role as a political centre for the business elite and as a vehicle for Gamal Mubarak and his supporters and their ambitions to legitimise a post-Mubarak takeover (Amrani, 2011: 32).

> Ours was not a culture to change. Permanency was valued. We lived in the same places we were born in. We married and moved around the corner. A job was held for decades, The less change, the less movement, the better. Everyone we knew preserved lives as they were, over generations. Sofas stayed covered in plastic, glass cabinets with proliferating displays were not to be touched, every gift, every token, every ticket, stuffed somewhere, or in a drawer. Most people's homes were like time capsules, offering panoramic views of every year until the present one (says, the narrator of *Chronicle of a Last Summer*: 13).

In his book *Soldiers, Spies and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt* Egyptian scholar Hazem Kandil (2012:175) likens the Mubarak era to Charles Dickens' classic *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. The best of times for the net beneficiaries of the July 1952 regime; a ruling class plundering with impunity and security men who perceived themselves, in the words of one of their own, as the masters of the country. It was the worst of times, for everybody else: The people and the army.'

Summer 1984: Mama said it was something of the past. Everything is of the past (41).

In an attempt to connect the past to the present and read Egypt's modern history in a cyclical fashion: defeat, deflation, silence, revolt and silence again, the novel recounts three summers in the life of an unnamed narrator (1984, 1998, and 2014) and even within those three summers, the narrator recalls other summers—from Nasser to Sadat to Mubarak to Mohamed Morsi to the 2013 coup that brought President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi to power. From these seemingly casual recollections, she builds an entire nuanced picture of subjugation and resistance in the country, using descriptions such as listless, silence of objectivity, lethal, *Tadmeer* or devastation, *kifaya* or it is enough, and truth.

At the beginning, the narrator is a perceptive 6-year-old reflecting on her Western upbringing, life in the affluent neighbourhood of Zamalek with a strict and emotionally distant mother, and the inexplicable absence of her father. As a 20-year-old film student, she reflects on the two men who shape her political consciousness and subjectivity: her uncle, a liberal father figure, and Dido, her communist cousin. The novel ends in 2014, after the 2011 uprising that was

followed by a wave of protests and the 2013 military coup, when her father and Dido switch places. The father returns after a long absence and Dido gets imprisoned for political offenses.

The city seemed to be on pause (178)

The novel opens with a blazing hot summer in Cairo in 1984. A perplexed 6-year-old girl, intently observing the world around her, sits in a dilapidated family house watching a documentary about the assassination of Sadat, who was shot by Islamic militants on October 6, 1981, while reviewing a military parade marking Egypt's 1973 war with Israel and the succession to Mubarak:

> They play the video of the new president, Mubarak. He was sitting next to Sadat when he was killed. They said it was a miracle he was not killed too. It was something from God, so they made him president the next week. Baba said it was the making of a pharaoh (8). And he also said the pharaohs invented dictatorship (33).

Her days pass as quietly as the breath of a small child: She listens to her mother's phone calls, looks out her bedroom window at the Nile, watches the three state-sanctioned channels of TV with the volume turned off, and dreams of other lives (3). Beneath this claustrophobic routine lurk the spectres of silence and absence. The silence that comes with the nightly blackouts, [32] and the silent rage of her melancholy mother who never utters a word about her father's absence, and the silence embodied in the absence of 'things that are there for a very long time and then disappear:' the abandoned cars, the roadside kiosks, the people, including her father (22). Her mother warns her of the danger of *listlessness* as a condition that affects Egyptians, but to avoid listlessness she must be disciplined, as her mother advises, 'without discipline I would become listless like the others (37).' 'Discipline can go either way,' Dido says.

> It is the country that makes us listless. I ask him what listless means. It means to wake up every day and not know what to do. It means to feel there is nothing to look forward to in life (37).

[32] Under Mubarak, Egypt suffered regular power outages due to an energy crisis caused in part by exporting parts of its own natural gas reserves to Israel at marked-down prices (Waked, 2010).

When one is trapped in an oppressive atmosphere for an extended period of time, the feeling of listlessness intensifies, as the narrator's cousin suggests. Listlessness can be interpreted simply as a state of lethargy, inactivity, and/or passivity, but it is probably much more than that. Ceasing to be a functioning being is a more complex concept that I argue involves a relationship between the self and activity (being and doing). It reveals a void in which the connection between the action and the reason why it is performed disappears. The state of listlessness described by El Rashidi does not necessarily imply a lack of activity or action, but a severed connection between the activity performed and the intention and thought to perform it: 'What does it mean to be devoted? (79).' Even state bureaucrats can become listless despite their activity, as Arendt reminds us, in Eichmann's case, the connection between the action and the perception (thought) of its cruelty was almost non-existent: 'Out of sheer passion he would never do harm to a fly (see Drakulić, 2004).'

To work out an analysis between listlessness and authoritarianism, it is necessary to examine a seemingly similar concept with somewhat different applications, namely the concept of in-operativity (*inoperosità*), which first appears in the work of Alexandre Kojève and is treated extensively in the writings of Maurice Blanchot (1988) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) before being taken up and developed by Agamben (1998: 61-62) in the very first volume of *the Homo Sacer* series. For Agamben, in-operativity is not about the cessation of activities, but about thinking of activities as means and ends in themselves, independent of the outcome of the activity or the achievement of results, in other words, breaking the link between the action and the product or result (what he calls *praxis* and *poiesis*). To render someone or something inoperative is not to cease to act, but to cease to think that an action should lead to a certain result. Agamben's form of inoperative life is similar to El Rashidi's form of listless life in the sense that both represent an effect of power and a human condition that results from a particular application (use) of power. Whereas Agamben (2003b:93) seeks to liberate life from the burden

of all the tasks imposed upon it, in which life without form and forms without life coincide in a form of life,[33] El Rashidi, through her depiction of the state of listlessness that surrounds all the characters in the novel, questions such a (necessarily repressive) condition of life and, unlike Agamben, believes that an inoperative/listless life is far from being a form of life.

With signs of melancholy and listlessness, relatives murmur about the newly appointed President Mubarak. All speak wistfully about the past and their lives after. Billboards bearing Mubarak's picture crowd the landscape (61). A constant reminder of his control over the country. Through the piercing gaze of his portraits, Mubarak's omnipresence, as in other dictatorships, is undoubtedly intended to make people feel that they are being watched, even if they are not, and this feeling, as Foucault argues, serves as a mechanism of self-discipline. In the case of Egypt, however, political iconography carries much more emotional weight and sometimes serves a 'quasi-spiritual function,' as writer Youssef Rakha suggests (Chamas, 2014). Mubarak has much in common with the figure of the father or patriarch, who acts as enforcer and saviour, just as he probably lets his portraits speak about him.

Between Mubarak's omnipresence and the disappearance alluded in the novel, the little girl struggles to comprehend the paradoxical interaction between presence and absence. Even her own father has disappeared-no one says a word about why or where he left or was taken. Again, the theme of presence and absence seems to run like a thread through the novels. The overnight disappearances referred to in the novel evoke the ghosts of Nasser's 'dawn visitors' (Kandil, 2012: 44). The term, familiar to many Egyptians, stands for those plainclothes police officers who come to the homes of political dissidents at dawn and arrest them without warrants. This is to take advantage of the time of dawn, when the suspects are too disoriented to fight back or resist, and when there is no one around to help or act as a witness. The 'dawn visitors' then

[33] On the concept of *in-operativity*, see also Marmont and Primera (2020).

detain the dissidents indefinitely, systematically torture them, and in many cases force them to sign confessions that would condemn them to long prison sentences. The vernacular phrase 'behind the sun,' which emerged during Nasser's era, refers to the practice of forcibly detaining people for years without informing their families and lawyers of their whereabouts or other legal details (Azer, 2018).

> The police would come sometimes and take things. They took the cart of the peanut seller on our street. They took the kiosk by the school that sold chocolates and cleopatra cigarettes by the one. They took the man who worked for Uncle Mohsen. They also took the boy who cleaned cars at the garage next door. In the cartoon *Abla Fatiha,* they told us that if we were naughty, they would take us too. Every time I see a policeman going into a building, I think maybe they will take someone away. I wondered if that was where Baba was too (22) [..] In class I write a story called *The Disappearing People*. I write about going to the prison. I write about the people they take away. It happens only at night. My teacher gives me zero out of ten and says I should not be writing such things at my age (23-24).

With her uncomprehending but curious eyes, she observes a changing political landscape. Her own family, bound by affection, is divided by their differing political views on Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak, and the monarchy. Around her, there are signs that Egypt is changing, and new subjectivities are emerging. She gets a sense of how the divide between people is widening. While she goes to an English school, her cousin Dido attends a public school. He tells her that her school will oppress her. She believes her parents are "anti-revolutionary" for sending her there (28). The teacher catches her saying a word in Arabic and makes her write a hundred times, 'I will not speak Arabic (31).' She sees starving children on the street selling lemons and people walking barefoot, but they are never shown on TV (6). She hears the word revolution, but she does not understand what it means or whether it is good or bad. Her Baba said we need a 'real revolution,' but what is a real revolution, she silently wonders (57)? On TV, she hears that the president is going to build five new bridges. She tries to imagine that her neighbourhood is still just fields and houses; her mother calls it a catastrophe (41). She learns things from Dido and her uncle that are not taught in school. She learns about the bread riots

or the hunger revolution against Sadat's policies that took place in the year she was born, she learns the words erasure, identity, nationalism, revolution, independence, lethal, iron fist and dictatorship, but she is not able to make the connections.

> At school they taught children that all the Egyptian presidents were great. Only the king was bad. Why was the king bad? Because he was a creation of the British (56).

Her own house, where most of her observations are made, is among the things that have also changed: It appears to her 'like a castle,' but its elegance (as well as its lush, tree-lined gardens) is waning (12). She can see, but not interpret, the connections between the dwindling intimate family space and the larger outside space. And whether this might be related in some way to the need for a 'real revolution,' as her Baba tells her. 'Revolution. What does it mean?' the girl asks her cousin. 'You could say it means change. Do Mama and Baba think it was good? It is complicated, says Dido (42).' The spirit of listlessness, silence, absence, and presence hovers over the novel. We see the girl puzzling over the meaning of these words; she even made a play out of it. She counted what she encountered every day on the way to school, memorised it and gave it a number; if it was still there the next day, she got points (21). She loves driving the long road along the Nile to school, but the Nile and access to its water and view have also changed. Just as the Nile separates the working-class neighbourhood of Imbaba from the wealthy neighbourhood of Zamalek, both Yusif in *The Heron* and the unnamed narrator in *Chronicle of a Last Summer* view their relationship to the city through the Nile. The Nile becomes emblematic of the rest of the country and the changes it is undergoing as an effect of privatisation, neo-liberal policies, and the authoritarian exercise of power.

> There were people rowing boats in the mornings. You could see them through the fence along the river. When Mama was little there were no fences. She would take her book and beach chair and walk down to the water. She would sit reading with her toes dipped in. The Nile was blue. Then it became green. Mama would never dip her toes in the water now (21).

Summer 1998: Fencing off and isolation-people keep rolling into silence even though everyone yearns for change (84).

> Over time, the Nile is barely visible. What was once a view of the Nile, of rowers plowing through thick waters in the morning, is now just fence, wall, fence, overgrown garbage-filled hedge. More fence, more wall. Dust coats it all like rind. Army clubs and government cafes take what space they can down to the banks, reserved only for those in upper executive ranks. The city's little green space is now fenced off, but the grass is dead anyway, the colour of straw. The overhead pedestrian walkway is long gone (74-75).

As a film student interested in filmmaking and writing in 1998, she feels fenced in, isolated, and distant rather than confused. Yet she is a keen observer, trying to understand the dialectical relationship between space and power, silence, and revolution: 'Now I wondered about the poetics of space, the cavities people once filled (73).' As in *The Heron*, public space becomes a contested field in the shadow of an authoritarian regime. It is a site of confrontation between people and successive regimes of power. In a conversation with her uncle about a national monument that was demolished as part of a construction project, he says, 'it was just one of many acts of destruction, they are erasing the identity of the city. Everything we ever knew will be gone. Anything with traces of past histories (77).' The erasure to which her uncle alludes, in my opinion, refers to a struggle over memory and forgetfulness. Following Mahmoud Darwish's prose poem *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1987), memory could be seen as a potential of (human) subjectivity, as something that evokes presence, permanence, and a connection to a particular place and community, while oblivion (forgetfulness), in this context is seen as a form of violence exercised by the regime of power to erase people's collective memory. Thus, the key element of erasure is that it removes the cues that trigger remembering, so that forgetting occurs (Timcke, 2013: 377). Since every significant (public) place can be considered a site of memory and possibly history, its erasure implies a suspension of meaning and presence, i.e., a rupture with the past (Breuer, 2019). However, when the erasure of memory becomes a systemic practice through the defacement and transformation of public space, as is the case in Egypt (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter under

Sisi's regime of power), the past, I argue, becomes so ubiquitous in the present that it is no longer erased.

Following the work of Henri Lefebvre (1995 [1974]) on the relationship between materiality and subjectivity, the narrator reflects on the constitution of people at different historical moments in relation to the material practice of transforming public space. In other words: What fences, erasures, and barricades do to our self-understanding or subjectivity has become very significant to the experience of living under absolute regimes of power. For El Rashidi, destruction, self-estrangement, and detachment are part of her intimate experience of growing up under a repressive regime and struggling with the disappearance of people and public spaces (77). The narrator's depiction of the effects of authoritarian control of public space and the people who occupy those spaces is no different from Arendt's (1998) theory of public space under conditions of totalitarianism, in which she argues that the most fundamental characteristic of human beings is the ability to act and speak in a free space. And insofar as totalitarianism eliminates not only physical life but also public space with its embodied, networked relationships (what she calls togetherness), Arendt (1976) sees totalitarianism as 'destructive' of the most human capacities. Similarly, the narrator uses the word *tadmeer* or 'destruction' to describe the effects of authoritarianism as it radically cuts people off from human connection.

> It was the legacy my generation would inherit, one of destruction and loss. *Tadmeer*. *Tadmeer*. It meant devastation. He worried it was who we had become, the narrator says, of her uncle (77).

The novel thus suggests that the salient feature and central subject-forming practice of a repressive regime is isolation, which ties in with what Montesquieu (1845: 100) proposes as the outstanding characteristic of tyranny, which is essentially based on isolation—the isolation of the tyrant from his subjects and the isolation of the subjects from each other through mutual fear and distrust, which in turn makes people susceptible to autocracy and autocratic rule, as

Arendt (1976) argues. The state of isolation created by absolute power relations is reinforced by neo-liberalism, as suggested by Marx's (1932) theory of alienation, which tears societies apart by presenting consumption, as discussed in *The Committee*, as an alternative to fill the social void (Monbiot, 2016). As part of her student research, the narrator asked people about the improvements they wanted to see in the city. The responses of the interviewees illustrate the state of fear of each other, suspicion, and distrust.

> People walked away. They looked at me sceptically. They asked who was asking. They asked who was really asking. They said they could not answer such questions. They took steps backwards, sideways. They said they could not speak about the city. They could not speak about the country. Sorry. You know how it is, I do not want to get in trouble. I do not want any problems. So why are you asking exactly? (88).

But just as authoritarian (tyrannical) regimes destroy all relationships between people, they also turn people against themselves. 'We are all angry. We just do not know how to express it that we were not taught to be in touch with ourselves. The way we live our lives is no better than death, says Dido (85).' To feel overwhelmed and burdened by life, in other words, to inscribe death on life, is to rethink the entanglement of Foucault's (1990: 138) notions of sovereign power (taking life and letting live) and biopower (fostering life or disallowing it to the point of death) and to question the nature of the right to life and death in its traditional and modern forms (see also Foucault, 2003). This means that the right to prohibit, or forbid life until death is nothing more than an extended version of the sovereign exercise of power, for if Foucault wants to tell us what happens to life after the sovereign has refrained from killing, what form of life do subjects in neo-sovereign societies live? It is no longer a matter of 'take' or 'let' but of the form of life that is permitted and that is deeply rooted in the sovereign exercise of power. It is like the role that psychiatry plays in taking life from patients and preventing them from feeling it, as Foucault (1967) suggests in *Madness and Civilization*, something like an anaesthetic effect of power. Like everyone else, Dido cannot get in touch with himself and his feelings. He uses an invented word, a mixture of Arabic and Russian, *poranheyar*, to

describe the feelings of unfulfillment, emptiness, and resignation that people feel, pointing out the limitations of language in describing people's feelings.

> Nobody has a voice, Dido says. Nor a real sense of who they are. He insists that the streets are simmering filled with people's outrage, but our emotions are misplaced, making us silent…There is not a language for what we are living. We need our own vocabulary, not just new forms in literature and art (79-80).

He thinks that art and literature express all that he feels about the politics of the time. 'It is art that sustains him (80),' that gives him the energy to keep going as he records cases all day, oral accounts of torture, mistreatment, abuse, and arrests by state officials. Even their emotions, he says, these victims and what remains with them, the trauma, have no terms or labels (80). The narrator decides to write about the feeling of being mute, of having no language, neither speech nor gestures. On the one hand, the novel shows the different representation of silence, both in speaking and in living and writing, where it is not only a lack of speech but also a lack of words, a lack of language to show and tell, and on the other hand, there is a clear indication that art has the capacity to break through silence and listlessness, seeing the possibility of struggle and change while recognising the decisive role that art can play. Despite his insatiable consumption of art (literature, cinema, and theatre), art seems to represent for Dido a detachment from the realm of everyday political practice. A parallel world in which he vents but does not act. In a dialogue between Richard Kearney and Herbert Marcuse (2007: 226), the latter sees 'authentic art' as negative in the sense that it refuses to obey the established order and its language, and that it serves to give refuge to defamed people, thus preserving in another form of reality an alternative to that affirmed by the establishment, but it cannot and should never become, to take up Marcuse's words, a direct and immediate factor in political practice. Similarly, Dido viewed writing as an exercise in passivity, a luxurious musing, rather than an instrument for change in a country like Egypt (137). He spoke of the need for an urgency of one's action, a physicality. Dido questions the narrator's artistic detachment; he urges her to engage politically, to make documentaries about dissidents, rather than to pursue the cinematic

ambitions of the fictional 'cinéma vérité' that she has (83). He wonders if her artistic distance, her devotion to the mundane (119), is merely a means to avoid active political engagement? He thinks it is important for her to 'connect with her anger,' advising her to make art through 'activism' and documentary, 'another art,' stronger, 'more potent' as he calls it (ibid). The narrator, however, insisting that writing is more of an action and thus becomes a physicality, challenges Dido's and Marcuse's view and lays the groundwork for the central question of her work: Can fiction writing be a political position or simply not a position? If she has chosen only to observe and write, does that mean she is complicit? Is the silence of objectivity tantamount to complicity? (152) And is not silence, exercised not absolutely but in gradations, a cry of its own, 'a form of speech' (in many cases 'of complaint or indictment and an element in a dialogue,' as Susan Sontag (1969: 9-11) suggests.

Her father's absence is very present in the questions she did not ask. She knows that everyone has questions that they do not ask and dare not ask. She knows that one way to ask the questions is to write fiction, she wants to write something that captures the tenor and atmosphere of what is happening around her, she thinks about the complexity of the national psyche (112), about the gap between generations, about the (1967) defeat, she wonders if her generation has inherited the very spirit of it? She feels 'deceived, cheated out of life (81),' but she does not know why, or by what, or how to change it. She wonders: 'Has this seeped into our being?' Do we need to reconcile with our parents' losses in order to restore ourselves? (111).' She knows that the regime is arbitrary when it comes to whom it persecutes, and she knows that this arbitrariness creates a state of uncertainty under which everyone becomes a target, and she knows that corruption and theft make up the country. Dido says, 'an arbitrary system is an unjust system' or 'maybe it is no system at all (114).' While arbitrariness is an essential characteristic of autocratic regimes, the violence of arbitrariness can also be seen as an expression (manifestation) of anger, as Walter Benjamin (2021) suggests. One way to read the

novel is to emphasise the connection between violence, silence, and anger. While people express their anger through silence, autocratic regimes use violence not only as a subject-forming practice (means to an end), but quite obviously as an expression of anger.

It was the late 1990s when she first observed from a distance a silent sit-in at the university (92). Later that evening, she learned that the police had dragged more than a hundred young men out of their bedrooms in the middle of the night. The parents searched and questioned to no avail. Three months later they all reappeared with torture marks on their bodies, but they would not talk about what had happened (93). No one dared to ask. She feared they would storm the campus and arbitrarily arrest more students (94). For the first time, she felt shame and cowardice (ibid). For the first time she understood what Dido meant when he said that her calm exterior was a mask and that this should be the source of her anger (114). She finds the word anger too simplistic, too reductionist; she gives it another word *languor* which she thinks fits their condition better (112). She remembers her other cousin who abruptly fled to the United States one summer. Something happened to him, but no one talks about him (87). Her uncle said that by now she must have some sense and know. He mumbled something about the terror of the state and about personal choices and freedoms, but he did not speak further (127). Dido believes that leaving, silence, and passivity are the greatest evils (111), but she does not necessarily see it that way.

Summer 2014: Our silence seems to be on pause (155) — The sounds of the city had shifted (123)

> I walked all the way down the fenced-off Nile. I could see none of the river except at the rowing club where a metal gate was flung open. Hedges had overgrown and turned ashen and been littered and then covered with corrugated metal. There was no sense, anymore, of being surrounded by waters (135). The colours around us changed, rows and rows of redbrick and concrete buildings, unfinished, not connected in any way to the infrastructure of the built city (125).

Now in her mid-thirties, Mubarak was overthrown by a popular uprising (revolution) in 2011, her uncle has died, her father has returned after a long absence, and her relationship with Dido

has become estranged due to differing political views. It is the summer of 2014 when former army chief Abdel-Fatah El Sisi comes to power, a year after he led the military's overthrow of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi amid mass protests against his rule. Where Mubarak's picture once crowded the landscape, now 'a building-size flyer of the new President Sisi hangs off the sides of one, two, I count five buildings on the street (151,152).' Three years earlier, on January 25, 2011, Egyptians broke the decades—long silence of anger and took to the streets demanding 'bread, freedom and human dignity.' The demands were a clear departure from Nasser's authoritarian legacy. Freedom and dignity can no longer be traded off for bread. A friend, a long-time newspaper editor, told me he had never seen anything like it before. 'The youth looked like they were in Gaza.' It was the same kind of despair' says the narrator (121). Her uncle taught her to listen to the sounds of the city to observe the changes in everyday living conditions and the reactions of the people. He pointed to the reverberations of car horns. How the honking had both quieted and intensified, taken on a different impatience (123).

> He had been saying all year that it was untenable. *La faim*. He told me to watch for certain things. The price of tomatoes and okra. If the man carrying the bread on his head as he cycles is whistling or not. If people are watching TV at cafés, or sitting in silence, or debating. If the radio begins to play repeated patriotic songs. Without tomatoes and okra, we cannot live, he said (121) […] We listened to the voices that echoed in from the streets and across the river. The constant chatter had given way to more abrupt bursts of expression. Something was pacified, followed by discharge. We could make out none of it, but the very tenor had shifted, we also listened for when the sounds of the city suddenly stopped (123).

The voices that had been forcibly and voluntarily silenced for years did not come out of the blue but were the result of a process that had been brewing for over a decade. It was only after the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000 that thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to protest, probably for the first time since 1977 (also in support of the Palestinians), which soon took on an anti-regime dimension. However, Mubarak remained an aloof figure or a taboo subject (el-Hamalawy, 2011). Thereafter, the country was beset by two major protest movements: The first was purely political, lasted from 2004 to 2006, and was epitomised by

the formation of the Egyptian Movement for Change called *Kifaya* (Enough), a coalition of political forces united only by a shared call for an end to President Hosni Mubarak's rule. Dido, who was part of this movement, tried to convince the narrator to join the marches or at least make a film called *Kifaya*, but she knew that she lacked, as she says, 'the activism gene;' she was more interested in abstracting experiences through writing and films than representing them (119). *Kifaya* expressed itself through several waves of large street demonstrations, chanting about being fed up with the status quo: 'No to the continuation [of Mubarak's rule] and no to the inheritance of authority by his son].' Despite the movement's inspiring and innovative appearance, it was largely elitist and therefore failed to penetrate Egyptian society at the grassroots level and create a significant social base (Abdalla, 2012). The second wave of protests began in 2005-2006, but was more social in nature, demanding economic and financial improvements in living conditions, especially for certain sectors of Egyptian society, such as workers, civil servants, teachers, bus drivers, etc. (e.g., higher social benefits and wages), which became increasingly urgent in the wake of policies of increasing economic liberalisation (ibid).

While Arendt (1973) dwells not on the tragedy of the revolution and its quantitative losses, but on its heroic moment and the newly created public sphere, the narrator is painfully aware of the toll of blood that the revolution took. Dozens of people were killed. One of the narrator's friends was raped in the process. Another had both arms broken. In the morgue were piles of young men with phone numbers scrawled on their arms. The narrator learned that these were the phone numbers from home, the numbers of their mothers (160). Nevertheless, she believes that the revolution is a brief moment of caesura, that it was an opportunity, that human emotions were given an outlet, and that they simultaneously discovered their source (150). Revolutions, too, Arendt (1973) believes, are brief moments of opportunity for a new beginning, constrained on all sides by inexorable necessities and the constant danger of being swallowed up by

overweening human aspirations to control and power. Thus, when the narrator thinks of revolution, the tribute of revolt, she also thinks of its absoluteness in the sense that it becomes so rigorous and knows no other limits than those of resistance to authority, even if this means risking one's own life, and accordingly anyone who does not seem to conform to this view is made an outsider, a traitor. *Hizb El-Kanaba* or (The Couch Party) is a term used by Egyptian revolutionaries to refer to the 'silent majority'- those people who sat on their couch during the revolution. In a sense, resistance itself becomes an authority that permits and punishes, includes, and excludes, defines, and frames. It thus creates new power relations, just as it aims to resist power. This seems in agreement with Foucault's (1976:126) conception of resistance and power (resistances exist within the strategic field of power relations and power relations themselves exist only relative to a multiplicity of points of resistance). Just as Dido became distant when the narrator expressed sympathy for those, he accused of being traitors, his activism had become intolerant 'of experiences that strayed from his ideals, as it was the tolerance he preached (142).' This corresponds to what Camus presents in *The Rebel* (1951: 119) as a critique of the contradictions of 'historical revolt,' in which revolution, despite its intention to realise justice and freedom, is perceived as an 'attempt [...] to fit the world into a theoretical frame.' In his article 'Useless to Revolt,' Foucault (1979) presents a similar critique of revolution suggesting that no one has the right to say: 'Revolt for me; the final liberation of all men depends on it' or to say, 'It is useless for you to revolt; it is always going to be the same thing.' 'People do revolt; that is a fact. And that is how subjectivity […] is brought into history, breathing life into it.' All regimes and structures of power reach their limit when people give preference to death over the certainty of having to obey, which is that moment when life barters itself, 'when the powers can no longer do anything and when, facing the gallows and the machine guns, men revolt (Foucault, 1979).'

As one can read, the novel is clearly not in favour of subsuming individual specifics under grand narratives but is concerned with the question of change and the true meaning of revolution. 'I am more forbearing in the name of change when he only stands by the absolute (152).' As if to say that silence does not necessarily mean complicity, and that through silence the narrator stands apart from the absolute. In a conversation with a young Cairene record salesman in 2014, the narrator says, 'he tells me the revolution has connected us to a past that preceded us (157),' The treatment of the revolution as a historical artefact is in some ways an emphasis on the history of oppression in the country, as if the narrator wanted to point to 2011 as a revolution against Nasser's Officer's Republic.

When her father finally returns, the narrator is eager to draw him into her enthusiasm for the protests. At first, she is frustrated by his pessimism, telling her that they have been through it all before (146) and that he knows it will not change anything (176), but then she realises that it is the lesson of a longer experience with 'this cyclical history I was just beginning to grasp in the aftermath of uprising (147).' As Foucault (1979) says, 'revolts belong to history but, in a certain way, they escape from it.' Confused by the pessimism of her father, whom she learns had to leave because he refused to offer a major contract to one of Mubarak's sons (149)—'there was a time when either you stayed and lost your life or you fled,' Baba tells her (148)—and by her cousin's activism, the narrator prefers to take the place of a witness to history, which she knows is a burden to the chosen (160). She writes down the word *truth*, which seems to repeat itself several times on every page she writes (147). As a budding writer, she ponders the urgent need for a new language that can evade censorship and meet the spirit of the times. Just as everything around her was stripped down to its essentials, Arabic eloquence and social realism were abandoned in favour of more abstract and fragmentary works that express the anxieties and concerns of the time (136).

None of us seem to be fighting anymore (175)

At the end of the novel, we have arrived in Egypt of 2014, with power outages occurring every few hours. People are still grumbling about the inconveniences of living conditions (167), and most of the people the narrator knows, including her parents, voted for Sisi, while she herself slept through the election for lack of an alternative. ‘If it were not Sisi, it would be terror (177)’ is the cry of the moment. Dido is arrested on charges of inciting anarchy and disrupting the state; the revolution had brought Dido, who no longer seems so critical and rigid (175), and the narrator closer again, as much as it had begun to divide everyone (170). She visits him in prison; his prison conditions are so degrading that he says prison breaks his soul (171). He is deprived of all rights; they make sure he cannot even see the sky (171). Before the narrator visits Dido in prison, she learns of a man who has lost his mind after the revolution and goes through the streets stabbing people, including her friend. As she searches for a place for him in the hospital, she is confronted with the suffering of others trying to find medical supplies, beds, chairs, syringes, and even painkillers-and is met with the response, ‘We are out of supplies, if you find any you will be lucky (167).’ An allusion to the downfall of Nasser’s authoritarian bargain. It is no longer a trade-off between political rights and social welfare, nor the bare minimum of Sadat or Mubarak, but a sustained cruelty and deteriorating living conditions in return for an illusion of stability, as will be discussed in more detail. She notes the rule of “nobody” and writes down:

> This has nothing to do with riots and revolution, but the very fundamentals of an overtaxed and corrupt bureaucracy and the cycles of circumstance and life. This is the type of bureaucracy so far gone that there is no left to argue with, no one to turn to with grievances. It has been this way for years (167).

The final scene shows how the narrator’s mother, once a passive figure who never quite recovered from her father’s absence, is rejuvenated by a Facebook campaign to conserve electricity (175), and in the closing pages they move out of their house. It is a kind of awakening —an awareness that things are no longer as they were (180). In sum, *Chronicle of a Last*

Summer seems to foreground the pursuit of truth through writing, which in turn connects to *The Committee* and *The Heron*. In response to silence, I argue, writing in the three novels is treated as a *parrhesiastic* act, an act of resistance, and, to use Foucault's (2007) term, a counter-conduct to power.

4.2 *The Crocodiles* (2013) by Youssef Rakha

> We carried the suitcase carelessly, flinging it down to fall as it may. Maybe we thought of the future as too sublime a thing for its shape to be dictated by suitcases and so we did not acknowledge the end of The Crocodiles when it happened, and then, four years after that, our lives were visited by the supernatural [says Youssef, the narrator of *The Crocodiles*, 2013: paragraph 12].

The Crocodiles or *al-Tamasih* by Youssef Rakha (2013, published in English in 2014) depicts the ordeal of a group of three young poets who founded a movement for secret Egyptian poetry in the 1990s. The novel can be read as a relationship between the Egyptian intellectual poet of the 1990s and existing power structures, reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's (1992:215) homology between what he calls the literary field and the field of power (i.e., the constraints and pressures operating on and within the literary field).[34] In other words, it is about the use of the arts (in this case poetry) as a form of resistance, about the struggle of the intellectual poet to define himself under a temporally extended authoritarianism and to position himself in a time of political upheaval.

Youssef Rakha is a novelist and poet who writes in both Arabic and English. His first novel, *The Book of the Sultan's Seal* won the 2015 Banipal Seif Ghobash Prize and his third, Paulo, was on the long list of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2017 and won the 2017 Sawiris Award. Along with having authored seven books in Arabic, he is the cultural editor at the Cairo-based Al-Ahram Weekly. Rakha (2015) expressed the influence of Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño on the writing of *The Crocodiles*, from whom he borrows the idea of imagining poets and making writers the heroes of what is written.

Set in Cairo under Mubarak's rule, *The Crocodiles* seeks to understand literary life from 1997 to the 2011 uprising—a pivotal period when Egyptian literature entered a phase of profound transformation (Anishchenkova, 2017: 89). The novel begins with a suicide (a life prematurely

---

[34] According to Bourdieu (1992:215), the field of power is the space of relations of force between agents and between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural). It is the site of struggles between holders of different powers.

ended) and ends with a revolt prematurely doomed. In one of his interviews (2015), Rakha said he wanted his novel to answer, above all, the question of what it means to be a poet in a context that is hostile not only to dissidents but also to art and artists. The poet is treated here as a representative of society through whose lens, as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1850) says, 'we read our own minds.' As the famous Syrian poet Adonis (1990) writes in his *An Introduction to Arabic Poetics*, the poetic in the Arab world has always been, and still is, intertwined with the political and religious (7). Like a revolution, poetry is a living event that has an unsuspected birth and is endowed with open possibilities.

By the late 1980s, the impoverishing effects of Sadat's liberalisation policies (*infitah*, or open door) had already impacted the lives of almost everyone and were exacerbated by Mubarak's kleptocratic political establishment. As a result, the generation that came of age in the 1990s had to find ways to live with the decline in social spending amid exponential population growth, the looting of the public sector by Mubarak and his cronies of elite capitalists, and the gradual collapse of socioeconomic, cultural, and political public services, as Sabry Hafez (2010: 48) notes. In parallel, the state of emergency that has been in effect since 1981 has been further prolonged and torture has become a systemic practice routinely used against common criminals, Islamist detainees, opposition activists, and bloggers, opening Egypt's notorious prison system to U.S., British, and other European nationals suspected of involvement in terrorism to 'extraordinary rendition' (see Human Rights Watch report, 2005). In the words of former CIA agent Robert Baer (Grey, 2004): 'If you want someone to disappear—never to see them again—you send them to Egypt.'[35] The disappearance of people and the alteration of public space—what Hafez (2001: 195) calls the 'shrinking social breath' discussed in *The*

[35] From the 1990s to 2005, Egypt held more CIA detainees than any other country, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2005).

Heron and *Chronicle of a Last Summer*—became a hallmark of the post-*infitah* period that continues to the present day.

> We lived in something that resembled a state only in outward appearance (a revelation that would come to those of us who think or read or observe; those of us who have lived to see 2011 and borne witness); we are treated as representatives of a class or sect or even a small family and not as citizens; it is expected of us that we will hold wealth and power dearer than anything we or others, might possess..[..] our homeland is just a place we wish to flee, and identity is a life sentence with hard labour, [says The narrator of *The Crocodiles*, para.186].

For three decades, Mubarak represented a sovereign power that did not tolerate even the appearance of independence (Holmes, 2019). As noted earlier, under Mubarak, the authoritarian bargain transformed into a kind of hybrid form in which, as Egyptian scholar Samer Soliman (2011: 26) contends, political expression was tolerated but action was not. More specifically, Soliman argues, Mubarak enjoyed 'almost absolute power.' The socio-political and economic changes have thus necessitated changes in the cultural and literary spheres as well as in other areas and spheres of public life. As Hafez (2001:186) aptly puts it, the generation of the nineties has come to know 'the impossibility of becoming what one wants.' The feeling of being, on the one hand, 'trapped in the present' and unable to imagine anything other than what currently exists (ibid: 197), and on the other hand, being out of place (to borrow the words of Edward Said (2000)), has led the writers of this generation to break with the boundaries of what has been called 'the dominant national imaginary' (Mehrez, 2001: 33). Moreover, the cultural and literary sphere, no different from the rest of the public sphere, continued to be subject to official censorship and control by the Ministry of Culture, Parliament, and the tabloid press.

Against this backdrop, a new wave of Egyptian fiction emerged in the 1990s that challenged the high orthodoxy of classical Arabic, a covert challenge to power structures and the absurdity of socio-political conditions, all of which share certain characteristics that I argue are reflected in the workings of everyday life. In other words, the rejection of established literary contours

or narrative conventions in the 1990s went hand in hand with a questioning of all forms of socioeconomic distortions and political oppression, as Mehrez (2001) notes. The main writing characteristics of this generation are the use of short, fragmented narratives with many digressions, shifting styles, perspectives, and voices, in which linear chronology, time, and conventional storylines are abandoned in favour of a focus on the self at the expense of *al-qadaya al-kubra* (the big issues) (see Mehrez, 2001; Radwan, 2016: 268, El Sadda, 2008: 145). While focusing on the self may be seen by some as apolitical, others go so far as to blur the distinction between the public and the private, arguing that 'the personal is political' (see El Sadda 2008:145-146). No private life, as George Eliot wrote in *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), was not determined by a wider public life. Moreover, C. Wright Mills (1959) argues in his *The Sociological Imagination* that the task of sociology is to connect private troubles with public issues. In other words, Mills' sociological imagination allows individuals to see the relationships between events in their personal lives and events in their society. Similarly, Edward Said (1994:12) argues in his *Representations of the Intellectual* that the private and public worlds are intimately intertwined. He writes:

> There is therefore this quite complicated mix between the private and the public worlds, my own history, values, writings, and positions as they derive from my experience, on the one hand, and on the other hand, how these enter into the social world where people debate and make decisions about war and freedom and justice.

In his novel *Being Abbas* El Abd (2006) or *an takuna 'Abbas al- 'Abd* (2003), Ahmad Alaidy depicts the bitterness and despair of the nineties generation: The 'I have got nothing left to lose generation (36).' We are the autistic generation living under the same roof with strangers who have names similar to ours' (ibid). The changes that permeated virtually all aspects of Egyptian society naturally led to an increased sense of self-alienation, which in turn inspired the development of new and unconventional methods of self-expression.

Like Alaidy, Rakha in *The Crocodiles* tells the story of a group of poets in their early twenties who are on the edge of the abyss, trying to do what they believe others have failed to do: 'Those others had come to the edge and had not jumped (4).' With much of literary life in Egypt taking place on the margins of an ongoing conflict between authoritarianism and resistance, *The Crocodiles* is a story about post-despair, disenchantment, and disengagement (231), a narrative about an ambition born and prematurely halted, about living with loss and circling around absence, an allusion to the faltering 2011 uprising (how much was lost and how much has changed since 2011). The 2011 uprising is portrayed by Rakha as a moment of mass hysteria (375), an extraordinary social event in the sense of Alain Badiou (1988) that ruptures the appearance of normality. While crocodiles are known for their strength, they are also known for the time they take underwater before resurfacing. The use of crocodiles as a metaphor is well-suited to describe the situation not only of Egypt's literary generation of the 1990s, but also of the masses who were submerged for a long time before resurfacing in 2011 to breathe, and before going down again.

> When will the jungle be still that the crocodiles might come out? So, I whispered to Paulo. A moment's hesitation then he began to cackle [..] and he tipped his head at Nayf, who was on his feet behind us, capering round one of the remaining guests, a Spanish girl: "When the chimp chills out, perhaps" (214).

There is a subtle thread that seems to connect *The Committee*, *The Heron*, *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, and *The Crocodiles*. It is the silence of the withdrawn and the use of writing as an exercise of action and resistance, in other words, finding refuge in writing, a 'physicality' as El Rashidi in *Chronicle of a Last Summer* (2016a: 137) suggests. Structured in prosaic, poem-like paragraphs with no linear chronology and no chapter or page numbers, *The Crocodiles* revives the spirit of the 1990s literary generation, whose authors often played with literary form in their works, consciously breaking with the conventions of the genre and abandoning the virtuous eloquence of Arabic literature in favour of a more experimental aesthetic form that

expresses their lived anxieties, [36] in which the political (public) and the personal (private) are closely entangled (Spleth Linthicum, 2019). The novel reads like an interruption of the linear flow of history. As such, it reads like a poem, echoing what Adonis (2010) says about the poem being 'a network rather than a single rope of thought.' It jumps back and forth in time between the 1990s and 2011, constantly circling in time and suggesting connections between the past and the present. The connection that stands as a key premise for understanding the question of power and subjectivity in postcolonial Egypt and runs more or less through all the literary texts examined in this study.

We were delivered premature (36)

The novel opens with the narrator (Youssef) looking back in time and telling the story of the formation and dissolution of The Crocodiles Movement of Secret Egyptian Poetry. A group of three young poets who wanted to champion what they called secret poetry and in return vowed among themselves not to write anything else (5).

> Are you aware that crocodiles share all characteristics of the secret poet? The crocodile has to swallow gravel and stones and lie motionless in the sun. [..] It makes no display of its strength, nor does it swagger about (para.308). [..] The Crocodiles' one insight was to appreciate the truth of the role that poetry played on the eve of the third millennium: That it was closest to a secret unspoken, or to silence. Perhaps I am a traitor in the sense that I have decided to speak, but with a decade and a half gone by, I believe that speech and silence have become one (331).

At the beginning of the novel, a lion appears to Nayf, one of the members of the Crocodiles, as it does in the first stanza of Allen Ginsberg's poem *The Lion for Real*, and it roams as the supreme mystery throughout the rest of the novel (14). In the years before The Crocodiles Group is brought to life, its core members were filled with a reckless youthful enthusiasm that

[36] In his book *al-Kitāba 'abra al-naw'iyya* (Trans-genre Writing), literary critic Edwar al-Kharrat (1990)) argues that 'trans-genre writing,' as he calls it, does not simply refer to a crossing of boundaries between genre categories that allows each genre to retain its individual characteristics; rather, this kind of writing implies a blending that, through the interaction of different genres within a given work, creates a new, distinct genre that is more than the sum of its individual parts.

had much in common with the Beat Generation, the American generation of the 1950s, whose rebellion against society through drug use, sexual experimentation, and unorthodox writing seemed to leave its mark on the Egyptian generation of the 1990s (46). The Beat Generation poets, however, acted with a courage and independence that was far from present in Egyptian circles (ibid). The trio consists of Paulo, the unemployed photographer who falls hopelessly in love with an ambitious married woman ten years older; Nayf, a penniless engineering student who lives alone as an orphan in a huge, dilapidated flat and is very interested in the beatniks and their famous poet Allen Ginsberg (47); and the third, Youssef (the narrator, named after the novelist), who is studying philosophy at Cairo University, whose father, a destitute doctor, is furious with him, is in some ways less ambitious than his peers, considering himself a nobody (20), but most committed to the creed of Secret Poetry and as such is best able to follow and narrate events (22). Belonging to the educated classes was, at least according to the three, the most important factor that united the group (288).

Characterised by discretion and exclusion, the Crocodiles Group represents a modified rendering of Weber's concept of 'social closure' (first published in 1922, translated in 1968). An exclusionary closure, a choice of seclusion not necessarily aimed at monopolising opportunities or preserving one's economic position or class privileges, as Weber argues, but rather at asserting one's own existence, and by existence Rakha presumably means coming to terms with one's true self. A self-imposed (imaginary) exile and a kind of refuge from society; an emphasis on personal autonomy and an escape from social conformity, a shutting off from the outside world and a shutting off in the confines of the self, as some would call it. This is another manifestation of Bayat's (2010) notion of the 'art of presence,' which has already been discussed, or as I would put it: silence in action. Imagination becomes the space of appearance in which the group asserts its existence. Writing secret poetry was nothing but an attempt to restore their agency and arrive at what they think of as 'the truth,' that determines their being

in the society, as the narrator notes (192). The group is treated as a metaphor for the power of the people (the crocodiles) versus the lion, symbolic of both the oppressive power regime and the revolution.

> The three of us were a locked room fashioned from the scrutiny of poetry, or a life that resembles a poem (23). [..] The disappointments which kept us in company and stemmed from each of us having avoided the life laid out before us (343).

On the same day that the founding of the Crocodiles was celebrated in 1997, Radwa Adel, the most famous female communist activist, and intellectual of the 1970s, committed suicide. The figure of Radwa Adel is based on the Egyptian activist and Marxist intellectual of the 1970s, Arwa Saleh (1953-1997).[37] Salih was a prominent figure in the student movement of the early 1970s, which emerged in response to *al-Naksa* (the 1967 defeat against Israel), the repressive practices of the regime of Nasser followed by Sadat, and the growing corruption and social inequality faced by the majority of Egyptians and brought to the fore by Sadat's neo-liberal policies (Hammad, 2016:122). After a lifelong struggle against alienation and after becoming disenchanted with the stances of the Egyptian left or what she called 'leftist kitsch,' Salih committed suicide by jumping off a Cairo balcony in 1997, a few months after the publication of *al-Mubtasarun* —The Stillborn (1996, [2018]). In her Stillborn (which can be read as a statement of a suicidal subjectivity),[38] Salih dissects the failure of her generation—a generation that had once believed itself to be 'in full possession of the future (3)' and had suddenly grown old; its children became incomplete projects—a stillborn generation (19).'At that time (in the 1970s) it was common to show oneself as disturbed or precarious, but in the end, there were

[37] In her short life, Salih was a veteran underground activist and a member of the political bureau of the Egyptian Workers' Communist Party that grew out of the student movement. She translated Marxist and feminist literature into Arabic and authored works in various literary genres (see Hammad, 2016:118). In 1972, Arwa was briefly arrested and jailed together with another female activist figure for mobilising and organising sit-in on Campus (see Imbabi, and Sabri 2004: 149-184).

[38] The Stillborn is unclassifiable in form and genre. It is neither an autobiography, nor a memoir, nor a history book, nor an essay. "It is none of these things and all of these things," writes Samah Selim (2018) in the introduction to Salih's *The Stillborn*.

those who came to the edge and jumped, and those who came to the edge and did not jump (Naga, 2019).

> I leaf through dictionaries until I find that the root of *mabsour*, premature is a synonym for haste: that a date palm that is *mabsoura* has been pollinated early, out of season; that anything *mabsour* has taken place before its time (328).

The prematurity to which Salih refers in her title is the consciousness of a generation that was unable to forge an understanding of the self independently or outside the regime that produced it, that was always held captive by its language and rhetoric and found it difficult to break away from it, and was therefore unable to become a genuine popular movement that stands for the reality of ordinary people (Salih, 2018; Khan, 2022). It is a documentation of the change in consciousness not only of a person or a political movement but also of a whole society (Khan, 2022).

> She attacked their social ambition, their hunger for power, their cold-blooded willingness to hurt each other to defend theories that hid their ambitions. She also attacked them for taking refuge in the idea that they were outsiders; for using the idea that the security services were on their heels to establish themselves as victims of a tyranny and authoritarianism (101).

Radwa Adel (the fictional version of Arwa Salih) committed suicide in search of the meaning of life; she 'struggled to live and did not live to struggle' as the narrator of *The Crocodiles* notes (139). Her struggle, as such, is a reason to live which becomes, in the words of Camus (1955), an excellent reason to die. Like the unnamed narrator in *The Committee*, who was ordered to eat himself, Radwa is probably more alive at the moment of her death than ever before. Although the causes of suicide are often pathologized, Salih's decision to end her life can be seen as a way to escape power (which rules over life and death) through her own agency, as Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality* (1978). Salih's ghost, however, haunts the rest of the novel like a call or a warning, connecting the different generations in post-independence Egypt. 'The ghosts of the past have been squatting on their fates all along, as the narrator maintains (14).' The living traces of the dead, the lost, and the disappeared (be they people or

places) are, in my view, central aspects of the study of repressive regimes and, as Gordon (2008:164) eloquently argues, must be appreciated because they convey a different kind of knowledge, a knowledge of 'the things behind the things'—as writer Toni Morrison (1987:37) suggests in her novel *Beloved*.

The simultaneity of Radwa's death and the emergence of the secret poetry was more than a mere coincidence (98). The story of Radwa's premature life seems to coincide with the prematurity of the Crocodiles Group for Secret Poetry, which, as the narrator notes, 'disbanded before it began or could even leave a mark (11,38),' but even more clearly with the aborted ambitions of the 2011 uprising. 'Let us know for the first time that we—just like the seventies generation and the great names of the student movement—that we, too, were premature (58)' While the synchronicity of Radwa's (prematurity) with the Crocodiles Group is unmistakable, it also gave meaning to those who fifteen years later, in 2011, decided to jump the fences of the Mubarak regime and take to the streets to demand their rights, risking their lives in an ambivalent attachment to life and in search of meaning. On the one hand, the charged sentiments that drove the 2010 generation to overthrow the Mubarak regime are no different from those that led Radwa to end her life, and Radwa's struggle to live in a society that denies both her own experiences and her own ambitions, on the other hand, speaks to the present (see Lindsey, 2019). The Stillborn speaks not only to and about Salih's own generation of leftist activists, but also to a broader national melancholy in post-independence Egypt.

> During that period in which it seemed that a spontaneous movement would eradicate the futility of living in Egyptian society, meaning really did return to words like people, homeland, revolution, even, perhaps, to bourgeoisie; and though this period did not last and though the meaning vanished again with its passing, it has been clear to me ever since that Radwa Adel really did kill herself for our sake. Without knowing it, she killed herself that meaning might return to words (404).

I argue that Radwa's work is very significant as it let silence about the premature (stillborn) subject speak. The theoretical foundations of the subject as a mode of response to power as

docile, complicit, resistant, delinquent, mad, or evil treated the subject as either a complete self or a split self (a cleft between the subject's true and false self (Laing: 1960: 83)). What Arwa presents in *The Stillborn*, though drawing from her intimate experience within the Egyptian left, is a radicalised version of the split subject, rather an incomplete project of the self (an interrupted image of self-knowledge), a premature one, a site of contestation and a reiteration into being and nothingness; 'someone whose cycle begins or ends before he is ready (11).' As an outsider, alienated from herself and society, Radwa was unable to cling to her pain and develop an attachment to the regime. In the words of R. D. Laing (1960), she was unable to invent and live a 'false self' (living a lie or wearing a mask) to cope with both the outside world and her own despair, although for Laing a false self was still required in many aspects of social life). Her suicide represents a dissolution of this false self, which in her case was to blend with the grand narratives of the power regime, a defeat of defeat, a rejection of division, and an attempt at completion in which her own sense of reality, aliveness, and identity is preserved.

The secret group of crocodiles, on the other hand, is an attempt to preserve the real self in a closed space, a vessel that resists the intrusion of division and separation, but here too the group disintegrates, they wrestle with incompleteness and thus with the split. The narrator describes this very aptly when he mentions the role that delusions play in the lives of the members of the Crocodiles. 'And so, we had no just cause to run down the role delusion played in our lives (36).' To speak about the split subject, in which the fragmented division between complete and incomplete self is fundamental, is to speak about self-preservation. While Nietzsche argues in his book *The Will to Power* (1968:688) that self-preservation is not the ultimate goal of life, but that the goal of the subject or 'living thing' is to become more, the death of Radwa in 1997 and the people who risked their lives in 2011 assume that they can overcome the split and feel complete by putting at risk the essential conditions of self-preservation.

Radwa's incomplete project of the self is echoed by Saqr Al Janaini (a fellow writer known to the Crocodiles), who published a book in 2003 titled *Incomplete Literature Group*, in which he defies the notion of a complete literature or text by suggesting that only the physical manifestation of the work is what is truly complete: But as for the thing around which the body is woven around, it is constantly moving and changing (313). For him, the completeness of the text is nothing more than a light that guides the author but does not necessarily lead to truth, so in a sense he rejects the account of an absolute or objective truth, just as he uses lyricism as an analogy of the self (311). Saqr's incomplete writings speak to the spirit of Radwa's incomplete project of the self and suggest that the subject is to be understood in a process of transformation in which, I argue, pleasure, pain, and resistance play a central role on the path to self-completion.

Unlike the Crocodile trio who believed 'that a person who had lost pleasure or despaired of it must cling to pain as the only way to feel alive (204),' Radwa licensed herself to commit suicide to escape the pain of alienation and despair, as she had no idea how to stay alive outside of suicide (to be vanished as the very condition of your existence (Gordon, 2008:131)). The trio, on the other hand, cling to their secret poetry, but above all to pain (the subject of pain here is both consciousness and the body), the only thing that moves them to life and for which they will be remembered, which as such functions as a signifier (Radwa is not remembered for her writings or activism, but for her pain, a signifier of the failure of her generation) (397). Similarly, Nargis—Paulo's lover and an ambitious artist who abandoned her conservative life in a small village in Upper Egypt to move to the city and create art—has lived with pain, as Youssef notes, 'she created art to live, not lived to create (74-5).' Whether one attaches to pain or flees from it, resistance seems to be, to use Nietzsche's words (1968: 694), an indispensable component of the experience of pain.

Attachment to pain and the shrinking self: The hostility we gaze out at from our windows lay within ourselves (228)

The novel suggests what we might call *foundational pain*, a certain amount of pain that awakens the desire or temptation of recreating oneself as a new being (243), a threshold without which the subject remains premature. It is foundational because all discussions of self-dissolution and constitution as presented in the novel revolve around a certain level of pain that is both productive and destructive. It is productive in the sense that it is a transformative experience in that it changes one's relationship to self and to others (as in the case of the trio). It is destructive in the sense that it can be projected outward in certain forms of violence, including the intimate or private violence that poets exercise in their love relationships. The display of intimate violence is intended as an exercise of power, but primarily as a sign of powerlessness. Another form of violence Rakha depicts I would call *sponsored violence*, which manifests as indifference to the shocking extent of suffering caused by state violence. This is about the pain of indifference (an implicit acceptance), of the normalisation of the excessive use of force, and the pain that this normalisation brings (228). This kind of violence is somewhat similar to the 'symbolic violence' described by Bourdieu (1989; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), which is exerted on a social actor with his/her complicity. The difference between the two, however, in my view, is that sponsored violence turns a blind eye to the suffering of others, while symbolic violence allows suffering to be inflicted upon the actor himself/herself.

> I became terrified that the violence, lies and brutality would no longer affect me; terrified that the murder of innocents in the street would no longer move me, or that I would go on supporting their demonstrations despite the fact it meant they would be murdered… and not feel a thing. A biting light flares in my head, blinding and paralyzing me, and I awake to a pain in my stomach (188).

The embodiment of pain and the use of violence thus illustrate the dialectical relationship between power and subject formation. I argue that Rakha's portrayal of pain in its various

forms (macro, private, and symbolic) underscores the need to consider violence as a constitutive element of processes of subjectivation. Agamben's figure of *Homo Sacer* is, for example, a good illustration of a bare life that embodies the condition of suffering and violence. This is in contrast to Foucault (1982), for whom pain is not a central but an auxiliary theme, relevant to both the genealogy of medicine and punishment (the clinical gaze and biopower). In *The Crocodiles*, Rakha argues that pain is an indispensable element in being a subject of power, and more generally, in explaining power and its effects (see further Sik, 2021 on pain as an indirect source of power).

> As I write, in this moment, about myself, I believe that what keeps me alive [..] is the pain of those twitching on the asphalt after inhaling gas, of those struck by bullets in their eyes, of those stampeding from the courage of billy clubs and electric cables…the pain that biting light in whose absence no one perceives a thing (204).
>
> The hostility we gaze out at from our windows [..] lay within ourselves; that our worldview and the limits of our imagination—each time we used society to justify our behaviour or silence—were both expressions of that society. Was this why we had kept quiet between August and December 2011, when the army revealed its true nature and people were murdered at their soldiers' hands? (228).

Among the painful experiences that the Crocodile Trio goes through after the death of Radwa Adel is the arrest of their friend Mizo, another milestone in their journey that coincided with the official announcement of the group (149). Mizo was arrested in connection with an actual attack on the music scene that took place in Egypt in the 1990s and became known as the 'Satanism case' (King, 2012). At that time, heavy metal bands in Egypt were branded as Satanists and persecuted by the security forces of the Mubarak regime. Mizo's incarceration alerted the trio to the fact that the space they were living in was shrinking, that their places, as the narrator noted, were becoming too narrow to hold them, to hold their future and what they were taking into that future (146). As discussed in previous chapters, the police apparatus in Egypt since the early colonial period was extremely intrusive and represents a semi-military institution (Ismail, 2012: 436-437). The use of overt violence and humiliation in police practice

has increased this intrusiveness over time. Under Mubarak, the police were tasked with suppressing Islamist opposition in the 1980s and 1990s, which solidified the police presence in everyday life. However, this also occurred in conjunction with *infitah* and the promotion of neo-liberal economic policies to suppress and quell any protest movement (ibid). The shrinking of spaces (spaces of freedom of expression, living spaces, and public spaces) literally and figuratively and the expansion of the securitization of private and public life went hand in hand and focused on practices of surveillance and discipline (ibid). The space to make art, play a variation of certain music, or wear certain clothes was labelled and attacked as evil and criminal. You do not have to be a political opponent to be harassed or picked up by security forces, just the fact that you look or act different from the mainstream makes you an object of repression. This may explain why the Crocodiles decided to keep their group invisible and secret to escape the surveillance and control that permeates private and public life.

> About a week before The Crocodiles were announced, I was saying—at dawn, at the tail-end of just another night that summer—more than one friend lived out the self-same classic nightmare: troopers from State Security's investigations branch, in plain clothes, hammering at his front door to drag him from his bedroom, brushing off paternal pleas or threats. Most of the fathers were rich or important enough to get away with threatening the officers that accompanied the troopers, but even so, and without warrant, the investigators ransacked these homes with absolute freedom that dawn: they confiscated anything they judged Satanic then led the young accused off to the interrogation centre (148).

What pain and violence displays are the constraint in which the trio's relationships to others, to themselves, and to poetry hold them captive, in ways that often interrupt the self-awareness and conscious exposition they are trying to display. Looking back on the dissolution of the Crocodiles group, the narrator uses 2001 as a benchmark: on the one hand, it was the year of global breakdown (254), the year in which poets, intellectuals, and activists fled the country, others died, still others went mad or got radicalised by joining radical groups of Salafist Islam (346). It is the pain that broke the group before its time, that drained its batteries with no thought of the responsibility for the country (378). These changes were all difficult to digest, but the

most difficult was that they came to realise that it was not only their spaces that were shrinking, but that it was they themselves who were shrinking the spaces and narrowing them. It is the people who are shrinking as much as the places through constant processes of repression and co-optation.

> [..] It seems to me that what we guessed at when we felt that the space in which we lived was shrinking, that our places were growing too narrow to hold us and our future, was that we, with our myths and disappointments, with the stories that made lovers of us before there was ever a chance to sincerely question if we were really poets — with our revolution, even: that peaceful protest which was co-opted after being repressed, repressed repeatedly until it was co-opted — that we were the ones who were shrinking the spaces and narrowing the places (229). The detainees would be subjected to merciless interrogations amounting to brainwashing, on the pretext of correcting the moral and doctrinal compasses of [..] or so strayed guardians of the future (163).

The shrinking of the self (I interpret it here as in the alteration of self-perception), a term often associated with suicide, alcohol consumption, and sexual masochism (see Brinthaupt and Lipka, 1994) (activities indulged in by the crocodiles group of secret poetry), is presented as a metaphorical effect of pervasive repressive power, but also as a coping strategy in which inhibited repression is projected onto the self as ‘an act of desperation’ (Harter, 2012: 374). As if the self-shrinks when the subject is repeatedly oppressed, when their rights are taken away, denied, or impaired, but there seems to be another effect of the constant use of violence and repression, which is that people cease to believe in their right to live, as the narrator suggests (166). A form of dependence or attachment to subjection, to the repressive power that grants them life as much as it takes it away (a power that commands life and death). The fear of losing the sole giver of life becomes, as the narrator implies, the source of their attachment to power.

> I began to suspect that the Egyptians ingrained hatred for their supposedly unjust government was no more than an inverted terror that this government might fall—the power that granted them life just as it removed it: utterly — because they did not believe in their right to live (166).

This insight is echoed in Freud’s assertion (1917, 1920) about the ‘adhesiveness of libido,’ which explains that the infant can form an attachment to any arousal, even a painful or

traumatic one, as a condition of its survival, and which can also be related to Fromm's (1941) notion of the fear of freedom, discussed earlier in *Karnak Café*. Moreover, it is consistent with Judith Butler's (1997) view of the passionate attachment to power: 'there is no formation of the subject without a passionate attachment to subjection (67),' meaning that no subject emerges without a passionate attachment to those on whom he or she is fundamentally dependent (7). According to Butler (1997: 79, 102), disciplinary regimes exploit the subject's willingness to attach to pain and be socially recognised rather than not attach by compelling subjects to attach to structures of subordination. In this respect, Butler's account paints a rather bleak picture of the possibilities of agency and resistance that are called into question by the very fact that the trio has endeavoured to write poetry that express what they see as the truth about themselves and their generation. In the wake of the post-2001 despair that accompanied the group's dissolution, the trio clung to pain and sometimes, like many others, to the abusive or repressive regime of power in order to survive, but they never willed (desired) or approved the terms of their subordination, which is expressed in their conscious recognition of failure and defeat, as repeatedly stated in the text, which paradoxically asserts its capacity to register dissent (one is not defeated if one agrees to the conditions of one's subordination) (381, 3).

> How did it ever occur to us that […] you could be an individual in the first place? What was it with us and slang? What made us say I scratched it" for I know, "dice-pair" for group and scorched for mad with a methodical pedantry that robbed the phrases of any possible freshness? (322).

This raises the question of whether it is possible to speak of non-subordinating modes of dependency (see Allen, 2006: 209 for a similar question). In other words, can we speak of less subordinating forms of subjectivity in a way that the subject's perception of itself (what it believes about itself) does not correspond to the way it positions itself in relation to the power regime. *The Crocodiles* follows the path of *The Committee*, *The Heron*, and *Chronicle of a Last Summer* in presenting a nuanced account of subjectivity that in some ways involves subordination, but also addresses pain and the vulnerability that accompanies it as a basis for

possible acts of resistance, as Butler (2008) seems to investigate in her essay *Violence, Mourning, Politics*. On the one hand, the precariousness of violence, oppression, and pain may lead one to uphold the values of the abusive power regime in order to survive, avoid further pain, and, most importantly, be recognised as a (good) subject, distinct from those with the lesser status of *bare life*; in this case, a kind of split between the true and false self occurs, which can also manifest itself in a state of cognitive dissonance, as described by the narrator.

> It seems strange to me now that the clearest sign we had grown was when we noticed people agreeing with things they would otherwise have rejected on personal grounds, for instance, or voicing opinions not because they really held them but because they seemed like the right ones to hold (386).

On the other hand, the novel suggests that subjectivity and resistance (which, as discussed in previous chapters, may encompass a wide range of actions, including acts of withdrawal, everyday resistance, and silence) should be thought of together, rather than treated as opposites. Even though this may seem paradoxical, it is still significant because it both illuminates the dynamic interrelationship between repression and resistance and highlights the nuances of the process of subjectification. This alludes to the reversibility of Foucault's (1991) concept of biopower or governmentality in which he argues that all mechanisms of power are potentially capable of counter-hegemonic reappropriation (see also Heller, 1996). Succinctly put, there is a dialectical relationship between subordination and resistance according to which one gives powers to the other (subordination fosters resistance and vice versa), but more importantly, as Asef Bayat (2015) argues, the complex relationship of subordination and resistance gives rise to novel subjectivities. Subjectification thus occurs along the process of resistance and dissent; in other words, a subject is formed and framed as it participates in its own subjectification, with resistance at the centre of the subjectification process. Thus, at least in the context under study, submission is not the only necessary condition for the existence of the subject, but the interplay between submission and resistance becomes the constitutive conditions for the subject's existence. Resistance, however, need not necessarily occur, as Foucault (1978: 96) asserts in

The History of Sexuality, as ‘great radical ruptures’ as in the case of revolutions or insurrections; rather, the everyday practices that produce fractions, divisions, and regroupings may constitute acts of resistance. There remains, however, a certain ambivalence in Foucault’s theory of power regarding the question of how one can liberate oneself outside of power, given that power, as he indicates is capillary, omnipresent and all-encompassing. While he repeatedly states (1978:95), ‘where there is power, there is resistance,’ the processes of subjectivation as depicted by Foucault and Butler, whom he heavily influenced, ‘lack a clear interest in the force of effective resistance to power,’ as Edward Said (1986:151) states.

Departing from this observation, Rakha presents in *The Crocodiles* a new reading of Foucault’s concept of power that in some respects agrees with Foucault’s theory and in one respect in particular contradicts it, namely in questioning the opposition or dualism of power and resistance that often underlies agency/structure; the consideration of power as an energy that negates itself, an energy that is both sustained and challenged by a repetitive re-enacting of resistance, by its contingent, dynamic, and unstable nature that necessitates its recurrence (see Ranciere, 2010 on the formation of political subjectivity). What Rakha addresses is an elusive, relational, and complex process in which oppression and resistance are mutually dependent. This seems to align with Foucault’s view of the intertwining of resistance and power. Rakha, on the other hand, sees power and resistance as two distinct categories that are mutually dependent yet do not form a monolithic whole. For him, the ideal formulation is not ‘where there is power, there is resistance,’ but where there is power, there is an alternation of positions with resistance that unfolds in dynamic and cyclical ways. According to Rakha, power is repressive and negative, and the negation of the negative is the resistance that arises from confronting power relations, not only through concrete practices, but also through its multiple possibilities, including the possibility of creating new subjectivities (see also Checci, 2014).

> The lion is revolution. The revolution always returns because it always leads to repression. The lion is this repression. What is repression? It is the energy that can negate itself. The lion is the charge of freedom that makes men revolt and the lion is the repression latent in that revolution. You spend your life struggling only to discover that your struggle was opportunism, and another struggle starts to set this straight. You are familiar with opportunism? The lion is the act of struggling, with shabby opportunism, for the sake of a freedom that might morph at any moment into repression (153). He who is blind to the lion in life is blind to life itself (156).

To conclude, the question of living through death (as in the case of Radwa) or living in subordination and/or in resistance (again, absence/presence dynamics) is not only the central question of the novel, but also the central agonising question of successive generations in post-independence Egypt until they were confronted in 2011 with the emergence of the lion, which, as the narrator suggests, 'was the only thing on which the suitcase of the future could be hung (239).' The lion represents both revolution and repression and defeat, pointing to the dialectical relationship between subjectification and resistance that is the central theme of the novel and, of course, of the study. Both *The Crocodiles* and *Chronicle of a Last Summer* are about the search for meaning and experimentation with various means of survival and resistance to power, and in both works writing seems to be a central experience of self-expression and resistance.

> It seems to me now – from my hypothetical vantage point in a future that dangled before us, unperceived, up until 2011 – that the lion was the supreme secret: the lion that appeared to Nayf. With a clarity unavailable at the time, it seems to me that its appearance was not the only mythical event to have occurred. And though it was for sure the only clearly supernatural event, I myself never for an instant doubted the reality of the lion. Just that, with distance, I have become convinced that it was not the only strange thing. Ghosts crouched atop our destinies all the while. At times they took the form of an idea or incident, just like the poem that comes from its author knows not where: vapours, risen from a vast number of life's liquids mixed all together without rhyme or reason, and distilled into one rich drop (14).

Chapter 5

The Politics of Death and Uncertainty in Post-2011: The Expendable Subject

5.1 *The Queue* (2013) by Basma Abdel Aziz

> You would only be allowed to walk toward the Gate, not away from it (70). And as soon as the Gate began to receive people, you would only be able to exit on the far side, which was not visible from where they were standing, nor from anywhere in the queue. This was, no citizen who completed his paperwork would be able to disobey instructions, turn around with his papers, and walk in the opposite direction (71).

The Queue or *al-Tabuur* (2013, published in English in 2016) is a novel by Basma Abdel Aziz, a psychiatrist who counsels torture victims, sculptor and painter, author and researcher who writes both fiction and non-fiction, using her imaginative and intellectual sensibility in so many different ways that it becomes difficult to label or categorize her and her work. Abdel Aziz is also an activist who has been called 'the rebel' for her outspoken critique of autocracy and oppression in Egypt (Jaquette, 2013). Abdel Aziz is one of the few women writers who participated in what some call post-Arab Spring dystopian writing in Egypt.[39] In one of her short essays (2017a), talking about *The Queue*, Abdel Aziz says, 'I drew on my experience in psychiatry, my specialization, and the field in which I work. I also drew on my later studies in sociology to establish the means by which authority dominates and controls citizens.' Fiction, Abel Aziz says, gave her the space to 'destroy different faces of dictatorship and totalitarian authority (2015).' Abdel Aziz (2017b) was arrested twice under Mubarak. In 2016, Abdel Aziz was named one of Foreign Policy's Global Thinkers for her novel *The Queue*, which received English PEN Translation Award in 2014 and a Sawiris cultural award. Although her literary works are not memoirs, they are deeply personal accounts of a precarious time of subjection and resistance. Speaking about writing fiction and non-fiction, Abdel Aziz (2021a) writes:

> The advantage I see, even with serious issues like authoritarianism and oppression, is the liberty that fiction always allows the writer. With non-fiction

[39] In one of her interviews (2022), Abdel Aziz rejected the classification between dystopian and non-dystopian writing because she says, her works are about "what it is like here and now, not a futuristic view of the country or the world."

> the writer must stay close to the ground, stick to the facts, and carefully check every single detail. This minimizes your room for manoeuvre, especially when you live in a place where there is no transparency, where information is routinely hidden or even erased, where you cannot find the documents you need, and where you are faced with many obstacles during your research. Let's say that in fiction one is always allowed to break rules, to describe what one feels, not just what one thinks. You can say what is in your heart, combined with what goes on in your mind, without restrictions, without walls. Also, fiction is sometimes perceived as being easier to read than an academic book. A complex topic can be made more approachable if its main ideas are explored through a light form of writing, like a novel.

Completed in 2012 and published in 2013, *The Queue* tells the story of an authority that controls every minor detail, manipulates, and fabricates truth, mobilizes others in its service, and creates conditions that curtail the rights of even the most faithful. The novel is set at a time in Egyptian history shaken by a turbulent three years of (counter-revolutionary) political and social unrest between 2011 and 2014 that seemed to eerily foretell the rise of the Sisi regime and marked the beginning of the worst human rights situation in Egypt in decades (Human Rights Watch, 2019). 'For counter-revolution—the word having been coined by Condorcet in the course of the French Revolution—has always remained bound to revolution as reaction is bound to action (Arendt, 1963b: 18).'

Since the fall of Mubarak, successive power regimes—starting with the interim government led by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF; 2011-2012), the Muslim Brotherhood (2012-2013), and the military, as of 2014 under Sisi's regime—have violently consolidated authoritarian rule through a bloody counterrevolution (De Wringer, 2020).

Although *The Queue* was written during the transition from Mubarak to Sisi, it is even more relevant and timely today, as it speaks to the present moment in the country's history. When asked if she would write the same novel under President Sisi, Abdel Aziz said, 'Absolutely, it would be the same, if not worse (Aziz, 2019).' *The Queue* has been widely compared to Orwell's *1984*, Kafka's *The Trial*, and Ibrahim's *The Committee*. Like these three, *The Queue* represents a critique of authoritarianism, an updated account of totalitarian bureaucracy for the

21st century that is both absurd and real and temporally specific, emerging in the wake of what many scholars and media commentators call the Arab Spring. It is a distinctly Egyptian version of its Orwellian and Kafkaian counterparts. At its heart, power is everywhere and nowhere, movements are controlled, and communications are monitored, and all of this is done through a cumbersome bureaucratic system that is good for nothing but subjugating and oppressing people (Hannum, 2016).

The Queue draws on the metaphor of waiting in queues to illustrate the dialectical relationship between bureaucracy and authoritarianism and how life in bureaucratic authoritarian regimes becomes a long, wearying, and humiliating experience. The metaphor of the queue can also be read as a disciplinary technique that regulates conformity and normalisation. Little by little, everyone joins the queue. In her essay *Waiting in Queues under Dictatorships* (2021b), Abdel Aziz points out that queues can be a powerful and effectively humiliating tool used by bureaucratic dictatorships to control and dominate people's bodies, minds, and souls. As Walter Benjamin writes in *The Arcades Project* (1999:105), 'we are bored when we do not know what we are waiting for.' The novel uses the concept of waiting as an experience filled with the meanings of subjection and control to analyse the relationship between time, narrative, and subjectification. In other words, the waiting line becomes a miniature of life under authoritarianism, and the different responses to the indefinite wait speak of the effects of power and the construction of different subjectivities. 'Not yet' or 'in the waiting room of history' are two expressions often used as metaphors for colonized nations that, as Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 8) suggests, were seen by their colonizers as incapable of governing themselves and making their way towards development and modernity. Even though colonialism has ended (at least) in its traditional form in most countries of the world, its legacy of waiting lives on to this day, especially in those regimes whose postcolonial experience facilitated the immediate establishment of authoritarian regimes, as in the case of Egypt.

> I began writing *The Queue* in September 2012, shortly after returning to Egypt from France. One sunny day, I went to Downtown Cairo, where numerous battles between revolutionaries and security forces had taken place since the revolution began in January 2011. While walking down a main street, I came across a long queue of people waiting in front of a closed governmental building. The gate to the building would certainly open shortly, I thought to myself; after all, it was nearly midday. Two hours later I walked back the way I came, only to find the same people standing exactly where they had been. They had not moved. There were more of them now, yet the gate was still closed (Abdel Aziz, 2017a).

Although waiting is a universal social experience that has become a natural part of our everyday lives, the differences in how people deal with waiting and how different forms of waiting signal different power dynamics remain enormous (Sellerberg, 2018: 359). 'We all wait, but the experience of waiting is different for different people (Khosravi, 2021: 13).' Waiting, however, is not just empty (wasted) time or an 'in-between situation,' as Giovanni Gasparini (1995) suggests, but can also be seen as an expression of power. Sociologist Barry Schwartz perhaps illustrated this best when he wrote: 'The distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of power (1974: 841).' For him, punitive sanctioning through the imposition of waiting is met in the most extreme forms when a person is not only kept waiting but is also kept ignorant as to how long he must wait' (862). Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu writes in *Pascalian Meditations* (2000: 228) that waiting is one of the privileged ways to experience the effects of power. To wait, he elaborates:

> implies submission: the interested aiming at something greatly desired durably–that is to say, for the whole duration of the expectancy–modifies the behaviour of the person who 'hangs', as we say, on the awaited decision. It follows that the art of 'taking one's time', of 'letting time take its time', as Cervantes puts it, of making people wait, of delaying without destroying hope, of adjourning without totally disappointing, which would have the effect of killing the waiting itself, is an integral part of the exercise of power (228).

Ultimately, those who have the power to make others wait demonstrate their ability to control people's time and expectations. Abdel-Aziz (2021:154) argues that people in dictatorships are destined to be kept on the uncertain edge of doubt and hope, in what she calls 'the waiting game.' The waiting game as she sees it is a power game, where the entrenched bureaucracy

that accompanies and is sought through the act of waiting becomes part of the system of oppression. Abdel Aziz describes waiting as an experience that drains both the body and the soul, keeping people in a state of ‘chronic, low-threshold anxiety (152).’ A person who waits most of his life, Abdel Aziz argues, becomes frozen and deprived of his/her vitality. Gradually, stagnation robs the will and leads to hollowness. This, Abdel Aziz says, is precisely what authorities and authoritarian regimes particularly welcome. Queues, according to her, produce obedient and easily manipulated subjects (ibid).

More specifically, the experience of waiting in Egypt is a life experience; an experience of being thrust into periods of prolonged stasis in which the dynamics of waiting cannot be understood in isolation from the existing dynamics of power. Egyptians wait for hours outside government offices to have their documents signed and stamped. Every bureaucratic procedure designed to achieve a particular goal is divided into an endless series of steps, each requiring approvals, signatures, payments, and stamps, and involving several functionaries who would otherwise be unemployed (Golia, 2019). It is the process of being the ‘subject of waiting’ that counts, not the outcome; the process is everything. People may wait an entire morning in state-run markets for subsidised goods (Abdel Aziz, 2021b:151-152). They wait for the presidential motorcade to pass, which can cause traffic jams that last for hours. People can also stand in lines for a day or longer to renew their driver’s licence, national ID, passport, or even to pay a bill. Detainees wait years in lengthy proceedings for a court decision (Omar and El-Sadany, 2021). Families of detainees often camp outside prisons overnight to visit their detained loved ones, and it is not uncommon for them to be denied a visit after the long wait (Ghoneim, 2015). An old or seriously ill person may wait years for life-saving treatment. Everyone must experience the act of waiting for the completion of every single and simple task (Abdel Aziz: 2021: 151-152). An entire generation that knew no leader other than Mubarak had to wait 30 years to overthrow him. Indeed, the spirit of the heron and crocodiles taking their time before

moving or reappearing, as described in previous chapters, has so much to do with the inherent state of waiting to which Egyptians have become accustomed.

Since its outbreak on January 25, 2011, the demonstrators in Tahrir Square waited tirelessly, with alternating feelings of hope and fear, facing different forms of repression, for the moment when Mubarak would leave. It was not until February 11, 2011, that Mubarak stepped down, having survived 18 days of mass protests that shattered three decades of unchallenged authoritarian rule. The transition period that followed was quite contentious. After Mubarak's fall, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took control of the country until the 2012 presidential election, in which Mohamed Morsi, the former leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) (*Ikhwan al-muslimin*), came to power as the first elected civilian president in the country's history.[40] The rise of MB to power after the repeated cycles of repression and ostracism they had experienced since the Nasser era was no surprise.[41] Mubarak's ruling party (NDP) was dissolving, and with the exception of the Brotherhood, the only organised mass political force in the country, there was no organised revolutionary or political movement in sight (Pioppi, 2013:55). This situation favoured the group and enabled it to seize power for the first time since its founding in 1928.

Barely a few months after Morsi took office, tensions between the MB and the secular and revolutionary opposition (a diverse array of non-Islamists) began to surface. The ongoing tensions were particularly exacerbated by the passage of the November 22, 2012, constitutional decree that granted President Morsi authoritarian powers, including the ability to enact laws without judicial oversight (Shehata, 2015). This declaration heralded the end of Morsi's

[40] Founded in 1928 by the schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna, the group preached a gradual Islamization of the state under the slogan 'Islam is the solution' and took a staunchly anti-colonial stance that soon gained widespread popular support. The Brotherhood was banned in 1948 and since then has had a difficult relationship with successive regimes, marked by brief periods of co-optation, collaboration, but above all persecution. Despite these repressions, the Brotherhood developed over the decades into one of Egypt's best-organised political opposition movements (Ardovini, 2022).
[41] For more on the rise and fall of MB see Kandil (2014a) and Jaraba (2014).

presidency and sparked street protests. The use of armed supporters in the clearing of anti-Islamist protests in December 2012, in which dozens of people were killed and tortured, caused the MB to lose any popular support and ground it may have had left, especially in secular and revolutionary networks (Kandil, 2014).

Opposition to Morsi and the Brotherhood grew in the months that followed, leading to mass protests against the Brotherhood rule on June 30, 2013, which eventually culminated in the July 3, 2013 coup d'état led by then army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi marking the beginning of a new wave of violent repression against the Brotherhood,[42] which was declared a terrorist organisation later that year and whose members were subsequently imprisoned, persecuted, driven into exile, or driven underground (ibid). On August 14, 2013 (the month following the coup), security forces opened fire on a sit-in by pro-Morsi demonstrators in Rab'aa al-Adawiya Square, killing at least 817 people (see Human Rights Watch Report, 2014). From the Brotherhood's viewpoint, the failure of Morsi's year-long rule is due to what MB leaders call Egypt's deep state, which includes the military, security services, bureaucracy, media, and judiciary (Jaraba, 2014: 61). According to the Brotherhood, the deep state has conspired against them to regain control of the country (ibid). And while the deep state always served to bridge the gap between the fall of the Mubarak regime and the rise of the Sisi regime, its ubiquitous presence could certainly be a reason for the fall of MB, particularly because the Brotherhood failed to infiltrate the security apparatus or build 'strong enough' loyalties within it. However, other factors related to the Brotherhood's policies, strategic choices, and alliances

[42] President Mohamed Morsi collapsed and died during a court session in 2019, nearly six years after he was ousted from power and arrested on three separate charges: leaking state secrets to Qatar, killing protesters during a sit-in outside the presidential palace, and spying for Hamas (Michaelson, 2019).

with the remnants of the Mubarak regime could also be reasons why the group lost popular support and failed in the short term (for more information on MB's choices and mistakes, see El-Houdaiby, 2013).

The queue was like a magnet (91)

In the midst of the aforementioned turmoil, *The Queue* was written. Although set in an unnamed country beset by political and social unrest, it is not difficult to discern from the references to specific events and from the names of the characters, which serve as geographical signposts, that Egypt is the novel's setting (the figurative expression can also be seen as a way of circumventing censorship). The novel tells the story of an obscure central authority (an allusion to the SCAF and possibly to Egypt's deep state or the old guards of the Mubarak regime-counterrevolutionary forces) called 'The Gate' (an actual gate of the so-called Northern Building), which had come to power after a popular uprising against the previous regime, referred to as the 'First Storm,' and had consolidated it through the violent suppression of a second uprising denouncing the authority's tyranny and injustice, which became known as 'The Disgraceful Events' (8). During the events, the Gate's security forces, known as the 'Quell Force,' modelled after the Central Security forces, fired on demonstrators, injuring, and killing many of them, including Yehya, the novel's main character, a curious but uninvolved passer-by (24). The Gate as described has a Benthamite panopticon structure through which no one can see, but everyone is seen, an allusion to its omnipresent power (35).

> Ordinary people rose up, defeated the security forces on the streets, overcame the old guard's defences, and nearly forced the ruler to surrender. But unfortunately —or perhaps it was fortunately? —things had not continued as they had begun. The movement fractured before it was able to overthrow the regime. Some people used the gains they had made to secure their own position and power. Others continued the fight against the regime, leaving a path of destruction in their wake. Some armed themselves in anticipation of a counterattack. Still others were wary because the ruler might manage to remain in power and slipped away to make their own private deals with him [..] While the people were distracted with their squabbles, the old guard regrouped and began to rebuild. Not long after this, the Gate appeared (9).

To expand surveillance, The Gate partnered with a telecommunications company (Violet Telecom) (modelled on the national monopoly provider Telecom Egypt) to subject queue dwellers to mass surveillance (originally achieved by offering unlimited free phone calls (69)). The promotion of unlimited free calls was a big hit with queue dwellers, but suddenly came under closer scrutiny when people discovered that their phones had begun to record and transmit their calls to a receiving device in the Gate's booth and that many people had subsequently disappeared from the queue (122). Gradually, people discovered that the surveillance feature had spread beyond the queue into other districts (120-121). At some point, the telephone network breaks down (49), and the people in the queue are no longer reachable and cannot leave their place in the queue, nor can they connect with their family or friends, in a sense, they are forced into further isolation and surveillance. *The Queue* presents a modern information panopticon that takes Foucault/Bentham's idea of panoptic architecture and transforms it into a more subtle, pervasive, and insidious kind of surveillance in which nothing can be hidden, in a way that literally and figuratively renders the subjects of the power regime naked (see Sheridan, 2016: 3).

It is worth noting that Egypt has a long history of communications surveillance. The aforementioned colonial 'City Eye' system evolved over time as wiretapping of telephone conversations and text messages became the primary means of monitoring mass communications under Mubarak (Kimball, 2015). Just as mass surveillance can be maintained using modern information, Internet, and data processing systems, so too can the disconnection of people from technology and the communications network be used as an instrument of control and discipline. The collapse of the telephone network, as described in the novel, is reminiscent of the time when the Internet was shut down by the Mubarak regime on January 28, 2011, and people had no way to reach each other and communicate other than to take to the streets—a very scary signal of a high level of control over the Internet and communication networks in

full force (Cohen, 2011). In the period in which the novel is set, a broader shift toward more surveillance was initiated with the announcement in 2015 of the establishment of a cybersecurity system that would allow the government to control and monitor Internet activity in Egypt (see Abdelatty, 2015). 'We are being watched' was a common hashtag on Facebook and Twitter among Internet users (see Ezzat, 2015). Bentham's panopticon depicted by Gate has clearly been revamped in the form of cyber-control, security presence, and data trawlers (Sheridan 2016: 3).

You would only be allowed to walk toward the Gate, not away from it (70)

After its emergence, the Gate maintained its power by issuing orders and instructions through its proxies and enforcing discipline through its militia. It controlled absolutely everything, subjecting all procedures, papers, permits, and authorisations—even those for medical prescriptions, food, and drink—to its control to such an extent that it became difficult to discern where its authority began and ended (31-32). Every single activity is subject to the power of the gate that promises to open but never does, right down to the banning of kites with colourful streamers (178). Although this seems a somewhat far-fetched account of the expanded powers of the Gate, it is nevertheless not surprising that Abdel Aziz refers to an actual ban on kites in Egypt in 2020, when security forces confiscated kites and banned them due to (what they call) 'national security concerns' (see al-Sharkawy, 2020). For the kite is a symbol of freedom, a stand-in for the kite flyer who escapes authority on the ground for a moment.

> Then one day the Gate issued an official statement detailing its jurisdiction, which extended over just about everything anyone could think of. This was the last document to bear the ruler's seal and signature. As time passed, the gate began to introduce a few new policies, and soon it was the singular source of all regulations and decree (31).

Everyone has their own reasons for joining the queue outside the gate: Ines, a teacher who was threatened with dismissal after praising a student for writing an essay on conditions and developments in her district (13), had to apply for a 'Certificate of True Citizenship'; another

woman has to file a complaint against the bakers who no longer wants to serve her state-subsidised bread because of who she voted for in the last election (12); Um Mabrouk, who lost one daughter due to bureaucratic and lengthy procedures of the Gate, tries to save her other child (19-20,65); Shalaby, whose cousin, a security guard, was killed in the Disgraceful Events, seeks recognition for his sacrifice; Ehab, a journalist, tries to find out the truth. And Yehya, the main protagonist who was shot in the Disgraceful Events, must obtain a permit to remove a bullet from his body. And since from the most menial to the most complicated tasks nothing can be done without the gate giving its blessing or approval, there was nothing left for the people to do but to continue to wait, hoping that the gate would open at some time or on some day and the queue will move (17). The queue, as it is depicted, is thus a place where the poor and the rich, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, even regime supporters and opponents line up and take their place. In a way, Abdel Aziz points to the far-reaching effects of authoritarian regimes, which affect not only opponents of the regime, but almost everyone.

> There were women and men, young and old people, professionals, and the working class. No section of society was missing, even the poorest of the poor were there, not separated from the rich by any means. Everyone was on equal ground. But they all had the same look about them, the same lethargy. Now they were even all starting to think the same way (90). The queue was like a magnet. It drew people toward it, then held them captive as individuals and in their little groups, and it stripped them of everything, even the sense that their previous lives had been stolen from them (91). All it provided was hope for people to cling to and a reason to stay in the queue (110).
>
> What reason did it have to remain closed? The Disgraceful Events had ended by affirming the Gate's hold on power and its growing omnipotence. Closing indefinitely made no sense unless it was simply dealing out another form of punishment (33).

Over time, the queue takes on monstrous proportions, stretching for miles and giving rise to growing social networks and small businesses that, as such, form a microcosm of the Egyptian community for which the queue dwellers have created a parallel to their lives outside the queue (88). The act of waiting in line, day, and night, becomes a form of life that people cannot escape or venture beyond (90), and the experience of waiting, with its associated hope, uncertainty,

and boredom, becomes the leitmotif that shapes people's everyday life practices. What the queue suggests is a state of perpetual uncertainty that serves as an instrument of domination and punishment. To live or survive under conditions of constant uncertainty, as Zygmunt Bauman (2007) suggests, people must act, plan actions, and calculate the likely gains and losses of acting (or not acting). But this also means living with a certain amount of rumour that can inspire hope but also lead to disappointment. Given the fact that the Gate never opens, nor is there any indication that it will, this is obviously a false hope, where the hoper or the inhabitant of the queue is misinformed as to how likely the object of his hope actually is, as Andrew Chignell (2013) in his distinction between 'a good and a bad hope' argues. 'There was no shortage of reports on when the Gate would open, and this was the greatest source of chaos and contention (70).' As an effect, people in the queue kept exchanging rumours and unreal stories about the Gate, some saying it was open, others standing in the middle saying they had at most a week to go. Other rumours said that those waiting at the front heard sounds behind the gate: murmurs of voices, the rustling of papers, etc. (69-70). Yehya describes how

> '[p]eople around him stood there so resolutely, he had not seen many sleeping or even sitting down in recent days. Everyone expected the queue to move at any minute, and they wanted to be ready' (17). The longer he waits, the more he finds 'himself doing the same, even though he did not believe what they told him about the Gate – that it might open at dawn, or even deep in the middle of the night (18).

In a sense, queue dwellers have developed what Goffman (1952) calls 'cooling the mark out,' a self-conscious mechanism developed to find comfort, attenuate, and adapt to the uncertainties and disappointments of waiting, which, as described in the novel, involves making the queue a place where people go about their normal daily activities: Eating, drinking, sleeping, gossiping, doing business, socialising, and worshiping. While waiting, people in line build relationships that provide a foundation for coping with the long wait. Despite the overcrowding, the people in the queue lived their lives and solved their problems without outside help (71). Um Mabrouk is a good example of this, a cleaning lady who got in line to

get a permit for her daughter's medical treatment, but once there, she becomes a great entrepreneur selling tea and snacks to the scores of others in line (88).

Since Goffman's adjustment/adaptation technique of 'cooling the mark out' can be understood as a way of coping and managing the gap between real (disapproved) feeling and (idealised) feeling, it nevertheless remains tricky, since it can lead to what Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012) calls 'emotional labour,' or managing one's feelings to meet the demands of a particular condition, job, or situation. The act of waiting, then, cannot be understood as passive or empty time, but as a time that entails certain forms of 'labour,' the most salient of which, I argue, is emotional labour (Bear, 2014: 20). Queue dwellers can become accustomed to numbing or muting signals, and to cope they learn to hide some feelings. However, as they lose access to their feelings, Hochschild (2012:188) argues, they lose a central means for interpreting events and the world around them, making it easier for authorities to control and manipulate their minds by dictating propagandistic narratives.

Furthermore, to take away people's time, that is, their lives, by keeping them trapped in an open-ended, indefinite queue, is an admission that their lives count for nothing and are therefore expendable, and superfluous. The figure of *Homo Sacer*, whose life is insignificant to sovereign power, becomes an indispensable component of power relations in post-independence Egypt. Similarly, Arendt (1951:457) points out that one of the hallmarks of totalitarianism is to label people as unwanted, subhuman, and superfluous or unnecessary. In a sense, concentration camps are based on the idea of eliminating those deemed superfluous and unworthy of sharing the world with others who are more countable and necessary. Abdel Aziz's point in *The Queue* is certainly not comparable to the concentration camps in Nazi Germany, but the act of indefinite waiting is meant to render the countless people waiting for their fate to be stamped and approved worthless in some way, reminding us of Arendt's words about concentration camps (Pandit, 2017). Although the terror is far from the same, Abdel Aziz in

The Queue, I argue, goes far to suggest that the uncertainty of hope and fate in bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes recalls a common fear. Although people in Abdel Aziz's queue can theoretically move and express themselves freely compared to closed camps, they are haunted by the fear of being constantly followed by an invisible gaze, with the dissenting voices being punished or disciplined, and, above all, by the fear of losing their place in the queue thus losing what they came for. The uncertainty of hope and the production of bare life become so entangled that the longer the inhabitants of the queue stand in line, the more they are exposed to life-threatening situations from which the law and politics offer no protection or help. The indefinite waiting is a state of exception or anomaly that is normalised for the enactment of what constitutes Agamben's (1998) figure of *Homo Sacer*.

> Meanwhile, rumours spread that some people whose (phone) conversations had been recorded had disappeared; they had been summoned to the basement and never returned (122) [..] People left their phones in empty rooms at home, afraid that their important or revealing conversations would be transmitted, and kept their calls to short social pleasantries, congratulations, and condolences (170).

The closed gate, as Abdel Aziz suggests, gradually becomes a symbol of an oppressive power that determines people's behaviour, turning them into identical copies of each other and depriving them of their will. The Gate's rationale of 'us on the inside' and 'them on the outside' departs in some ways from Carl Schmitt's (1932:26) infamous political distinction between friend and enemy by creating a division between those with whom to ally or those to fight, thus depriving subjects of agency, for when they exercise it, it is taken from them by the force of segregation and labelling. Schmitt's distinction is further operationalised by what Abdel Aziz calls a 'Certificate of True Citizenship': a document issued by the Gate certifying that the person is a true, meritorious, or sufficiently good citizen, a document proving loyalty and fidelity to the power regime. The use of the term 'true citizens' is reminiscent of the term 'honourable citizens,' which was brought to the forefront by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) a few days before the fall of Mubarak and is still in use today, to distinguish

between those who pose a threat to the regime, who do not comply with the wishes of the authorities, and those who are worthy, patriotic, and dignified (*ālmwāṭnyn ālšrfā'*(honourable citizens) vs. *ālqlẗ ālmndsẗ* (imposed minority)) (see Abdelhamid, 2022).

The framing of the other as enemy, traitor, terrorist, or less loyal is a technique adopted more recently from the global 'war on terror,' in which Schmitt's name keeps coming up. A few weeks after the military coup in 2013, then army chief al-Sisi (2013) had called on 'all honourable and trustworthy citizens' to come forward and give him the mandate and order to take action against what he described as violence and potential terrorism. The novel makes this distinction clear by showing how Mahfouz, the security guard who was killed fighting the riots after shooting one of the demonstrators, is seen by his cousin Shalaby who came to the Gate only to request honourable recognition for Mahfouz (74). Mahfouz was a real man, Shalaby says, while the man he had killed was just an agitator, a saboteur who tried to take possession of the streets and thus hinder the life activities of the honourable citizens (77-78).

> It was Mahfouz sworn duty to protect and defend the country from Godless infidels, unscrupulous rebels, and other filth who were bent on destruction and had an insatiable appetite for dirty money (73).

The Truth: An accepted illusion (178)

The transition from a state of subjugation to a state of citizenship, in my opinion, forms the basis for all the struggles in the country from the early colonial period through Nasser to the present day. January 2011 was above all a moment of struggle against subordination to benevolent rulers. While the terms of subjugation have not changed significantly in post-independence Egypt, the official use of the concept of citizenship (in its liberal tradition that bestows uniform rights and duties upon all members of a state) is increasingly opaque. Abdel Aziz's category of certifying true citizenship sheds light on the ways in which authoritarian forms of domination and exclusion are enacted and sustained through the use of language, or what Bourdieu (1991: 163) refers to as 'symbolic violence/power.' Abdel Aziz's analysis of

symbolic violence through language involves not only the Gate as the central authority, but also its proxies, the country's High Sheikh (the religious figure who heads the Fatwa and Rationalizations Committee, as depicted in the novel), who issues a fatwa (Islamic legal opinion) in conjunction with the official narrative stating that 'God fearing believers' should accept bullets as though they come from God (181).'

During the Egyptian uprising, religion was strongly present in the official stances of the religious institutions (Al-Azhar and the Coptic church). From the beginning of the uprising, senior members of al-Azhar took a conservative stance on the protests and called on the demonstrators and the regime to exercise restraint, [43] citing concern for the public good and even considering fatwas calling for support of the demonstrators as 'sedition' (*fitna*) forbidden by God and His Messenger (al-Anani, 2012: 7). The Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb, expressed his support for the Mubarak regime and, after Mubarak's fall, for the SCAF (Ezzat, 2020). The stance of the Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Church was no different. When then-army chief al-Sisi announced the overthrow of Muslim Brotherhood President Mohamed Morsi in a live televised press conference on June 3, 2013, numerous civilian figures were present to lend legitimacy to the coup, including Pope Tawadros II of the Coptic Church and the Grand Imam of al-Azahr, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb (Holmes, 2019:145).

Through its network of supporters and proxies, The Gate has repeatedly sought to fabricate/distort the truth (defined here as a reasonably accurate account of reality) and shift the blame. What the novel depicts is a power constellation that thrives on isolating its subjects

[43] Al-Azhar is considered the world's highest seat for Sunni scholars and is one of the most respected sources of religious scholarship and guidance in the Muslim world (Morsy, 2011; Brown, September 2011). Despite al-Azhar's official stance, several Azharite scholars supported the uprising: Sheikh Emad Effat, a senior Azharite scholar who advocated nonviolent resistance and frequently participated in protests against the SCAF regime during the transition period, was shot and killed by security forces during a sit-in (Khazbak, 2011). Sheikh Emad became a prominent martyr icon of the uprising, which in some ways problematized the relationship between the private (individual religious scholars) and the official stance of al-Azhar institution.

between an inside and an outside, sometimes blurring that distinction so that the outside can join the inside at any time, locking them into an endless queue and controlling the narrative passed off as the absolute truth through the control of TV, telecommunications companies, news broadcasts, and religious institutions. The only newspaper allowed to be sold in the queue is the state-controlled newspaper with the ironic name *The Truth*.

By controlling the narrative, people are robbed of their words and their experiences, leaving no room in language for an alternative perception of reality (Bhatia, 2017) consequently they are no longer able to make independent judgments about the nature of reality. The vocabulary used by the Gate and its proponents is specifically designed to stun and mislead queue dwellers and the public at large on whose support it depends. It has created grotesque euphemisms that, according to Marcuse (1964: 106), 'not only reflects the control of the apparatus of power, but itself (the language) becomes an instrument of control that does not search for but establishes and imposes truth and falsehood.' The novel uses the terms 'righteous (true/untrue) citizens (114),' 'unscrupulous rebels' (73), and 'anti-religious minority' (181) as a few examples of the repressive character of the language used by the Gate's regime. Moreover, the use of the term 'rumours' as a substitute for actual events or real happenings is an example of the subversion of language. The Gate manipulates facts and promptly issues its own version of them:

> The story simply made no sense—it contradicted all the other accounts in all the other papers, as well as every statement released by the Gate, and it went against the committee's latest fatwas, too. Ehab's report was just based on rumours that there were citizens injured by government bullets who had not come forward, that others were blind to their injuries. Rumours that they had disposed of the bullets removed from people's bodies, and then denied that the bullets had ever existed (182).

Following Foucault (2006), Abdel Aziz presents truth as a central and tactical element for the functioning of power relations. In both works, the individual is fundamentally thought of as the subject of truth, but the perception of truth by both parties is different. Foucault speaks of a modern Western 'epistemological' view of truth, which he refers to in his Lectures on

Psychiatric Power (2006) as 'truth demonstration' or truth as objective and demonstrative as opposed to 'truth as event.' Truth in this modern epistemological view requires no brute or additional force to be accepted. It is true regardless of place or time; it resides everywhere and can be recognised by anyone at any time. 'Truth itself determines its regime, makes the law, and obliges me. It is true, and I submit to it, says Foucault (2014: 92-93).'Abdel Aziz, on the other hand, presents truth in the novel as an event of repeated egregious falsehoods and untruths, an incomprehensible event, an accepted illusion (178) that requires brute force or coercion to be transmitted and accepted. In short, the truth Abdel Aziz presents belongs to the order of force, not the order of knowledge.

> This truth (truth as event) is a dispersed, discontinuous, interrupted truth which will only speak or appear from time to time, where it wishes to, in certain places; a truth which does not appear everywhere, at all times, or for everyone; a truth which is not waiting for us, because it is a truth which has its favourable moments, its propitious places, its privileged agents and bearers. It is a truth which has its geography (Foucault, 2006: 236-237)

In post-2011 Egypt, the official narrative about those who disappeared and never reappeared or those who were arrested for unknown reasons and are still in custody, or even those who were extrajudicially murdered (e.g., Shaimaa al-Sabbagh), is not far from the Gate's narrative about the Disgraceful events and those who were shot in the process. [44] In both cases, it is about propagating conspiracies, denying responsibility or knowledge of the events, in a sense a manipulation and distortion of the truth or what is known as Orwellian 'double speak.' Yehya is one of dozens or hundreds of people who were seriously injured in the Disgraceful Events (51), and the bullet that lodges in his body is undoubtedly and unmistakably real: 'He possessed tangible evidence of what had really happened and was perhaps the only person still alive who was willing to prove what the authorities had done (116),' but yet the Gate had released a

[44] Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, a young mother, poet, and a leading member of the Socialist Popular Alliance Party, was shot dead by security forces in January 2015 as she peacefully marched to commemorate the anniversary of the uprising (Alarabiya News, 2015).

statement claiming that no bullets had been fired at the place and time he was injured (52). It further urged people 'not to be misled by what they had seen, no matter how confident they were in the accuracy of their vision (93).' At the same time, it closed all radiology departments in hospitals, public clinics, and private clinics, confiscated all their equipment, and took it to Zephyr Hospital, a subsidiary of the Gate (ibid).

> Several prominent journalists published full-page articles concurring that no bullets had been found, neither in the bodies of the dead nor of the injured. Eyewitnesses they quoted insisted that the people who caused the Disgraceful events were just rioters who had suddenly lost all moral inhibitions and flown into a frenzy: first they insulted one another, then they threw stones, and finally they seized iron bars from an old, vacant building belonging to the Gate. Any injuries they sustained were simply puncture wounds they suffered while struggling over the bars they had wrenched off (52). Some journalists went further and published unconfirmed reports that people who died were not in fact killed but had committed suicide when they saw what had happened (53) [..] Assertions that people had been injured in the Events were clearly no more than lies and fabrications, spread by an anti-religious minority who had suffered injuries themselves (181).

Arendt's analysis of propaganda and the function of lies in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) seems particularly relevant to Abdel Aziz's description of the strategies used by the Gate. The kind of blatant lies spread by the Gate and its supporters among the inhabitants of the queue and by other institutions (including the media and religious institutions) are so commonplace that they become banal practices. Moreover, falsification of the truth, as described, goes hand in hand with the concealment and/or manipulation of evidence, as in the case of Yehya, whose x-rays (the only evidence of his injury) were taken away from his file and confiscated, upon instructions, by a military doctor (42-43). The metaphor of the military uniform is significant because, in a sense, Abdel Aziz is referring to the hierarchical relationship between civilian and military doctors within the same medical field. To remove the bullet, Yehya must undergo surgery, but the gate has decreed that no surgery can be performed without prior authorisation (41). While Yehya endures the long wait in line and his condition worsens day by day as illustrated by his increasingly deteriorated physical health,

Tarek, the principled doctor tending to Yehya's case, struggles between his desire for personal safety and his moral and professional obligations. When it turns out that the gate denies that shots were fired during the events, Tarek is faced with a difficult decision: forget everything that happened or treat Yehya and face the consequences (57).

> Terms and provisions issued by the Gate in conducting work in medical facilities: Article 4(A): Authorisation for the removal of bullets. The extraction of a bullet or any other type of firearm projectile, whether in a clinic or a private or government hospital, from a body of a person killed or injured, is a criminal act, except when performed under official authorisation issued by the Gate of the Northern Building; parties excluded from the above are limited to Zephyr Hospital and its auxiliary buildings, which are direct subsidiaries of the Gate [..] As a rule, bullets and projectiles may be the property of security units, and thus cannot be removed from the body without special authorisation (44-45).

The deterrent and arbitrary side of bureaucracy is evident in the amendment to Article 4 (A), which sets the conditions for those who can obtain permission to remove bullets. The right to life is made conditional on compliance and obedience to the authorities. The emphasis on bureaucracy is so clear that every minute detail is controlled by decrees and laws that are passed on to the people. Abdel-Aziz envisions an ever-expanding total regime after a mass uprising that uses legislation to burnish its image and give legitimacy to despotism (legalising autocracy and dictatorship).

> Permits authorizing the removal of bullets shall not be granted, except to those who prove beyond doubt, and with irrefutable evidence, their full commitment to sound morals and comportment, and to those who are issued an official certificate confirming that they are a righteous citizen, or, at least, a true citizen. Certificates of True Citizenship that do not bear a signature from the Booth and the seal of the Gate shall not be recognized under any circumstances (114).

Nothingness: The body as a map of the battle (25)

The power that the gate exercises over Yehya and countless others is a power over life and death (the right to take life or let live), embodied in the fact that his place in the queue represents the Gate's ability to end his life by simply making him wait until time runs out. The experience of his subjectivity is that of waiting to be granted the right to live. At best, he is labelled as an 'untrue citizen' (188) and punished for not fulfilling his religious duties according to the High

Sheikh's fatwa, accusing him of not accepting God's will and of questioning the unquestionable and above all for the negligence that directly led to his injuries (181). He is accused of taking the bullet and charged with demanding its removal. Yehya is the example of a subject whose murder is not a crime and whose life is no longer his, an example of what Agamben calls a living dead (1998:99). Power as presented in *The Queue* is essentially a right of appropriation: of time, of bodies, and ultimately of life itself. The use of the body as a site of retribution and punishment through torture and enforced disappearances was a clear strategy employed by the Egyptian authorities during the transitional period in which the novel is set (2011 and 2013). The targeted and repeated shootings in the eyes of Mohamed Mahmoud's demonstrators in 2013 are a good example of how Egyptian authorities use the body as a site of retribution, truth, and remembrance, as if to say that by shooting away the eyes, the witness is lost (see Human Rights Watch Report 2012). The novel problematises the connection between the body and body politic. As much as the body can be treated as a site of punishment and retribution, it can also function as a site of truth, a site of proof against the abuse of power. In other words, Agamben's bare life or (*zoe*) bears evidence of political existence (*bios*).

Yehya vacillates between hope and hopelessness, he is 'filled with despair and the desire to hide' and at the same time imbued with the longing to survive, to start a new life and to experience every moment of sadness, joy, and absurdity (94). Other people had grown weak in the face of fear and pain or had bowed to pressure and promises from above, clinging to the desire to survive their predicament (115). Others agreed to undergo surgery at Zephyr Hospital and were somehow back to the way they had been before the events with no sign of bullets or any trace (proof) of abuse (ibid). Like many others in the queue, Yehya had become a captive of it, unable to think beyond the Gate and the permission he was waiting for. Yet he was aware that he was carrying a tangible testimony of the abuse of power; his bullet is a preservation of the memory he wanted to remove, but he did not want to erase the memory (116). Holding to

his position of keeping the bullet to bear witness is in some ways similar to Agamben's (1999) account of the camp, in which he implies that one of the reasons a prisoner can survive is the idea of bearing witness. 'I firmly decided that, despite everything that might happen to me, I would not take my own life...since I did not want to suppress the witness that I could become,' says Langbein (1988:186), one of the Auschwitz survivors.

While waiting in line, a second wave of Disgraceful Events broke out. Accusations were spread in the media against what some members of the queue called the 'Riffraff' resistance movement, which initially achieved success before being cut short (90). Propaganda announced that Riffraffs were against the Gate and were trying to divide and disperse the queue. When the people in the queue heard this, they rose up against the Riffraffs, accusing them of childish, reckless and irresponsible behaviour and demanding that they leave immediately (ibid). The clinging to false hope and the passive acquiescence of the queue dwellers (what to do if The Gate simply does not open?) represents the terrifying way in which authoritarianism gradually takes possession of all aspects of life or the banality of collective evil, as some might call it (Bhatia, 2017). Fear of chaos and the pursuit of stability make people susceptible to authoritarian rule, as Abdel Aziz implies in the novel. Indeed, the choice between chaos and stability was a regular controlling tool of the Mubarak regime and remains so under the Sisi regime. In his last speech before his fall, Mubarak (2011) stated unequivocally: 'The choice between chaos and stability.'

> Everyone in the queue [...] refused to give up hope. No one was ready to leave without receiving the resolution they had come for. Life in the queue had been relatively orderly and stable before the Riffraff's arrival; there were recognized rules and limits, which everyone accepted, and everyone followed (90).

While many of those in line have opted for what I call *the stability of the uncertain* and have chosen to submit to the power of the Gate and its jurisdiction, others are portrayed as 'speaking subjects' who insist on speaking what they have experienced and are willing to suffer the consequences. These include: The woman with the short hair who launched a boycott campaign

against the Violet Telecom company, and Ehab, the journalist who wrote an article in the newspaper about the boycott campaign and conditions in the queue, but whose article the newspaper refused to publish on the grounds of 'fabricating news' (135) and spreading rumours (182).

Amani, on the other hand, Yehya's friend, decides to pay a visit to Zephyr Hospital to get Yehya's x-rays, especially after the gate announces that one must present the x-rays to get permission to remove the bullet. When Amani arrives at the hospital and boldly insists that Yehya has a right to get his x-rays back, she is told that there were no injuries that day or any other day. Amani could not help but scream and make a statement about Yehya's injury and the bullet, 'as soon as they do the operation and he has the bullet in his hand, he will tell everyone who shot him, and then you will have your proof (151).' With this, Amani has crossed the line drawn by the authorities, whereupon she is inexplicably tortured; the form of torture is not fully revealed, but it is so drastic that she is no longer herself at all (157). After that day, Amani's life has fundamentally changed. She distances herself from her friends and almost loses her job (204). The experience has robbed her of 'all-natural vitality and determination' and left her in a 'dull and lifeless state (ibid).' She loses her urge to prove the Gate wrong and begins to convince herself that nothing really happened (213). She tries to convince Yehya that the bullet that had pierced his side and was lodged in his pelvis was a fake bullet, that it was not important to remove it, and that he no longer needed to concern himself with the question of who had shot him. But Yehya was not convinced, and he did not stop bleeding (ibid).

> Nothingness. She was not blindfolded, but all she could see was black. She moved her palms away from her face ... nothing. She heard no voices, her hands felt no walls, no columns, no bars. She saw and felt nothing, only the solid earth underneath her, where she stood or sat or slept. Perhaps she was only earth, too. She walked in every direction but met nothing but a void. She tried to scream, to be silent and listen out for other voices, to swear and curse every person who deserved to be punished for wronging her. Or even just name them. The Gate and the people who ran it. Violet Telecom. The High Sheikh. And then she took it all back and asked for forgiveness, rebelling then pleading,

> filled with courage then wracked with tears. But everything remained as it was: nothingness (157).

The novel ends with Tarek, the doctor, deciding to operate on Yehya outside a medical facility. Nagy, Yehya's friend, offers to use his apartment as an operating room. Knowing that he is being monitored and that all his conversations and visits are recorded in *Document No. 6*, he changes his mind and postpones the surgery, but again decides to go ahead with the procedure (216). Tarek returns to the hospital to take a last look at Yehya's file, in which he has noted the words 'Yehya Gad el-Rab Saeed spent one hundred and forty days of his life in the queue (217),' an allusion to Yehya's death. Tarek then closed the file, left it on the desk, and rose.

With the grim event of Yehya's death and the uncertain fate of Amani and many other inhabitants of the queue, Abdel-Aziz draws on Agamben's (1998: 171) analogy to the camp by pointing out that in the queue, as in the camp, 'power confronts nothing but pure life, without mediation.' The lives of Yehya and others in the queue are largely characterized by what Mbembe (2003: 1) calls 'extraordinary vulnerability,' an intricate intertwining of life and death that profoundly affects the lived experiences of space, time, and body of those who live in such proximity to death and terror. To sum up, the experience of indeterminate (uncertain) waiting, as depicted in the novel, is integral to the experience of being the subject of (to) an authoritarian regime. In other words, the uncertainty, nothingness, absurdity, and possibly resistance (manifested in the act of witnessing through the preservation of evidence) that the act of waiting entails constitute an essential feature of the power-subject relationship.

5.2 *Here is a Body* (2017) by Basma Abdel Aziz

> I am living in the camp as a body among many bodies (43). “Listen, you body,” they say. “Shut up, you body.” “Obey, you body.” They are the heads, and we are the bodies (44). We are all bodies in their world, and now we are all bodies in the world beyond them too. We got used to being called bodies, and our real names faded away automatically [says Rabie, one of the main characters of *Here is a Body,* 2017:47].

Not long after *The Queue*, Abdel Aziz published *Here is a Body* or *Hunā Badan* (2017, published in English in 2021). The novel was not allowed to be advertised or even sold in Egypt (Lindsey, 2022). I remember searching in vain for the book in local bookstores and finally had to order it online. In a way, the strict restriction on the publication and sale of the novel by the relevant authorities is emblematic of the story that the novel unfolds. The novel is set in two spatial realms (two narrative strands): The Camp and The Space, both of which come to epitomise bare life in today’s Egypt. To understand the two spatial domains on which Abdel Aziz bases her plot, it is necessary to look at the Sisi power regime from a more microscopic point of view, perhaps even deeper than in the previous chapters, since it is the culmination of earlier exercises of power.

Indeed, as will be discussed in more detail below, the novel bears witness to the exercise of power under al-Sisi regime and at times slides back and forth between the plot and a specific moment of extreme violence in the country’s history, so that at a certain point it becomes difficult to distinguish between the novel and the real event. It testifies to the appropriation and possession of the body as a subject-forming practice of the Sisi power regime, branded as Egypt’s ‘New Republic,’ a slogan introduced by President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi in 2022 as an expression of his vision of rebuilding Egypt as a republic of development, construction, and progress’ (Egypt Today, 2022). The proclamation of the new or second republic alludes to the historical parallel with Nasser’s first republic, or the republic of the Free Officers. Whereas the first republic, which spanned a period of nearly 60 years from 1952 to 2011, laid the groundwork for an absolute exercise of power with some moments of struggle and resistance,

as noted earlier, is in many ways no different.[45] On the contrary, some observers claim Egypt is moving in the opposite direction, back to the first republic (Sayigh, 2014).

While Nasser's authoritarian bargain, discussed in previous chapters, transitioned into hybrid authoritarianism under Sadat and Mubarak, Sisi's regime has evolved into a full military dictatorship that relies heavily on the military and security establishment to lead and manage day-to-day government operations and even the economy.[46] The culmination of military involvement is the imposition of two mega-projects: the expansion of the Suez Canal and the construction of the new capital (Brooks, 2021; K. Rutherford, 2018).[47] By beginning with the first republic of July 1952 and ending with the so-called second republic of July 2013, the study suggests that Egypt's post-independence history should be read in a cyclical manner.

Here is a Body is a narrative that presents Sisi's military-backed new authoritarianism as a form of reconfigured sovereign power that acts directly on and through the subject's bodies and the spaces they occupy, holding them hostage awaiting a reprieve. I use the term sovereign as a combination of Foucault's (2003:259) 'power over life' and Agamben's (1998:159) 'power over death.' Abdel Aziz understands the subjugated body, on the one hand, as a material being that is acted upon, and, on the other, as a temporal site of power transfer onto which power can be projected and/or stripped away. In brief, the main protagonist of the novel is 'the body's capacity to be killed,' as Agamben (1998:12) says. In short, *Here is a body* is a story about how authoritarian regimes act upon and enact bodies, but also about how bodies, despite

[45] To become Defence Minister, Sisi, who was then head of military intelligence, first had to be promoted to Lieutenant General, and then, to become president, had to rise to Field Marshal without ever having had a day of combat or field experience (Kandil, 2016b:10).
[46] For more information on the economy of the Egyptian army, see Anouar Abdel-Malek (1998); Ottaway, 2015, and Yezid Sayigh (2019) on the phenomenal growth of the military economy under Sisi.
[47] It is worth noting that the army's budget and revenues are kept secret; not much is known to the public about the monetary value of revenues and expenditures (Ouf, 2018).

their subjection to deep constraints, are still able to manifest their agency in the midst of those constraints. In an interview, Basma Abdel Aziz (2021a) writes:

> The idea for *Here is a Body* had been flourishing in my mind over the past few years. It came directly from reality on the ground. The narrative thread of 'The Camp' developed as I noticed the sudden disappearance of homeless boys and girls from the streets of Cairo. I took notes and extended my line of questioning, trying to explore what fate they were led to, what would have been the reasons for their disappearance, and what might be behind it. The second narrative threat, that of 'The Space,' also has its roots in reality; it is the massacre that was committed years ago, in which hundreds of people were killed, while the rest were detained, and left to die in prisons; the victims were pictured as devils, while the perpetrators washed their hands of their blood, dehumanizing those who were still alive, and finally, rewriting history. A mixture of these two threads was the initial core idea I chose for the novel. It gave me the opportunity to tell a considerable part of what has really did occur, but also to imagine what was not seen.

The distinction between bodies and heads that Abdel Aziz makes in the novel is significant (44) because it embodies in itself the way the regime views itself vis-à-vis the people, which is in great contrast with the way the people viewed themselves during the January 25 uprising, as the famous slogan goes, "The people want ..." What Abdel Aziz represents in the novel is a securitised body, a nameless, countless body that can neither think, desire, or express an independent will.

To control subjects and make them recognisable as mere bodies, rulers in postcolonial Egypt resorted to techniques I call the three Cs: coercion, co-optation, and control of the religious, media and public discourse (language in use). With the discourse of threat, emergency, and exception, foreign conspiracies were always central to the exercise of power in the country (Tonsy and el-Raggal, 2021: 52). Sisi elevated this discourse to a more existential level, focusing on the survival of the state itself rather than on a range of looming external or internal threats (ibid). He repeatedly uses the term 'evil people' to refer to a dubious segment of the Egyptian population, blaming them for all the shortcomings and faliures of the Egyptian government (Nossier, 2016). Just as in *Here is a Body*, the evil people are bodies that could be

anyone, no one, or a specific one, but it makes no difference since everyone is subject to this divelish discourse.

As in the works of Schmitt (2006) and Agamben (2003a), al-Sisi has created a discourse of exception par excellence, consistent with what Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence calls the 'fancied emergency,' or the 'willed state of exception' (see Werner Spohr, cited in Drobisch and Wieland, 1993:28), in order to protect the country from the alleged forces of evil and chaos (Tonsy and el-Raggal, 2021: 52; see also Hamzawy, 2017). While Agamben's state of exception is about the suspension of law, al-Sisi's state of exception is more about formalizing the permanence of the exception, in other words, the endorsement of the exception and its anchoring in law (see Ardovini and Mabon, 2019).[48] This is precisely what happened after the state of emergency was officially lifted on October 25, 2021, when numerous emergency-like provisions had already been incorporated into other laws (e.g. 2013 Anti-Protest Law and Counter-Terrorism Law No. 94 of 2015), making the exception permanent (in Agamben's (2003) words, the exception becomes the rule) (Human Rights Watch, 2021; see further on the state of emergency in Egypt Mohy El Deen, 2017 and Auf, 2018).

Given the sacred mission of protecting the nation from the 'forces of evil,' that, according to the official narrative, conspire against the country, it is not surprising that President al-Sisi is touted as the country's sovereign ruler and saviour (see *The New Arab*, 2016). The public and private media (including both print and satellite media outlets), often controlled by the security apparatus, repeatedly use certain phrases and other glorifying statements about Egypt's Sisi as saviour of the country, trimphuant guiding hand and predestined prophet, which serve to glorify his role and build an aura and cult of personality around him (Seikaly, 2014). Within this populist discourse of Egyptian militancy and exceptionalism, enforced disappearances, torture,

[48] Egypt has lived under a state of emergency since 1981, except for interrupted periods between mid-2012 and mid-2017 (see Human Rights Watch Report 2021).

prolonged pretrial detention, the expansion of the jurisdiction of military courts (military trials of civilians), mass death sentences, extrajudicial killings, and various other rights violations are committed as part of a broad-based repression that leaves no one behind and goes beyond the classic opponents of the regime (the Islamists) (ibid). It is precisely this discourse and the categorical distinction between good and evil that is metaphorically portrayed in Abdel Aziz's novel between the boundaries of the Camp and the Space.

To solidify his figure as the country's sovereign ruler and saviour, al-Sisi, former U.S. President Donald Trump's favourite dictator, as he has repeatedly called him (see *The Guardian*, 2019), or 'Egypt's Pinochet,' as soicologist Hazem Kandil (2014b) calls him, has sought to capitalise on two key moments: These two moments are: a) *ẖṭāb āltfwyḍ* (the Mandate Speech): On July 24, 2013, then- Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces al Sisi asked for a popular mandate to fight terrorism proclaiming a 'war on terror' (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 2013); and b) the dispersal of the Raba'a sit-in in August 2013, which claimed more than 1,000 lives (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Following the 30 June 2013 military coup, pro-Morsi supporters, mostly members of MB, camped out with coup opponents in Raba'a Al-Adawiya Square. The sit-in lasted about 47 days before it was violently dispersed by the police and military forces, resulting in a massacre described by Human Rights Watch (2014) as 'one of the world's largest killings of demonstrators in a single day in recent history.'

By violently dispersing the sit-in, al-Sisi, demonstrated his sovereign capacity to use maximum force by carrying out one of the deadliest of several post-2013 coup, crackdowns on Muslim Brotherhood, and more generally committing one of the worst atrocities in the country's protest history, albeit with popular approval and amid international anger that he would later appease (Tonsy and el-Raggal, 2021: 56). In this particular epoch of violence, as Agamben (2003a: 4) notes, bare life, I argue, has reached its utmost 'indeterminacy.' However, the killing and wounding of hundreds of thousands of Egyptians did not shake al-Sisi's status as a presidential

candidate in 2014. In many circles, this actually reinforced it, leading to a kind of euphoric masculinisation or sexualization of al-Sisi into the figure of the patriarch, a common representation of 'hegemonic masculinity' embodied by previous Egyptian military-rulers, particulalry Nasser (Frederika Malmström, 2019: 98). Al-Sisi's fever or mania (el-Behary, 2013), as some called it, or his charismatic authority during that time (to use Max Weber's classic terminology) was partly associated with the notion of a better and stable future free from the 'forces of evil,' whether external (foreign threats) or internal (MB or Tahrir revolutionary forces) (ibid: 110).

In a way, al-Sisi resembles Walter Benjamin's (1996: 239) figure of the 'great criminal' who, no matter how repellent his crimes, arouses the admiration of the public. Jacques Derrida (2017: 45) explains that this is because 'the great criminal [..] is the sovereign exception of the one who has been able [..] to reappropriate for himself, as an individual, the violence that the law has taken out of the hands of individuals.' To justify the predatory use of violence (commonly known as the 'massacre of Raba'a'), al-Sisi advanced two main arguments that I contend are in line with Benjamin's and Derrida's characterization of the 'great criminal.' The first is a statist argument that justify the monopoly of force to protect the country and combat the threat of state collapse, as in other countries in the region (Syria and Iraq). The second is a purely religious argument, in which he positions himself as the bearer of a divine mandate to eradicate extremism and prevent future radicalization (Tonsy and el-Raggal, 2021: 56). On one of his trips to Europe, al-Sisi told Egyptian audiences, 'God made me a doctor to diagnose the problem, he made me this way so that I can see and understand the true state of affairs.[49] It is a blessing from God (Wright, 2015).' In both moments, al-Sisi's regime has acted steadfastly to proliferate fear and terror, not to fight or abolish it, as Agamben (2015) argues.

[49] In this context, it should be noted that President al-Sisi has neither a medical degree nor medical training.

Argumentatively, the mandate and dispersion represent two moments of hegemony in Gramsci's (1992) sense, closely related to the point of almost overlapping, one based on popular consent and the other on brute coercion. However, this popular consent, which al-Sisi's military-backed regime often invokes to justify its actions, cannot be explained by the mere creation of a 'false consciousness,' a concept derived from Marxist theory of social class and often described as a distorted understanding of one's own will and interests, as Abdel Aziz aptly points out in the following analysis.[50] In other words, the active acquiescence of the people to the terms of their subjugation is not necessarily to be understood as the people simply being manipulated or drawn into a 'false consciousness,' as some like to argue, but rather as the effect of a compelling worldview, mediated and enforced in concerted action by the various institutions of society, and guided primarily by notions of leadership, common good, and necessity. In a sense, it is a process of shaping cognition, but one that does not arise from an irrational position of the subject, but from what Gramsci (1971:333-335) calls 'contradictory consciousness' grounded in the common sense of the masses, which for him is 'disjointed and episodic' rather than 'critical and coherent.' In Egypt, de Smet (2016:25) writes: 'The hegemonic rule of the dominant class can very well rely on a disproportionate use of force (war, occupation, state violence), as long as this is accepted as necessary and in the interest of the common good by its allies.'

In the spirit of Foucault's questioning the way power acts upon a body, but also the way power comes to craft and form a body, best known for his analysis in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), *Here is a Body* takes a similar approach by examining the relationship between body and power in a way that stands as a testament to a moment of hegemony in the modern history of Egypt

[50] The term 'false consciousness' was first coined by Friedrich Engels (1949); there is no evidence that Karl Marx himself ever used it in his writings (Eagleton, 1991). The term first appeared in a letter from Engels to Franz Mehring in 1893 to describe the scenario in which a subordinate class willingly embodies the ideology of the ruling class. Modern Marxist scholars, including Georg Lukacs (1923, 1971) and Antonio Gramsci (1971), have further developed the term, and given it a very different reading.

in which the production of bodies becomes the fundamental activity of the power regime. In one of her interviews, Abdel Aziz (2022) says she wrote the novel out of a desire to preserve the collective memory of violations and abuses. In a sense, Abdel Aziz's *Here is a Body* presents what some call literature as a historical document/archive or repository that documents how people have felt and experienced certain events that have shaped much of their present and possibly the future of generations to come. Abdel Aziz thus echoes the French historian Lucien Febvre's (1953: 234-235) assertion that it is not possible to adequately consider an era or period of time without getting a sense of how people felt about events, both large and small. To this end, Febvre proposed a history that includes study of the arts, which he says are of 'inestimable value.' As Abdel Aziz (2022) says in one of her interviews:

> There are things that should not be buried, things that should just be documented for people to know about them when the time comes, even after years or decades. This is one of the biggest motives for why I wanted to write *Here is a Body*. This is why I recorded many testimonies, and this is why I put a lot of details in the line of the sit-in. These have truly happened.

Against the above background—and possibly to escape censorship—the novel is set in a placeless, timeless, and unidentifiable place, but it is not difficult for the reader to infer from the plot lines, names, and descriptions of characters and events that the action is set in Egypt. The novel takes place along what Abdel Aziz calls two main narrative threads: The first is an imaginary thread with as much reality in it as Abdel Aziz asserts. It tells the story of a camp where a group of street children were rounded up off the streets and forcibly taken away by security forces to a closed camp where they are forced into a kind of rehabilitation programme from which neither escape nor rebellion is possible (18). The programme included a series of conditioning lectures (on the importance of obedience, service to the homeland, political morality, the dangers of foreign conspiracies, etc.) delivered by articulate media representatives and pundits, religious figures, and high-ranking security officials to influence children's thinking, make them more receptive to the rhetoric of the military-backed regime, especially

the war on terror, and ultimately turn them into killing machines. The regime-sponsored programme is supported by generous contributions from business tycoons known for their close ties to the regime, a clear indication of the close ties between the media, religious figures, and business centres and the power regime (27, 125).

What is depicted in the Camp is a disciplinary power that acts on the individual, which, to quote Foucault (1977), acts directly on the body by marking it, training it, torturing it, and forcing it to perform certain tasks. The abducted children are forced to give up their identities, their previous lives, their sense of self and individual being, and most importantly, their names, and simply become 'bodies' to be used and trained at the behest of the military and security forces, whom the children refer to as 'Titans.' In drawing the lines of the imaginary thread, Abdel Aziz (2022) says that she was inspired by the statements of some lawmakers and journalists about street children, who are often demonised and portrayed by the media as criminals and thugs, and that they should not be left on the streets, but instead should be picked up and given military training so that the country can benefit from them.[51] Such calls were echoed in 2021 by an Egyptian member of parliament who has put forward a plan to pick up street children and place them in training and rehabilitation camps run by retired army officers (see Amin, 2021). The idea of placing street children in rehabilitation camps goes back to a similar initiative by Mohamed Ali Pasha (the Albanian Ottoman governor known as the founder of modern Egypt who ruled the country from 1805 to 1848), who reportedly collected some 300,000 street children and placed them in a desert camp in the south of the country, where they were trained in various professions and trades (Hussein, 2017).

On the one hand, the Camp can be read as an expression of the predatory character of al-Sisi regime or the state of 'prisonification of society' as some call it (see Matthies-Boon, 2022).

[51] In Egypt, the number of destitute children living and surviving on the streets is staggeringly high, especially in Cairo. They are mostly present as street vendors, shoe shiners, beggars, garbage collectors, goods carriers, etc. (Hussein, 2017; Amin, 2021).

Human rights groups report that the prison population has increased since the 2013 coup (there are currently up to 60,000 political prisoners in Egyptian jails, up from 5,000 to 10,000 at the end of the Mubarak era). [52] On the other hand, the Camp can be seen as an instrument of power that enables the organisation and the 'fabrication of corpses' in the words of Martin Heidegger, that is, it becomes a symbol of the siege and the politics of death of al-Sisi regime, but above all of the shaping of perception and cognition, suggesting an intertwining of the political and the spatial.[53] In other words, it can be said that the imaginative narrative of the Camp stands as the central paradigm for analysing power relations under al-Sisi regime.

Abdel Aziz's account of the camp as a spatial and sociological object is, I argue, ominously inspired by Agamben's (1998: 166) work on the camp as the 'nomos' of the modern political space or the new (biopolitical) paradigm of power born out of the state of exception (a modern form of sovereign rule that functions according to the make live—or let die formula, as opposed to the traditional juridical make die—or let live formula), as well as by Arendt's work on the camp as an experiment in the destruction of humanity and the central institution of totalitarianism. A camp as a place for the unwanted, not because of what they have done, but because of who they are and what they represent as a group, as shown in the works of Agamben and Arendt, is no different from Abdel Aziz. The latter, however, goes beyond the two by showing, as will be discussed below, that the camp is not just an instrument of population management or a space of exception where bare life is produced, but a tactful formula for the

---

[52] To cope with the increased prison population, more prisons have been built. At least 27 new prisons have been built which according to some human rights groups, nearly three new ones are built every year (see Waiting for you and there is a Room for Everyone reports by the Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI, 2021 and 2016).

[53] The use of the term 'fabrication of corpses' first appeared in a speech by Martin Heidegger in Bremen in 1949 and was published intact in volume 79 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1976) (Collected Edition) in an essay called *Positionality* or *Das Gestell*. The term is used in reference to the gas chambers or extermination camps of Nazi Germany. It should be noted that Heidegger does not refer to the Holocaust as a crime against humanity, genocide, or murder. He speaks only of the 'fabrication of corpses,' an expression that, according to Gordon (2014), refers to the continuous and anonymous operation of a machine that avoids any mention of a specific perpetrator, agency, or responsibility.

exercise of power (a fraudulent formula of power sharing) in which the undesirable group (in this case, the street children) is trained, manipulated, and optimised against others, even more undesirable groups so that the powerless are enabled to act in favour of the powerful and fight off their so-called enemies with a minimum of liability and impunity on the part of the powerful, rendering their crimes invisible.

The use of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as informal (seasonal) workers, street vendors and street children, referred to as government-backed 'thugs' or pro-government militias (*baltagiya* in Arabic), is a practice used by successive Egyptian regimes to sabotage opponents. The practice of hiring thugs, often for the equivalent of a few dollars, was reportedly first used by the Mubarak regime in the 1990s against Islamist groups and later during elections (El Rashidi, 2010). During the 2011 uprising, the group was very active in trying to sabotage and discredit protests and demonstrators to prevent the overthrow of the Mubarak regime. One particularly notable incident is the so-called 'Battle of the Camel' (Wynne-Hughes, 2021), in which pro-Mubarak thugs on horses and camels attacked protesters gathered in Tahrir Square to sabotage the protests and put on a show for international observers. For the regime and its loyalists, the so-called 'thugs' are cheap, desperate, and above all, they do not ask questions, or they are easy prey, as some call them (Windfhur and Steinvorth, 2011).

> They did not pick us up to punish us. They did it because they liked our style and wanted to use us for their own purposes. They wanted to take advantage of our skills. They are inciting us to attack the people they want attacked, to grab girls' breasts and asses in demonstrations, and light fires here and there. In short, we do what we did before, but under their protection, says Youssef, one of the children from the camp (Abdel Aziz, 2017: 203).

The first narrative line is not disconnected from the second, which is described as the Space where people hold a sit-in to protest the deposition and kidnapping of the president by a military coup. This line, as Abdel Aziz (2022) says, is clearly not a completely imaginary line, as it bears witness to the Raba'a massacre, in which demonstrators were violently attacked and hundreds were killed; those who were not killed were arrested, and many of them were later

sentenced to death or long prison terms in mass trials that activists say violated basic due process rights (Ardovini, 2022). 'This is a reflection of what I saw and a reflection of the testimonies of people I met and heard from about the evacuation of the sit-in,' Abdel Aziz (2022) says in an interview. The novel makes a good connection between the two storylines. While a group of street children are forced into a rehabilitation programme sponsored by a general, another group opposing the general is protesting a recent coup in parallel. The two storylines collide as the abducted children are trained to attack the protesters, not realising that they have more in common with the powerless (the protesters) than with the powerful (the regime). By using two spatial concepts, the Camp and the Space, Abdel Aziz reemphasizes that space, in its material and symbolic character, can be used as an analytical category for understanding power relations.

They had even stolen our names (52)

The novel opens with the abducted children being condemned for circumstances in which they had no part, and for being a great burden to the state, which cannot afford to pay, house, or educate them. After a cruel night of abduction, the children wake up to find themselves completely powerless, bound and gagged in an unknown place where their fate is to be decided. It was not long before one of the security guards showed up and told them what the authorities planned to do with them. Horrified, they learned that some designated experts had concocted a plan to get rid of them, deeming them non-existent and erasing their names from all official records, if they existed at all, and that this extermination plan was well received and supported by a large majority of the population (8-9).

> There would be nothing easier than poisoning you or shooting you and having your bodies removed from piles of garbage to be buried or burned [..] as the country cannot afford to spend money feedings, educating, and housing you without you doing anything in return (8) [..] Our lives, everything that had happened to us, would be forgotten. We would cease to exist (10).

The decision to get rid of the children was reconsidered by General Ismail (the head of the camp and holder of the highest office in the government for the defence of the entire country, who can be assumed to represent General Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi), who decided to take advantage of the special qualities they had acquired after their long stay on the streets (13), and a new plan was devised for housing them in a closed camp where they would undergo a rehabilitation programme. Under the command of General Ismail, the children are constantly reminded that they are a mainstay of the country and will one day be one of its main lines of defence, and most importantly, that they are the children of the general himself and the children of the system, and that they should serve the country and honourably defend its national security like 'respectable people,' so they have been told, and so they have been led to believe (24). As part of the very intimate (patriarchal) discourse, al-Sisi frequently addresses the nation with similar phrases, repeatedly emphasising the special bond between him, the armed forces, and Egyptians: 'Do not you know that you are the light in our eyes?' (See Shams El Din, 2014). The categorization of the entire population into 'normal,' 'suspicious,' 'dangerous,' 'infiltrating minority,' and 'criminal' is, as discussed in previous sections, a hallmark of the post-2013 Egyptian regime of power and thus also of the imaginary camp regime of Abdel Aziz, which thrives on the division between friend and enemy and the fluid shift between their positions (a friend is not always a friend).

> We will give you shelter in the camp, and we will look after your scrawny bodies, and you will not have much need for those rotten heads that you carry on your shoulders. You will be valued, and you will be strong, smart, upright citizens as good as any others (13).
>
> They said we [..] would learn new things, find out how things worked behind the scenes. People would treat us with respect. All we had to do was listen carefully, remember as much as possible, and do what was required-nothing more and nothing less (24).

Being afraid is what we do here (86)

In the novel's tense opening, Rabie, one of the collected street children and one of the novel's main characters, feels disoriented: between the terrible contrast between his life on the street

and that in the sheltered camp. He is torn between what he thought would be his salvation from society's wrath and the realisation that his freedom is in jeopardy with the militarised life in the camp and the penalties of disobedience gleefully and carefully meted out by the camp leaders (17). 'What is all this about strength? Who is strong and who is weak? Are only the strong worthy of trust?' Rabie wonders what the camp essentially stands for (87). The camp is a place originally built on fear, and all children were raised and trained to blind trust, obedience, and loyalty (82). Fear is depicted as a central instrument of control and domination in the camp, as it arguably is in the case with al-Sisi regime. The recruits of the camp do not know what will happen to them next and whether, having put their trust in the admirable general, they will really become honourable and good citizens, as promised. The fear of what is to come is their greatest fear. What they do not know brings with it an element of uncertainty, for fear and uncertainty are two sides of the same coin. Similarly, in *Being and Time* Heidegger (1962:180-181) relates fear to what is not in the present, whether in the spatial or temporal sense of the "here and now." Fear responds to what is approaching rather than what is already here.

> In this camp, I have lost my sense of superiority. Imagine, says Rabie to his friend Saad, in the street I thought I was on top of the world. I inspired fear in many people, but now I am one who is afraid (93).

What is portrayed in the camp is a fearful, monotonous, and insecure life full of constraints that act primarily on the body and manipulate the psyche—not only through lies or untrue accounts (propaganda) of what goes on inside and outside the camp, but in many cases through what American sociologist Harry G. Frankfurt (2005) calls 'bullshit.' In most cases, camp heads were less concerned with telling the truth, or even lying, than with reaching the minds of their recruits with a host of nationalistic and religiously dressed-up sentiments that had nothing to do with how things are. As Frankfurt (2005: 52) says, the bullshitter is less analytical and less deliberative and has more freedom to play with the truth or the facts. He cares less about how things really are.

> The country is the beginning and the end. It is the purpose that we serve and for which we make sacrifices. As the general say, our county is the heart of the world (52). [..] Obey your leader always, remembered his favours to you, and make sure you carry out orders to the letter. Meticulous work is a token of belief and obeying your master is part of obedience to God, one of the pillars of faith (27).

In this atmosphere of fear and manipulative mendacity, life in the camp proceeds methodically and according to a strict plan laid down by General Ismail and meticulously implemented by the camp heads (43). Isolation, humiliation, strict timetables, and disconnection from the outside world all serve to achieve a state of numbness and submission. The children are being trained (weaponised) to become the strike force tasked with attacking the demonstrators and driving them off the streets.[54] They eat, sleep, wake up, exercise, and even go to the bathroom on a very strict schedule; everyone lives in the camp as 'one body among other bodies (43).' Only when one of the children escapes from the camp and his body is found dead do they all realise that the camp is no more than a place from which there is no escape (18), just as it became inconceivable that anyone could ever escape the Titans or flee from their power (54). Rabie envies the escapees for their courage, for he too feels that he has lost the sense of freedom and superiority he used to have on the streets (93), like the escapees he had thought of running away of the camp, but unlike them he preferred safety to freedom (16). At every opportunity the children were reminded that no one could ever escape the camp. This sheds light on the contested dichotomy between security and freedom that manifests itself as a central element of life in the camp, as the children repeatedly learn that: 'Freedom has limits and rules, and in crises no form of freedom can be demanded, because freedom leads to chaos (92).'

> Escape to where? What does he expect after his escape? And what will become of him in the years to come if he is lucky enough to survive. Someone with no purposes in life does not deserve to live. You used to live as parasites, like leeches, but now you have noble objectivities and legitimate ambitions. You have advances to a higher level and none of us would survive outside the camp.

[54] The military use of children does suggest the common use of children as combatants in Africa, but that is probably not the main concern of the novel, but rather the exploitation of the powerless in general, not necessarily children, but the less privileged.

> Make no mistake about it. Not a single boy will survive without a clear future
> or carefully planned objectives (53).

To ensure their safety, the children must give up their freedoms and submit to the rules of the camp as they are taught, but to do so they must first sever all ties with everything and everyone outside the camp and place all their trust in the leaders of the camp (the collective We versus the antagonistic Other). In this context, the demonisation of a support figure like Amina Shaaban, a champion of children's rights as portrayed in the novel, was necessary to achieve this very purpose of cutting ties with the outside world and maintaining full control over the children. Amina's character is not fanciful per se, but is reminiscent of Aya Hegazy, the Egyptian American child rights advocate and founder of the Belady Foundation for Street Children, who was imprisoned for three years in 2014 and charged with organised gang crimes, including child abduction and child trafficking, for merely advocating for the improvement of street children's living conditions (Mada Masr, 2017).

You are safe as long as you stay loyal to the country (95)

The restriction of the children's individual freedoms in the name of personal security can be understood as an allusion to the expansion of authoritarianism under the al-Sisi regime in the name of protecting national security and combating terrorism (Yahya, 2014). The 'right to fight' has been classified as a fundamental human right by the al-Sisi regime, as the latter (2017) stated in his opening speech at the World Youth Forum held in Egypt: 'Fighting terrorism is a human right, a new right that I add to human rights in Egypt.' This represents a shift away (departure) from Nasser's authoritarian bargain to one that prioritises security over freedom, which is not necessarily that of the population but that of the country or, more precisely, of the ruling regime (Ibrahim, 2021). To exercise the right to fight means to have an existing threat or to create a threat (an enemy, an antagonist other) against which one should always be ready to fight (regardless of whether it exists or is assumed to exist). This suggests that there is an element of contingency in dealing with threats, often rationalized by the logic

of prevention, preparation, and readiness, and that is what the camp was all about: rehabilitating or preparing children to fight on the side of the regime against what is seen as a potential threat to its national security (see Daase and Kessler, 2007). In some ways, this recalls Foucault's (1978) temporality of security, according to which the threat to freedom in the name of security takes the form of uncertain, unpredictable events that may never occur but are always possible. Therefore, measures to maintain security may in themselves create all the conditions for the violation of security, since security and freedom cannot be treated dichotomously. In fact, Abdel Aziz's account of the Camp and Space (discussed in more detail below) represents a re-examination of the relationship between security and freedom, arguing that security and stability cannot be attained in the absence of freedom. Similarly, in his article 'Security and Terror,' Agamben (2001) asserts that nothing is more important than a revision of the concept of security as a model of control and a basic principle of state policy. What Abdel Aziz constructs as a reciprocal relationship between security and freedom is in complete contrast to al-Sisi's conception of stability and security. In a speech in 2018, al-Sisi stressed that Egypt's stability would be at stake if another uprising occurred, and that the price of stability would be his own life:

> What happened seven or eight years ago (alluding to 2011 uprising) will never happen again in Egypt. What did not succeed then will not succeed now. No, no, no. It appears that you do not know me well. No, by God. The price of Egypt's stability and security is my life and the life of the army.

I argue that prioritising security over freedom and forging security threats, provides the al-Sisi regime with the opportunity to (re)shape the way people think about themselves and others. In other words, in a highly securitised environment that thrives on the construction of an antagonistic Other, people become fundamentally insecure and unsafe, (i.e., the path to safety and security leads to insecurity and precariousness, which sounds like a well-worn cycle of securitisation (Kurylo, 2022). The discourse of securitization combined with the image of the antagonistic Other vs. the saviour that Abdel Aziz paints in General Ismail's speeches is so deft

that it mirrors the tone and message of al-Sisi's speeches. In a televised speech presenting Egypt's 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, al-Sisi (2016) reminded Egyptians that the country was facing a conspiracy and advised them not to listen to anyone but him:

> Do not listen to anybody's words but me. I am speaking in all seriousness, do not listen to anybody's words but me. I am a man who does not lie, nor do I beat around the bush. I have no interests except those of my country. My country only.

Alongside the imaginary thread of the camp, the children are repeatedly reminded that they can trust only the system and its men, and that their safety depends on their loyalty to the system. Loyalty is undoubtedly a cornerstone of al-Sisi's ruling elite, which relies heavily on blood relatives as well as very close associates linked to him through personal ties originally forged in the military and intelligence agency, including his sons, who were appointed to key positions in security and auditory agencies (see Springboard, 2020 and Miller and Hawthorne, 2019).

> You are safe as long as you stay loyal to the country, keep your eyes wide open for any tricks and are wise to foreign conspiracies that hide behind facades that look sincere and honourable to those who do not know (95) [..] As you all know, if a ruler fails to impose his authority and cannot keep a tight grip, the state collapses. We do not care about ourselves. We only care about our country and our people. If the state goes to ruin, God forbid, the ones affected are the citizens themselves. You have to understand that none of us worth anything. We are not worth anything without the system and who is going to impose strict order? We are the ones (84).

While no one was allowed to leave the camp voluntarily, some were forced to do so; those who proved indispensable to the camp and its purpose because of their incapacity or disability simply disappeared from the camp, and no one knew where they had been taken (28-29). After a series of military training sessions and lectures, the children were finally assigned tasks outside the camp. Some were assigned to take part in and disrupt demonstrations by the Raised Banner group, reminiscent of the MB protests demanding the return of ousted President Mohamed Morsi. They were equipped with weapons and clothing so as not to attract attention. At the right moment and when they were out of sight, the children were instructed to fire a few stray shots in the direction of the security forces then run off as fast as they could into the

confusion (142). Some others were ordered to take part in counterdemonstrations in support of the General and to pay tribute to his role in protecting the country from predators (182). Still others were ordered to shoot some university students who were thought to be disturbing order (183). Not least, some were deployed to assist the security forces in forcibly clearing some areas deemed uninhabitable by the General Ismail (186-187).

> Whenever you go out on the streets, you face the possibility that you might be recognised by some traitor, a member of the Raised Banner for example, or one of their supporters. No one would blame you if you defended yourself. In fact, you have a duty to keep yourself safe, because now you are worth something, and when it comes to the crunch, a scratch on the tip of your finger would be worth more than the head of one of those people. You must also bear in mind that information about the state, the system and the camp is classified, and you must not pass it on to ordinary people (141).

The attempt to reshape the social composition of slum areas under the guise of slum development and redevelopment of unsafe housing is not an imaginative storyline by Abdel Aziz, but rather part of a broader development plan of al-Sisi regime manifested in concentrated efforts to alter the landscape of Cairo in its entirety (Al-Raggal, 2022). The crowning glory of it all is the construction of a new capital city to serve as the new centre for all presidential palaces, government buildings and business enterprises (Mandour, 2021). A separate urban space, a de facto encampment in the desert east of Cairo separating the centre of (political and economic) power from the population, thus limiting the possibility of unrest and moving away the face of power from the memory of resistance (El Sayed, 2019). In support of and under the guise of al-Sisi's development plan, massive investments were made in Cairo's infrastructure, including the expansion of roads and the construction of dozens of new bridges, the removal of green spaces to compensate for the increasing expansion of roads, and the removal of all public artworks created during the 2011 uprising under the pretext of cleaning up. All these military-led infrastructure projects are heavily financed by debt, foreign and domestic loans, the burden of which falls on the shoulders of average Egyptians (poor and middle class) who pay the price for the development plan in the form of taxes, reduced investment in social

services, and subsidy cuts (Mandour, 2020). The transformation of public space thus serves many plausible purposes, the first of which is to alter the collective memory of the population and break people's attachment to the space that was once a symbol of resistance, to connect the old and new capitals through a transportation network, and, most importantly, to enable faster deployment of military and paramilitary forces, to contain and suppress future protests (Mandour, 2021; Walsh and Yee, 2022). In a sense, al-Sisi is fulfilling the prophecy of Orwell's 1984: 'He who controls the past controls the future.'

The temptation of power: Now we are part of the system (202): Have we turned into Titans, or have they turned us into bodies? (189)

In assisting the security forces with their demolition and clearance assignment, Rabie and the children of the camp did not find it difficult to connect with their past and the disadvantaged areas from which they came. One of the women who broke down during the eviction reminded Rabie of his mother. The whole action reminded him of the day they were taken from the dump, the crying and screaming of the women and children in the cleared area had evoked a recent memory in him, but then a stronger feeling than their sadness came over him, he felt empowered, fulfilled, satisfied with what he and the others had achieved and wanted to return to the camp as a hero. Unlike Youssef, one of the children of the camp, who was critical of the camp and the Titans and could not stand any of their narratives, Rabie was seduced by the euphoric sense of power he felt and was thrilled by the feeling of being significant and strong. The words of Head Allam found their way to him, 'remember, people see you as a symbol of the system and representatives of the state, and the state never bows its head (188).' Rabie, who used to bully the rich and powerful on the streets, now attacks the people in the slums, he attacks the reflection of his image in the mirror. Speaking to Youssef about how he felt after his first deployment, Rabie said:

> The most important thing you have missed man, was the sense of authority, of enjoying control over people, or being in authority yourself. It is a feeling you

> have never experienced, Youssef, the feeling that you can control other people (186)
>
> The Titans know what is in our interests. They see things we cannot see. They control everything, we have never seen any failure on their part. There is no reason for us to challenge what they say (189). I did not tell Youssef the idea that was taking form inside me [..] the idea that the heads think about is and for us. They get into our heads and before long they can even read our hearts. They seem to run in our blood. We see things and understand things through their minds. In fact, we feel as they feel. Have we turned into titans or have they turned us into bodies (189).

Closely related to the atmosphere of power excitement that prevailed in the camp is Arendt's (1970: 52; 1958: 200) repeated formulation that 'power springs up' in other words, power enables actions, and actions produce power, and this is precisely what happened to the powerless children who were subjects of a certain deceptive form of power sharing that enabled them to commit acts that they had always considered inappropriate and illegal earlier when they took place in the streets, but by committing the same acts now, they felt emboldened, honoured, and protected. It is the temptation to enjoy the power to escape the consequences. In his famous psychological experiment, the *Stanford Prison Experiment* (1971), which examined the roles of people in prisons, psychologist Philip Zimbardo randomly assigned Stanford students the roles of prison guards or prisoners—an extreme form of power relations. The prison guards quickly lapsed into the purest forms of power abuse, psychologically torturing their peers (with whom they were originally associated), the prisoners. In some ways, the camp experience resembled the Zimbardo experiment, in which disenfranchised and neglected boys were arbitrarily placed in the role of titans (the guards) by flipping a coin. They were given clean accommodations and better food, and most importantly, they were made to feel powerful, immune, and worthy. Around the same time that Zimbardo was conducting his prison experiment, Foucault wrote tirelessly about the absurdity of the cyclical nature of our relationships. He argues that the classification and categorization of people into larger groups — such as convicts and law enforcement or security officers— produces types of people. That is, as Foucault scholar Ian Hacking suggests (2002:122), 'categories of people come into

existence at the same time as kinds of people come into being to fit those categories and there is a two-way interaction between these processes.' Thus, in *Discipline and Punishment,* Foucault (1977) argues that practices constitute social realities. He writes that practices constitute both objects of knowledge and the subjects of that constructed knowledge, subjects who behave according to that knowledge. With his simple words Youssef gives meaning to the generalised (abstract) words of Hacking and Foucault by suggesting 'all kids in the camp were a natural extension of the titans, an intrinsic aspect of their power and a sign of their prestige (202).' 'Now we belong to them. Now we are their willing tools (203).'

The bodies would forever remain lower in status and less influential (202)

The situation in the camp makes it a place where, to quote Arendt's (1951) famous characterization of the camps, echoing the words of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, 'anything is possible,' a total uncertainty and susceptibility to contingency on the one hand, and a susceptibility to total possibility on the other. It marks the inclusion of exclusion of al-Sisi's political order and the ruling paradigm of his military-backed regime. 'By reducing the children completely to superfluous, insignificant, nameless bodies, that is, to bare life, the camp becomes a place where, as Agamben (1998: 171-172) suggests, those in power confront pure life without any mediation. Even when some of the street children decided to make a secret pact to remember each other's names and, in some way, protest the interpellated roles assigned to them, they realised that they were present-absent subjects, that not only were their names stolen, but also their lives and independent existence outside of this larger body called the camp.

> We were afraid of forgetting our real names, although we realised that names were no longer useful, since we rarely used them, and the titans never uttered them. One of them would shout, "you body!" and we would all look around to see in which direction his head and eyes were pointing, or sometimes his finger, and we did not wait to hear a name. The titan might mean one of us, or he might be addressing all of us. It made no difference (47).

While a name is a designation, an expression of a unique entity, a characterization of someone or something (Hamamra and Abusamra, 2020: 116-117), a sign by which someone is declared present, its misappropriation is the exact opposite. The proper name, as Simon Wortham (2010) argues, is the mark by which someone is identified, but it is also meant to outlast the person, to replace them in their absence. To (de)name someone or to take away their name is to declare them insignificant, to negate their self-presence or absence, to say that they have no distinctive identity, to render them anonymous, and thus to distort their self-understanding. Similarly, in his poem *The Red Indian's Penultimate Speech to the White Man* (2009), the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish sums up the uncanniness of the name by saying: ‘Our names are trees of the deity’s speech, and birds that soar higher than the rifle. Do not sever the trees of the name, you comers from the sea in war (154).’

The whole state machinery has been mobilised against us (109)

The counterpart to the closed camp is the open Space, which serves as the second narrative strand of the novel. It tells the story of a large square in the Eastern part of the city, where supporters of the ousted president are staging a sit-in to protest his kidnapping and demand his reinstatement (61). From all the detailed descriptions, it is not difficult to surmise that it is the sit-in of Raba’a al-Adawiya in the Cairo middle-class neighbourhood of Nasr City that is being recounted. The narrative thread is told mainly from the perspective of Aida’s family, a teacher and wife of Murad, a doctor who volunteers at the Raba’a Mosque field hospital, and the mother of a son, Adam, who participates in the sit-in. The last thing Aida had ever thought of was that one day she would take part in a demonstration, knowing full well that she was not a member of the Raised Banner, but for her and her family it was a matter of principle, of right, and it was by no means right or natural that an elected president should be kidnapped and expelled by the military without an act of dissent (35).

A study (Ketchley and Biggs, 2015) of the socioeconomic profiles of those killed in the Raba'a dispersal shows that protesters came from more than half of the country's districts, including the wealthier and more urban parts of the country. This is somewhat at odds with much of the reporting by state-run and pro-military private media in Egypt, portraying the Raba'a demonstrators as either semi-literate or peasants, easy to mobilise, recruit, and bus in from the countryside.

Over time, the sit-in had developed into a sort of a small village: It had tent structures with electricity branched off from streetlights, a fully functioning pharmacy, tight security to protect he space, and a professional sound stage from which Brotherhood leaders delivered rousing speeches to thousands of protesters each evening (Hersh, 2013). Several protesters described their time at the sit-in as a unique personal experience that changed their understanding of solidarity and a meaningful life (Julien Grimm, 2022). As Aida reflects on the space, she realises that any outsider would think that a second, parallel state with its own independent government and population had been established in the square (67). Despite this high level of organisation and structure, Aida was concerned that weapons might be hidden there, as was rumoured, or that people suspected of being informants had been beaten or tortured in the space (166). While scary for Aida because it discredits the demonstrators and confirms the official pronouncements and prejudices against the Brotherhood and its supporters, it was not impossible that things could get out of hand here and there. After all, it was a large area, and the people were not a 'homogeneous bloc' (70).

> Under these circumstances, it would not be easy to impose unanimous commitment to good practices (70) [..] I can well understand that the space cannot be completely clear of weapons [..] but that is not the core issue. I would like to know where the Raised Banner really stands on carrying weapons, whether they have left it to individuals to decide, based on their own personal judgement, or whether the leaders have taken a decision that applies to everyone, either to reject weapons completely or to allow them (157).

Aida and Murad got uncomfortable day after day with the escalating rhetoric of the brotherhood leaders who took up the podium every evening. They, too, used war speech against the regime in a very emotional and ill-considered manner that often got out of hand. They promised the people with great confidence that the ousted president would return; there was not the slightest trace of doubt or caution (117). But it was clear to both Aida and Murad that they made their decision to join the sit-in on principle, not because of the interests of the Raised Banner. They 'will not be able to dream of better days for their son if things continue as they are, with a succession of generals in power or people ruling on their behalf,' Murad says (118). It was obvious that some members of MB were out to seize power and that others were exploiting the situation to their advantage, but for them, as for many others who joined the sit-in, it was about defending their right to determine their own destiny (170).

> What the brothers say on the podium, and the reckless discourse of war that they put out without thinking, might help to make the system more intransigent and defiant, and then we would lose more and more, not to mention the fact that the general is using our own methods. We are not the only ones speaking in the name of Islam. He (al-Sisi) is doing so too, and the sheikhs are supporting him and his discourse in a way that improves his image (109-110).

Despite the seemingly community-like environment I personally experienced during my two visits to the sit-in, with ample food for all, schooling and entertainment for adults and children, and most importantly, circles of social networking, a similar narrative to that of the encampment manifests itself; they too are 'bodies,' though not so directly named, and just as expendable as the leaders of the sit-in would lead them astray and as the act of forcible eviction demonstrates (Chaffa, 2022). While some bodies are used as weapons, others are meant to be killed and injured. Both in the Camp and in the Space, people are controlled by rhetoric, media, and religion. While one group blindly supports the new ruler, wants to defend the regime and the general, and wages a relentless war against the Raised Banner movement, the other group of equally disillusioned partisans is led to believe that it has the power and that the kidnapped ruler will soon return (324). The two narrative strands (the Camp and the Space) that Abdel

Aziz skilfully stages seem to be connected by the figure of Halim, a Coptic Street kid, a friend of Youssef and Rabie, who wandered off the road and found refuge from the Titans nowhere but in the space to which he seems to have no connection because of his different religion, but which he nevertheless connects because he fears the Titans, and which offers him food, shelter, and a kind of family-like environment.

Human voices seemed irrelevant amid the violence (264)

> The iron fist of the state would be called to restore good order, and there would be no alternative to decisive use of force. There might be some collateral damage but saving society as a whole is worth the sacrifice and it requires firm decisions. Let us bear in mind that killing one saboteur who is protesting could save a hundred people because that saboteur will not have a chance to reach them (208).

On August 14, 2013, exactly at 6 o'clock, the tear gas hit the noses and eyes of the people in the space and the attack began. Tanks, helicopters, and armed vehicles gradually arrived as it became clear that it was impossible to hold back against the attack. Shots were fired again and again, and people were warned that the security forces were using live ammunition (262). After a while, the attacking forces announced over loudspeakers that there were safe exit routes, but no one knew where they were or if they even existed. Everyone was mercilessly attacked, even old people, children, no one and nothing was safe, recalls Aida (270). Whenever people tried to get out of the space they came under fire, and if anyone managed to leave, they were grabbed and thrown into trucks. As described in the novel and in the accounts of survivors and human rights organisations, there were no safe (exit) routes, or at least no one knows when they were opened or how to reach them (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

> Most of the people on the move inside the space were carrying injured bodies, or were injured people themselves crawling in search of medical help, but snipers were watching them, and to move along the main routes was to dice with death (Abdel Aziz, 2017: 263)

Lina Attalah, the editor-in-chief of Mada Masr, an Egyptian online publication, who had been in Raba'a earlier on the dispersal day, later reported that navigating the roads in and out had been a petrifying experience (Hersh, 2013). 'You had to enter and exit running, because they

set up snipers on the rooftops,' she said. 'And you have to be on your own, it cannot be a group of people, because they would be targeted. It was very tricky.' Those who were on the scene described what they witnessed: One young woman recounted wading through a thick layer of blood mixed with ice water in a nearby mosque (as the bodies were covered with blocks of ice because the temperature was above 40 °C), and how the sight of all those dead, mutilated bodies made her nauseous as she tried to help relatives find their loved ones (Matthies-Boon, 2018: 96). Even those who were not present—and politically opposed to the sit-in —reported that death and violence had become an even more pervasive feature of public life in Egypt since Raba'a (ibid: 96). The threat of violence was pervasive and conveyed to many that to live in this country, one must either be an oppressor or an oppressed, as Murad says to Aida. 'If you do not oppress others, you will be oppressed to death (226).'

It was the last assignment for Rabie's Camp and their most important one ever, they were told. They liked to think as they were told that they will free the country from the evil deeds, from the hands of the traitors (265). The Camp, the duty, the general, long live the country (266), these were the words the children repeated as they were loaded onto trucks and ordered to set off to battle, they began to shoot indiscriminately in the air, as Rabie recalls. It was a matter of life and death (267). Youssef was the only one who held back. He did not fire his gun or hold it up. He refused to take part in the killings until he himself was shot directly in the head by one of the security officers (273). By the late afternoon, everything was over and the victory at the end belonged to the Titans, the space was theirs. In the words of Abdel Aziz:

> The mosque crammed with more than three hundred bodies. The doctor and the medics who were still there had started laying the corpses on their sides to make some space where they could help the injured. As the dead piled up, there was no solution other than to pile the bodies on top of each other to make room for the newcomers (226-227).

You are not safe from harm, not you, not anyone living in this country: We should now pretend to conform until the clouds pass (303-304)

Aida lost her husband Murad in the massacre, Halim and Adam survived but are mentally and emotionally wounded like a whole generation that witnessed the massacre. Nour, a young, spirited woman who had participated with great interest in the sit-in but left on the eve of the massacre when her opportunistic father learned of the dispersal through a businessman in the government, lives with a pervasive sense of shame, guilt, and defeat. To overcome her sense of defeat, Nour launched a campaign against arrests and forced disappearances (290). Ibrahim, who like Nour was plagued by despair and dejection, a doctor and colleague of Murad's who had cared for the injured in the hospital, was arrested and taken to a maximum-security prison. In 2018, following an internationally condemned mass trial, 75 of those arrested during the Raba'a sit-in were sentenced to death and more than 600 were given hefty prison sentences (Ardovini, 2022; *Middle East Eye*, 2018). While surviving the horrific prison conditions of the military-backed regime, Ibrahim began to reflect on the sit-in and the ways in which the people in the Space were manipulated by the leaders of the Raised Banner movement, whom they listened to without dissent or critical examination until they were destroyed. Rabie and other camp children, on the other hand, became murderers.

> No one is immune, even if they are right at the heart of the system, says Ibrahim. They do not have any qualms about arresting people in the army or the police (302) [..] Even people who know absolutely nothing about politics or religion, and have nothing to do with government, are not safe from the brutality either (303).

While encouraging the use of violence through the recruitment and radicalisation of street children, the regime is simultaneously, as depicted in the novel, attempting to deradicalize the Raised Banner movement, whose members were required to participate in de-radicalization programmes held by the same sheikhs whose mission was to arm the children in the camp with religious rhetoric to fight on behalf of the regime. The purpose of the lectures was not to combat violence, as Ibrahim says, but to co-opt opponents of the regime and integrate them into the

fold of obedient subjects (304). This storyline is reminiscent of the efforts of al-Sisi's regime through its advisor on religious affairs, Osama al-Azhari, and a series of preachers who deliver sermons to MB members in prison in the hope that they will reconsider their ideas in a process known as 'intellectual ideological revisionism'.[55] In return for their release, the members of MB are asked to sign 'certificates of repentance' condemning the brotherhood (Sayed, 2017). This is to suggest that he who rules with and through violence and terror sets the tone and discourse on radicalism and de-radicalism. In the name of counterterrorism, terror is reproduced to suppress the opposing Other, which in many cases leads to the radicalisation of that Other and thus to new terrorism. Thus, a vicious cycle of violence and terror is created. This is nothing new, but in the process of radicalising some groups while attempting to incapacitate others, the hypocritical (sometimes seen as strategic) face of authoritarian power is revealed. And this hypocritical face of the exercise of power is at odds with Foucault's (1980) conception of power, in which he suggests that power can only be exercised through the production of truth. In a sense, the violent intervention on the body as a paradigm of power under al-Sisi regime represents a kind of productive-repressive power that, unlike Foucault, is based on a hierarchical rather than a relational understanding of power, which manifests itself in what I call the use of people against people on the one hand and as bridges to cross on the other.

> The system is creating a generation of thugs who are loyal to them and have a grudge against society in general. It is pushing them to carry out tasks that the regular forces do not want to get involved in, either because they are dangerous or barbaric. Most of those tasks undermine the image of itself that the system wants to project. These wretches serve the system, but it usually sacrifices them and never admits it has anything to do with them. If necessary, it offers them to the masses as scapegoats. They are caught between the anvil of poverty, ignorance, and necessity on one side, and the hammer of oppression

[55] It is worth noting that al-Jama'a al-Islamiya (Egypt's Jihadi group committed to violent activism) had undergone a similar process of intellectual revisionism since the 1990s, led by imprisoned leaders and culminating in 2002 in the group's complete renunciation of violence and a commitment to peaceful activism while recognising the legitimacy of the state and the ruling regime (al-Sayyid, 2003; Hamzawy and Grebowski, 2010).

> and control by the system on the other side […] If they try to resist or disobey orders, they will find no rest on this earth. I think the only recourse they have is to stay under the protection of the system and give it their full obedience and loyalty, simply to avoid its vengeance and so that the system at the same time protects them from the vengeance of other victims (225).

A few routine excesses are no big deal (322)

Rabie realised how they had been manipulated by the regime, the Titans, and their supporters. They were told about morality and honour, about giving to the land and the people, but they were not told that they would shed blood, that they would sacrifice people for the land, that they would sacrifice themselves to please the Titans. They sacrificed Youssef for their own sake, so as not to think too much about the truth that Youssef embodied. By his death and his refusal to comply, Youssef shamed them without meaning to (314). Rabie resumed life in the camp, but he separated himself from the other boys. One day he saw Youssef on TV, his picture was clear and unmistakable to him, the TV presenter read the names of the officers who died in the clearing of the space, and when Youssef's picture appeared, she said, 'Martyr Officer Abed Wagdi.' Rabie was baffled as to how his name could be changed. 'This name should never change, whether dead or alive (319).' Over time, Rabie lost what was left of his soul, and his only desire was to complete this rehabilitation programme with an identity card promised to the boys since the beginning of the programme (330). In the evening, the boys heard the news that General Ismail had been promoted and he only had to take one more step to hold the highest office in the country,[56] the boys were thrilled by the news, they were proud of the General's promotion as they were always told they were his sons and his extended arm and any promotion for him meant a promotion for them (331). While some can only feel valuable when they are recognised for accomplishments that they precisely do not share with others, thus articulating a unique path of being (Honneth, 1995:125), personal value for the camp children lies in their complete identification and close association with the ruler. This

[56] From July 2013 to June 2014, Egypt was ruled by the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, Adly Masnour, who was appointed interim president by the military after the ouster of his predecessor, Mohammed Morsi. In June 2014, Mansour handed over power to President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.

association gives them the sense of being part of a larger, more powerful self into which all the images of the idealised father figure they have always longed for are transferred. Although relatively little understood outside of clinical psychoanalysis, transference as a process of projecting feelings or desires about one thing or one person onto the here and now Other can arguably explain many power dynamics, particularly those related to the seduction of power, allegiance, and followership dynamics in general (for the concept of transference, see Freud, 1921/1958).

> This was a government that pushed nastiness and depravity to the limits, exploiting people's good opinion of it and playing on their feelings, especially those who longed to play a role that would make them feel their lives were useful. It lured them in and took advantage of them to burnish its image and then tarnished the reputations of those same people by associating them with its filth (244).

The novel begins with the brutal kidnapping of the children and ends with the breaking news that intelligence has discovered a camp where members of the Raised Banner movement are training to carry out acts of violence against the government and civilian targets (332). The camp was thus attacked and destroyed, wiping out all who were hiding there. A final allusion to al-Sisi's politics of death, from which no one is immune, not even those who fought on the side of the regime. The children of the camp were fired to death, threatened with the same fate as those in the Space, their extermination plan was only a matter of time before they were no longer usable. They were nothing more than bodies being run over and used; a perfect embodiment of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* figure whose naked life is taken with impunity.

To conclude, from the first to the second republic, with a brief interruption between 2011 and 2013, the conditions of subjugation, I argue, have not changed significantly: Those in power are still the heads, and the rest are the bodies. The heads in the literal and figurative sense: the head as the top of the body and the head as the part responsible for thinking and for decision-making denied to the body. The murder and disappearance of children, protesters, the deposed ruler, streets and neighbourhoods, and even individual names on both sides shows how central

erasure is to authoritarian rule. The colonial spectre of erasure thus seems to live on in post-independent Egypt. Described in the novel as ‘routine excesses’ (333), erasure seems to retain its primary function as a spectacle of power and an instrument of control not only over land and people but, more importantly, over memory (e.g., to erase the memory of the Raba’a sit-in, Raba’a Square was renamed after the assassinated Prosecutor General, Hisham Barakat, who is believed to have given the green light for the dissolution of the sit-in). What Abdel Aziz powerfully demonstrates in *Here is a Body* is the capacity of writing to bear witness, to name, and to remember (Chaffa, 2022), thus highlighting the resistant and archival role of literature and the ways in which it can serve as an alternative space for speaking truth. What is conveyed here is the message that despite the politics of silence, terror, uncertainty, and violence detailed in the various chapters of this thesis, resistance can still find its way through the oppressor, in various forms, even if they are subtle or seemingly minimal, including writing, which is what I believe this study stands for. I would like to conclude the last chapter of my work with a quote from Alaa Abdel Fatah, the famous Egyptian dissident who has been arrested by every Egyptian regime in power throughout his lifetime, and who has been on hunger strike for over 200 days and has just started his thirst strike as I write these lines. In his book, most of which he wrote in prison, Alaa (2021) writes: ‘You have not yet been defeated.’

Chapter 6
Conclusion

That day, after being stopped briefly at the airport and questioned about something I must have done that neither I nor the officers who stopped me knew anything about, for some unknown reason that was no different from the one for which I had been stopped, I was simply released. As I walked through the gate, I knew it was a casual harassment, a warning that meant nothing more, but I had this nagging thought: what if I had been arrested, and what does it mean that I received this warning? That we are now keeping an eye on you? What does this mean for my future travels, and what precautions should I take, and would they even work? I went home with so many thoughts, and I think that was the point of it all: To awaken the feeling of fear and uncertainty, especially the fear of uncertainty. From that day on, I had only one feeling: for those in power, I am a nobody, and my life can be put in danger at any time without any legal protection. I am simply deprived of my right to have rights.

Looking back to the beginning of this study and the writing of the last chapters, I realise that my motives for studying power effects and the process of subject formation in Egypt have changed. They were initially based on a desire to understand how people facing oppression, including myself, come to terms not only with the oppressor, but more importantly with themselves. I wanted to understand the psyche of the oppressed and subjugation as a lived experience, how people participate in their oppression, if they do at all, and what impact this has on their sense of self. It was only in the course of research that I came to the conclusion that in examining subjugation and submission, I was also examining resistance, not as an antithesis to subjugation, but as an inseparable part of it, as a dialectical relationship between submission and resistance, according to which one confers power on the other, as examined in the novels.

Using the same backward-looking approach, but on a more methodological level, the use of fiction to generate research data was essentially based on the assumption that fiction functions not only as a mirror of society but also as a theoretical resource, a form of imaginative social theory that serves to challenge theoretical ideas and vary their perspectives. Only as the study progressed did it become clear that fiction further involves a complex repertoire of strategies that include truth-telling, bearing witness, interrogating the past, and writing history as it unfolds, thereby challenging narratives of those in power, all of which, as the study shows, constitute acts of resistance.

In almost all the novels studied, the figure of the writer is central and equated with the figure of the truth teller, who does not necessarily possess the absolute or factual version of the truth, but rather an opposing version of truths not desired by the power regime. These include the unnamed narrator in *The Committee*, Youssef in *The Heron*, the unnamed narrator in *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, as well as the poets in *The Crocodiles* and Youssef in *Here is a Body*. They all share the same subjectivity (a sense of mission, the perception of self as narrator and bearer of truth). The figure of the *parrhesiast* or truth teller thus appears as a figure of writing, a key symbolism that highlights the relationship between writing and the quest for truth on the one hand and writing and the preservation of memory on the other.

By articulating the relationship between writing and truth and writing and memory as such, the study provides a vantage point for reading modern Egyptian literature by placing it in a broader context of resistance. While *writing as resistance*, or what some call *resistance literature*, has long been associated in Egyptian literature and Arab literature in general with the struggle for national liberation and self-determination (Palestinian literature is a good example), this study repositions it as a form of subjectivity in the face of postcolonial oppression.

I argue that most of the writers studied, as well as the writer characters portrayed in the novels studied, are themselves writing from the position of an omniscient, all-seeing, all-feeling

narrator. A narrator who conveys stories about the feelings and thoughts of those who experience life under authoritarian or absolute regimes of power. The writer as narrator, as storyteller who bears witness to lived experiences, as is the case in the novels studied, shows resistance in this act of storytelling and bearing witness.

However, the writer as a robust and resistant subject recurring in the novels studied reveals much about the borrowings between the two genres of sociology and literature. Although fiction writing was originally intended as a method to generate data about a sociological phenomenon and is not in itself the focus of the study, nor was it intended to be, the creative borrowings between the genres revealed that not only can one genre help explain or illuminate the other, but also that one genre is embedded through and within another. Thus, in examining the question of subject formation under authoritarianism through fictional narratives, it becomes apparent that writing as an act in itself has much significance for the process of subject formation, as a response, as a means of survival, and as an expression of counter-power techniques.

To further the discussion of 'Creative Borrowings' between the two genres the study adopts a writing approach that focuses on *thought as a style process.* As such, it is inspired by the literary text and, to some extent, by the writing style of Michel de Montaigne, which is characterised by following the stream of thought or in the words of Blaise Pascal (1858: 307) *la peinture de la pensée* (the painting of thought), moving from one theme to another, with the first theme leading to the second in a productive and eclectic manner. This approach to writing is reflected in the interweaving between the reading of the plot and its placement in a historical background and the subsequent sociological analysis, which, without fixed dividing lines, allows each chapter/subchapter to be read as a single story that builds and paves the way to the next story. In some ways, the way the novels were read, interpreted, and analysed roughly parallels what Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1985) refers to in his work *Time and Narrative* as the three steps of

mimetic theory of narrative (pre-figuration, configuration, and re-figuration), beginning with bringing my previous experiences and expectations into the reading of the novels, to the interweaving of stories, characters, and plots into an ordered and comprehensible whole, to the third step, in which the story takes on meaning and recalls real life experiences, aspirations, pain, and suffering, increasingly blurring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction.
While the above are mainly general concluding remarks on the state of research then and now, its unintended pursuits, and writing style, the value of this study is threefold: theoretical, empirical, and methodological.

First, the study makes a theoretical contribution to a reading of Western social theory on power, subjectivity, and resistance by drawing on a wide range of thinkers across different disciplines, paying particular attention to the works of Foucault, Arendt, and Agamben on the one hand, and placing Western theory in dialogue with Egyptian literature on the other. Viewing theories as fluid, interconnected, and always in motion, as Edward Said (1982) asserts in his *Travel Theory* and tracing their journey through space and time outside of the Western context is another dimension of the creative borrowing approach taken in this study.

This constellation of theoretical and literary entanglements suggests that the exercise of power in Egypt at various points in the country's post-independence history took place on the ever-shifting boundary between coercion and consent. The intertwining of the right to discipline, punish, regulate, and kill with the right to exempt, pardon, or refrain from killing suggests a fused power paradigm that breaks with Foucault's genealogical approach of power exercise (from societies of sovereign power to societies of discipline to societies of control or biopower) and suggests, that power in the context under study operates through a high degree of uncertainty with various power strategies at work that leave people no choice but to seek means to survive, in the form of various modes of attachment and/or nonattachment to power. From Zeinab Dyab in *Karnak Café*, who clung to power for fear of freedom, to *The Queue* dwellers

who resorted to Goffman-like cooling the mark out technique to find comfort and adapt to the uncertainty of waiting, to the camp boys in *Here is a Body*, who were guided by a deceptive formula of power sharing and thought they were safe, when they stood by the powerful. Among the various expressions, and responses to the uncertainty of power practices in the context under study are waiting, self-withdrawal, moral looseness, listlessness, running away, cooling the mark out, self-consumption, writing, and silent encroachment, all of which point to the constitution of the subject as a site of struggle and resistance.

In a sense, the exercise of power in Egypt, with its ubiquitous control and normative validity of terror and violence, goes beyond the Foucauldian sovereign formula of making die or letting live, or the biopolitical formula of making live or letting die, to a more Agambenian (1999) formula of making survive, defined as the absolute separation of life from all human forms and predicates where life and death are no longer separated by clear boundary zones.

With the question of agency and articulation of the human subject striving for survival at the centre, Arendt's reflections on totalitarian rule and Goffman's reflections on survival techniques or as he calls them in *Asylums* (1961) primary and secondary adjustments, among others, come into play. The study, while acknowledging the penetrating insights and the considerable analytical utility of the theories of power examined, argues that understanding how power operates under conditions of dictatorships requires a more complex analysis of power dynamics beyond the boundaries and cultural confines of the Western lens. Indeed, the more elaborate theoretical formulations I interpreted from the novels studied, such as the fear of freedom, the banality of evil, self-mortification, attachment to pain, identification with the powerful, the transformation of idealistic freedom fighters into functionaries of the regime, and the concealment of individual differences under the guise of conformity, to name a few, have provided a good basis for discussing the effects of power and the various ways in which subjects present and express themselves under authoritarian power constellations.

If we take, for example, the figure of banal evil as one of the main figures recurring in most of the novels studied, its articulation in the novels is interpreted differently from the way Arendt describes it. In a sense, elements of the novels refute the assumption that banal evil is committed by people who do not necessarily have evil intentions, nor are they thoughtless subjects, as Arendt asserts. This misses the radical side of banal evil itself and is a kind of refutation of agency on the part of the figure of banal evil. The evil committed by al-Zanfali in *The Black Policeman* or Khalid Safwan in *Karnak* Café was not thoughtless; for both there was a kind of consent to power and a pleasure in it, and this is where Foucault's notion of the intelligibility of power comes into play.

As the study concludes, this intelligibility or relationality that Foucault asserts as the mode of exercising power (as opposed to the ruthless exercise of domination) cannot, in a sense, take place without intermediaries or proxies bridging the gap between the powerful and the less powerful. It is those like al-Zanfali or Safwan who maintain the flow of power and give power the character of intelligibility that Foucault asserts. As the interpretation of the novels has shown, there is a radical evil side to banal evil that is perhaps even more radical than the radical itself, for it can evade responsibility by claiming to be sincere and thoughtless, or by uncritically accepting the mores of those in power. In other words, Eichmann's banality is no less radical than radical evil.

Moreover, the abstract figure of *Homo Sacer,* another recurring figure in most of the novels, adorned primarily with the literal images of nakedness and the complete loss of human security, as shown in *The Committee*, *Here is a Body*, and *The Queue*, is called into question. Without underestimating Agamben's (1998) notion of silent resistance as the most conspicuous form of resistance available to the figure of *Homo Sacer*, the detailed analysis of the novels in each chapter reveals other affirmative forms of *Homo Sacer's* resistance. These include writing as a recurring form of resistance, as noted above, and the struggle to gather and preserve evidence,

even if it means risking one's life, as in the case of Yehya and Amani in *The Queue*. Others are more overt forms of resistance, speaking out or protesting, as in the case of Dido, the cousin of the unnamed narrator in *Chronicle of a Last Summer*. Others manifest themselves in means of counter-conformity that put their lives on the line, such as Youssef in *Here is a Body* and the unnamed narrator in *The Committee*. Still others stick together and recite poetry in a collective act of resistance, like the poets in *The Crocodiles*, and finally, some opt for small, everyday forms of defiance to authority, as in *The Heron*.

In this way, a more positive understanding of survival is drawn, no longer understood as a passive act but as an active, emotional state of existing that involves various forms of resistance, and a more vivid picture of an abstract and complex theory of *Homo Sacer* is drawn. As such *Homo Sacer* can be seen as a shell that is solid on the surface but has much to tell on the inside, but it is necessary to penetrate its interior to make it more viable and to give nuance and meaning to its abstract representation.

As the figure of *Homo Sacer* becomes more vivid, the abstract and obsolete figure of the sovereign is also brought to light. Known in the definition of Carl Schmitt and Agamben as the one who decides on the exception, the figure of the chief, master, or sovereign ruler, embodied in the persona of the successive Egyptian dictators, is not only the one who decides on the exception, but also the one who orders its enactment and formalisation, creating a new norm and thus confusing the exception with the norm in a way that is constantly changeable. The inability to distinguish between exception and norm or to draw boundaries is thus a central element of the politics of uncertainty, which appears in the novels studied as a technique of power and as a subject-forming practice.

Reading the novels not only made theoretical concepts more vivid and offered a personal transposition of experience, but also stimulated reflection on other theoretical connections, such as, to name a few, Agamben's bare life and Goffman's self-mortification as discussed in

the analysis of the novel *The Black Policeman*, Arendt's spaces of appearance and Foucault's heterotopic spaces as discussed in *The Heron*, Bayat's 'art of presence' and Baudrillard's 'art of disappearance' as also discussed in *The Heron*, listlessness as an effect of power, and Agamben's notion of in-operativity as discussed in *Chronicle of a Last Summer*.

Second, the study presents an empirical account of what it means or feels like to be a subject of coercion and control, but also a subject to what one believes about oneself when living under the conditions of an authoritarian dictatorship, and sketches this out over a historical period to trace the continuity and haunting effects of power.

To arrive at such an analysis, the study examines the notion of *the subject*, often treated, and read as an all-encompassing coded concept that merges with concepts such as identity, consciousness, personality, and self, as the way individuals locate and define themselves in power relations, or the experiences they have that affect the way they live their daily lives vis-à-vis the power regime.

I argue that the particular significance of this study lies in its understanding of subjects in their emotional existence amidst a wide range of everyday forms of subjectification, such as the compromising of personal freedom in *Karnak Café*, self-withdrawal in *The Heron*, shrinking, clinging to, or running away from the false self in *The Crocodiles*, listlessness in *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, and the dispensable and waiting subject in both *The Queue* and *Here is a Body*. Beginning with the dishonourable and shameful body of Zaynab Dyab in *Karnak Café* and ending with the expendable bodies of those in the Camp and in the Space in *Here is a Body*, the emotional and personal representation of the experience of being subjected to an absolute regime of power is revealed. The portrayal of the emotional existence of subjects could not be more evident than in works of fiction, which, it is argued, are able to portray the nuances of self-expression, unpack suppressed feelings, as well as provide insight into patterns of emotion that are difficult to study in other ways.

Third, the study invites sociological reading of Western theories to Egyptian literature and argues for the value of sociological use of fiction. Covertly, the study sought to explore whether a fictional plot or a passage from a novel could be used with the same factual authority, accuracy, and judgement as standard sociological sources, such as a transcript of an interview, an observation, a survey, or field research?

In doing so, I argue that a significant detail of the novelist is just as good as a good hypothesis of the sociologist, and that the production of literary narratives follows broadly similar approaches to those of social scientists, as elaborated in the *Writers as Sociologists* section of this study. At the level of data analysis, however, it is important to note that just as the work of art is largely interpreted by the consumer or audience rather than the artist or creator, my interpretive subjectivity has also guided my reading of the literary texts in this study. Working from that premise, my agency as a researcher and reader of literary texts would have been just as present as when interpreting data collected through other traditional sociological sources or methods. That is, a researcher or sociologist imbues the text or data they collect with their own interpretation, and therefore it would be methodologically inhibiting to dismiss the value of the sociological use of fiction based on claims of a subjective reading or interpretability. To underpin and support the analysis, data from secondary and primary sources (including speeches, reports, interviews, and archival material) were also used, so that the embedded correspondence and dialogue between narrative fiction and the narration of real events of the past and present run like a thread through the study.

To provide a framework for the above discussion, the study is divided into four main chapters, each dealing with a temporal episode in Egypt's post-independent history, presenting the constitution of the political subject as a site of struggle and resistance, and attempting to answer the question of whether the subject has been defeated in its quest for existence, freedom, and self-definition. The first chapter (Nasser's 1956-1970 era: *Karnak Café* and *The Black*

Policeman) deals with the pursuit of and/or fear of freedom, the refuge in conformity and the identification with the powerful. The second chapter (Sadat's era 1970-1981: *The Committee* and *the Heron*) looks at how the effects of authoritarian neo-liberalism can be ridiculed through the pursuit of truth and the everyday practices of life (quiet encroachment of the ordinary). The third chapter (Mubarak's era 1981- 2011: *Chronicle of a Last Summer* and *The Crocodiles*) deals with the state of muted stillness and listlessness and the search for alternative forms of self-expression to the emergence of a revolutionary subject. The fourth chapter (post- 2011 to the present: *The Queue* and *Here is a Body*) deals with the experience of waiting as an instrument of power and the excessive use of violence, the seduction of power, and the politics of uncertainty and back to Nasser's identification with the powerful. The notions of presence and absence, silence, truth-telling, and waiting embodied in the spirits of the heron and the crocodiles run like a thread through most of the novels studied and offer clues for analysing the experience of subjectification in Egypt.

To recapitulate the main take-aways of the study in light of the above framework and the three main premises, it is concluded that the process of subject formation in Egypt can be understood, on the one hand, as an artefact of historical continuity that connects the past to the present, not necessarily in a linear fashion but in a way that gives it a cyclical character, and, on the other hand, as a dynamic process of shifting subject positions (to name a few: the subject of surveillance, the subject of waiting, the muted subject, the listless subject), a process that is riddled with ambivalences and constantly generates counter-positions. In other words, to understand authoritarianism and subject formation in Egypt is to understand the history of the present. The study further argues for the limitations of the conception of citizenship as a defining framework for the state-society relationship in the context under study, proposing instead the use of the power-subject framework as a substitute, clearly embodied in the power formula of the authoritarian bargain that has characterised successive regimes since 1952 and

that has become evident in the novels studied. Finally, the study suggests that the connection between theory and method, expressed in the very structure of the research, reveals the epistemic relevance of literature to the conceptual imagination and contributes in some way to the discussion of the decolonisation of knowledge production, which I argue is an original contribution of this research. In some ways, this interdisciplinarity underscores the sheer breadth and hybridity of the concept of subject formation that has become apparent throughout this analysis.

Bibliography

Abaza, M., 2016. Cairo: Personal Reflections on Enduring Daily Life. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies ,* Volume 16, pp. 238- 239.

Abbott, A., 2007. Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology. *Sociological Theory.,* 25(1), pp. 67-99.

Abd El-Fatah, A., 2021. *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated: Selected works 2011-2021.* London: Fitzcarraldo Editions.

Abd-El-Reheem, S. H., 2009. *Images of Women in Charles Dickens' Great Expectations and Hard Times and Mahfouz's Midaq Alley and Palace Walk.* Cairo: Unpublished MA Thesis: Ain Shams University.

Abdalla, N., 2012. *Social Protests in Egypt Before and After the 25 January Revolution: Perspectives on the Evolution of their Forms and Features.* [Online] Available at: https://www.iemed.org/publication/social-protests-in-egypt-before-and-after-the-25-january-revolution-perspectives-on-the-evolution-of-their-forms-and-features.

Abdel Aziz, B., 2013 [2016]. *The Queue.* translated by Elisabeth Jaquette ed. London: Melville House Publishing .

Abdel Aziz, B., 2015. *Basma Abdel Aziz: 'The Worst Thing Is That Publishers Are Scared, Too'* [Interview] (29 https://arablit.org/2015/12/29/basma-abdel-aziz-the-worst-thing-is-that-publishers-are-scared-too/.

Abdel Aziz, B., 2017 [2021]. *Here is a Body.* translated by Jonathan Wright ed. Cairo: Hoopoe (The American University in Cairo Press) .

Abdel Aziz, B., 2017a. *Arablit and Arablit Quarterly: On Writing 'The Queue'.* [Online] Available at: https://arablit.org/2017/08/31/basma-abdel-aziz-on-writing-the-queue/ [Accessed 11 August 2022].

Abdel Aziz, B., 2017b. *The Pen Ten With Basma Abdel Aziz* [Interview] (30 May) https://pen.org/pen-ten-basma-abdel-aziz/

Abdel Aziz, B., 2019. *ChiassoLetteraria 2019* [Interview] (5 May) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZerNJ30qgVM&t=656s

Abdel Aziz, B., 2021. *In fiction one is always allowed to break rules* [Interview] (28 July 2021). Available at: https://hoopoefiction.com/2021/07/28/in-fiction-one-is-always-allowed-to-break-rules-basma-abdel-aziz/

Abdel Aziz, B., 2021. Waiting in Queues under Dictatorship. In: S. Khosravi, ed. *Waiting: A project in conversation.* Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp. 151-156.

Abdel Aziz, B., 2022 . *"What It's Like Here and Now:" A Conversation with Egyptian Writer Basma Abdel Aziz* [Interview] (March 2022). Available at: https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2022/september/what-its-here-and-now-conversation-egyptian-writer-basma-abdel-aziz-linyao-ma

Abdel Meguid, I., 2013. *'Stirring Up a Revolution', BBC Radio 3* [Interview] (9 June) https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b02626dc

Abdel-Khalek, G., 1981. Looking Outside or turning Northwest? on the meaning and external dimensions of Egypt's Infitah. *Social Problems ,* 28(4), pp. 394-409.

Abdel-Malek, A., 1998. *al-Mujtama‘ al-Misri wa-l-Jaysh: 1952–1967 [Egyptian Society and the Army: 1952– 1967].* Cairo: Mahrousa Centre for Research, Training, Information, and Publication.

Abdel-Nasser, G., 1959. *The Philosophy of the Revolution.* Cairo: Dar al-Maaref.

Abdelatty, A., 2015. *Al-monitor: Egypt's cybersecurity council prompts privacy concerns.* [Online] . Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/01/egypt-cyber-security-council-privacy.html [Accessed 26 August 2022].

Abdelhamid, A., 2022. *"Affective Authoritarianisms": Affect, Emotions and Authoritarian Governance in the Arab World and Turkey.* Denver-USA, Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting .

Abdulaal, M., 2018. *Famous Assassinations Across Egypt's History,* Cairo: Egyptian Streets.

Aboul-Ela, H., 2004. The Writer Becomes Text: Naguib Mahfouz and State Nationalism in Egypt. *University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of Center for Biographical Research,* 27(2), pp. 339-356.

Acconcia, G., 2016. *Il manifesto: Sisi's Diversions.* [Online] Available at: https://ilmanifesto.it/sisis-diversions [Accessed 31 August 2022].

Adonis, 1990. *An Introduction to Arab Poetics.* London: Saqi Books.

Adonis, 2010. *A Revolutionary of Arabic Verse: The New York Times by Charles McGrath* [Interview] (17 October 2010).

Adorno, T. W., 1962. Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften: On the Logic of the Social Sciences. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie,* Volume 14, pp. 249-263.

Agamben, G., 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and bare life.* Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G., 1999. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the archive.* trans by Daniel Heller-Roazen ed. New York: Zone Books.

Agamben, G., 2000. *Means without end: Notes on politics.* Translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino. ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Agamben, G., 2001. Security and Terror. *Theory and Event* , 5(4), Translated by Carolin Emcke.

Agamben, G., 2003a. *The State of Exception.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Agamben, G., 2003b. *The Coming Community (La comunità che viene).* Minnesota : University of Minnesota Press.

Agamben, G., 2005. *State of exception.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Agamben, G., 2009. *'What is an apparatus?' And other essays.* Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella ed. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G., 2015. *Le Monde: Giorgio Agamben: De l'Etat de droit à l'Etat de sécurité.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2015/12/23/de-l-etat-de-droit-a-l-etat-de-securite_4836816_3232.html [Accessed 23 September 2022].

Agamben, G., 2016. *The Use of Bodies.* Standford: Standford University Press .

Agar, H., 1942. *A Time for Greatness.* London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Agency, A., 2015. *Naguib letters give glimpse of Egypt's '1952 revolution'.* [Online] Available at: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/naguib-letters-give-glimpse-of-egypts-1952-revolution-/20850

Ahmed, G., 2008. *Egypt's Virginity Tests and the Revolution's Hymen.* [Online] Available at: https://raseef22.net/article/1071985-egypts-virginity-tests-revolutions-hymen

al-Anani, K., 2012. *The Role of Religion in the Public Domain in Egypt After the January 25 Revolution,* Doha : Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.

Al-Azami, U., 2021. *Islam and the Arab Revolutions: The Ulama between democracy and autocracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Al-Haj Saleh, Y., 2020. *AlJumhuriya: Voices of the Absent: Ideas Towards the Renovation of Thought.* [Online] Available at: https://www.aljumhuriya.net/ar/content/-أصـــوات-الغائبين-أفكار-لإصلاح-التفكير_ [Accessed 13 March 2021].

Al-Haj Saleh, Y., 2021. [Online]. Available at: http://www.yassinhs.com/bio/.

Al-Hakim, T., 1985. *The Return of Cosnsciousness.* Translated by Bayly Winder ed. London: The Macmillan Press LTD.

al-Musawi, M. J., 2007. Engaging Globalization in Modern Arabic Literature: Appropriation and Resistance. *Modern Language Quarterly ,* 68(2), pp. 305-329.

al-Naqqash, R., 1989. *Naguib Mahfouz: Pages from his Memoirs and a New Perspective on his Life and Work.* Cairo : Al-Ahram Center for Translation and Publishing.

al-Naqqash, R., 1997. *Safahat min mozakerat Naguib Mahfouz (Pages from Naguib Mahfouz's Diaries).* Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk.

al-Sayyid, M. K., 2003. The Other Face of the Islamist Movement. *Carnegie Paper no. 33*, January, Available at: http://www.carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/wp33.pdf.

al-Sharkawy, Y., 2020. *Al-Monitor.* [Online] Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/07/egypt-kites-national-security-threat-activity.html [Accessed 23 August 2022].

al-Sisi Inaugural Speech at the World Youth Forum. 5 November 2017. [Film] Directed by https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWkJudgUJko. Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt : DMC.

al-Sisi, A. F., 2013. *Al Sisi Asks For Mandate To Combat Terrorism,* Cairo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tJQtkmAfOk.

al-Sisi, A. F., 2016. *Launching Egypt's 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy.* Cairo: Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiht9hEkiAE&t=5073s.

al-Sisi, A. F., 2018. *What Happened Seven or Eight Years Ago Will Never Happen Again in Egypt* [Interview] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBzQQ_xMtUc (31 January 2018).

Al-Zabn, S., 2017. *Al-Hayat Newspaper.* [Online] Available at: https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/6641/Topics-tackled-by-Arab-columnists-on-Monday

Alaidy, A., 2003. *An takuna ʿAbbas al-ʿAbd (in Arabic).* Cairo: Dar Merit.

Alaidy, A., 2006. *Being Abbas El Abd.* Translated by Humphrey Davies ed. Cairo: American University of Cairo Press.

AlAshry, M. S., 2022. A critical assessment of the impact of Egyptian laws on information access and dissemination by journalists. *A critical assessment of the impact of Egyptian laws on information access and dissemination by journalists,* Volume 9, pp. 1-17.

AlKodimi,K., and Omar, N., 2010. Satire In Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee: An Allegory To Ridicule Capitalism. *Journal of Language Studies,* 10(3), pp. 53-65.

Allen, A., 2006. Dependency, subordination, and recognition: On Judith Butler's theory of subjection. *Continental Philosophy Review,* Volume 38, pp. 199-222.

Allen, R., 1981. The Artistry of Yūsuf Idrīs. *World Literature Today,* 55(1), pp. 43-47.

Allende, I., 2017. *Magical Realism or Realism? – Isabel Allende* [Interview] (8 December 2017). https://www.modernliterature.org/2017/12/08/magical-realism-realism-isabel-allende/

Alter, A., 2016 . *Middle Eastern Writers Find Refuge in the Dystopian Novel.* [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/books/middle-eastern-writers-find-refuge-in-the-dystopian-novel.html

Alterman, J. B., 1998. *Sadat and His Legacy: Egypt and the world, 1977-1997,* Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Althusser, L., 1971. Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In: Louis Althusser. trans by Ben Brewster, ed. *Lenin and philosophy and other essays.* New York: Monthly Review Press, pp. 142–7, 166–76.

Amin, S., 2021. *Al-Monitor:* Lawmaker's proposal to place street children in camps stirs controversy [Online]. Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/02/children-camp-egypt-pm-controversy-homeless.html [Accessed 13 October 2022].

Amnesty International., 2020 . *Egypt: Court arbitrarily extends the pre-trial detention of over 1,600 defendants,* New York : https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/05/egypt-court-arbitrarily-extends-the-pretrial-detention-of-over-1600-defendants/.

Amrani, I. E., 2011. *London Review of Books: Why Tunis, Why Cairo?.* [Online] Available at: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v33/n04/issandr-el-amrani/why-tunis-why-cairo [Accessed 21 March 2021].

Amrani, I. E., 2011. The National Democratic Party: The Battleground. In: Pioppi, D., Cristina Paciello., M., el-Armani, I., and Dros Vincent., P., ed. *Transition to What: Egypt's uncertain departure from neo-authoritarianism.:* The German Marshall Fund of the United States, pp. 31-43.

Anishchenkova, V., 2017. Feminist Voices of the 1990s Generation: A Quest for Identity in Miral al-Tahawy's Blue Aubergine. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies,* March, 13(1), pp. 87-106.

Ansary, M. E., 2017. *Project On Middle East Democarcy (POMED): How Egypt Uses a Colonial-Era Law to Crush Protests.* [Online] Available at: https://pomed.org/how-egypt-uses-a-colonial-era-law-to-crush-protests/ [Accessed 8 January 2023].

Ardovini, L., 2022. *Rabaa massacre: Nine years on, Egyptians still live in its shadow.* [Online] Available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/egypt-rabaa-massacre-shadow-live [Accessed 18 October 2022].

Ardovini, L., and Mabon, S., 2019. Egypt's unbreakable curse: Tracing the state of exception from Mubarak to Al Sisi. *Mediterranean Politics,* 25(4), pp. 456-475 .

Aref, M., 2021. *Fekr:* What is neo-liberalism and how did it work under the infitah?. [Online] Available at: https://www.fekr-magazine.com/articles/what-is-neoliberalism-and-infitah [Accessed 6 November 2021].

Arendt, H., 1929. *Love and Saint Augustine.* Joanna Vecchiarelli Scott and Judith Chelius Stark ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H., 1951 [1976]. *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Arendt, H., 1953. Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government. *The Review of politics,* 15(3).

Arendt, H., 1958. *The Human Condition*: University of Chicago Press.

Arendt, H., 1961. What is freedom?. In: H. Arendt, ed. *Between past and future: Six exercises in political thought.* London: Faber and Faber.

Arendt, H., 1963a. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.* New York City: Viking Press.

Arendt, H., 1963b. *On Revolution.* London: Penguin Books.

Arendt, H., 1967. *The New Yorker: Truth and Politics.* [Online] Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1967/02/25/truth-and-politics [Accessed 3 Jaunary 2023].

Arendt, H., 1967. *Truth and Politics.* New York City: The New Yorker.

Arendt, H., 1970 . *On Violence.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

Arendt, H., 1973. *On Revolution.* Harmondsworth, Eng: Penguin.

Arendt, H., 1976. *The Origins of Totalitarianism.* New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Arendt, H., 1978a. *The Jew As Pariah.* R.H. Feldman ed. New York, NY: Grove Press.

Arendt, H., 1978b. *The Life of the Mind.* London: Secker & Warburg.

Arendt, H., 1978c. Organised Guilt and Universal Responsibility and Eichmann in Jerusalem: An Exchange of Letters between Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt. In: R. Feldman, ed. *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age.* New York NY: Grove Press, pp. 204-213.

Arendt, H., 1994. *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism.* California: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Arendt, H., 1998 [1957]. *The Human Condition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Asad, T., 2015. Thinking About Tradition, Religion, and Politics in Egypt Today. *Critical Inquiry,* 42(1), pp. 166-214.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths. G., and Tiffin, H., 2013. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts.* eBook 3rd edition ed. London: Routledge.

Ashley, K. M., 1990. The Discourses of Interdisciplinarity. In: K. M. Ashley. *The Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology.* Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis.

Aslan, I., 1983 [2005]. *The Heron.* trans by Elliott Colla ed. Cairo : The American University in Cairo Press.

Aṣlan, I., 2007. *Something of That Sort.* Cairo: Dar Al-Shorouk .

Atkinson, P. & Delamont, S., 2006. Rescuing Narrative from Qualitative Research. *Narrative Inquiry,* 16(1), pp. 164-172.

Atkinson, P., 1988. Ethnomethodology: A Critical Review. *Annual Review of Sociology,* pp. 441-465.

Attar, A. E., 2009. *Bidoun:* An interview with Sonallah Ibrahim. [Online] Available at: https://www.bidoun.org/articles/sonallah-ibrahim [Accessed 21 October 2021].

Attell, K., 2009. Potentiality, actuality, constituent power. *Contemporary Italian Thought ,* 39(3), pp. 35-53.

Auf, Y., 2018. *Atlamtic Council:* The state of emergency in Egypt: An exception or rule?. [Online]. Available at: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-state-of-emergency-in-egypt-an-exception-or-rule/ [Accessed 22 September 2022].

Aulas, M.-C., 1982 . Sadat's Egypt: A Balance Sheet. *MERIP Reports: Egypt in the New Middle East,* Volume 107, pp. 6-30.

Austin Holmes, A., and Aziz.S., 2019. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Egypt's Lost Academic Freedom.* [Online] Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/78210 [Accessed 27 December 2022].

Awad, N., 2015. *Stepfeed: Hand prints of blood: Egypt's dangerous superstition.* [Online] Available at: https://stepfeed.com/hand-prints-of-blood-egypt-s-dangerous-superstition-1721 [Accessed 3 March 2022].

Azer, S., 2018. *The Tahriri Institute for Middles East Policy- "Behind the Sun": How Egypt Denies Forced Disappearances.* [Online] Available at: https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/behind-the-sun-how-egypt-denies-forced-disappearances/ [Accessed 10 May 2022].

Azimi, N., 2011. *What Do Egypt's Writers Do Now?* [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/11/books/review/what-do-egypts-writers-do-now.html

Bachrach, P., and Baratz, M. S., 1962. Two Faces of Power. *The American Political Science Review,* 56(4), pp. 947-952.

Badawi, M. M., 1988. A Passion for Experimentation: The Novels and Plays of Tawfiq al-Hakim. *Third World Quarterly,* 10(2), pp. 949-960.

BADIL Occasional Bulletin, 2004. From the 1948 Nakba to the 1967 Naksa. *No. 18*, June. Available at: https://www.badil.org/phocadownloadpap/Badil_docs/bulletins-and-briefs/Bulletin-18.pdf

Badiou, A., 1988. *Being and event.* London and New York City: Continuum.

Baheyya, 2013. *Fetishizing the State.* [Online] Available at: http://baheyya.blogspot.com/2013/08/fetishizing-state.html [Accessed 4 January 2023].

Banks, S., 2008. Writing as theory: In defence of fiction *In J. Gary Knowles, Ardra L. Cole. Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Barfi, B., 2018. *Egypt's New Realism: Challenges under Sisi,* Washington DC The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. [Online] Available at: https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/1314.

Baron, B., 2006. Women, Honour, and the State: Evidence from Egypt. *Middle Eastern Studies,* 42(1), pp. 1-20.

Barone, T., 2012. Arts-based research. In: *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp. 29-32.

Barone, T., 2012. Creative non-fiction and social research. In: *J. Gary Knowles, Ardra L. Cole. Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, pp. 106-116.

Barone, T., and Eisner, E. W., 2011. *Arts-Based Research.* Los Angeles SAGE Publications.

Bartlett, C., 1986. Magical realism: The Latin American influence on modern Chicano writers. *Confluencia,* 1(2), pp. 27-37.

Baudrillard, J., 2017. *Jean Baudrillard: The Disappearance of Culture: Uncollected Interviews.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bauman, Z., 2007. *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bayat, A., 2010 [2013]. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East.* 2nd ed. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press .

Bayat, A., 2012 . Politics in the City-Inside-Out. *City and Society* , 24(2), pp. 110-128.

Bayat, A., 2015. *Madamasr:* Revolution and despair. [Online] Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2015/01/25/opinion/u/revolution-and-despair/ [Accessed 25 July 2022].

Bayat, A., 2017. *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring.* Stanford: CA: Stanford University.

Bayat, A., 2018. *Revolution without Revolutionaries:' Making sense of the Arab Spring* [Interview]. (25 Januaray).https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/02/03/feature/politics/revolution-without-revolutionaries-making-sense-of-the-arab-spring/.

Bear, L., 2014. Doubt, Conflict, Mediation: The Anthropology of Modern Time. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* 20(S1), pp. 3-30.

Becker, H., 2007. *Telling About Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beer, D., 2015. Fiction and Social Theory: E-Special Introduction. *Theory, Culture and Society,* 33(7-8), pp. 409-419.

Beinin, J., 2009. Neo-Liberal Structural Adjustment, Political Demobilization and Neo-Authoritarianism in Egypt. In: Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi, ed. *The Arab State and Neo-Liberal Globalization: The Restructuring of State Power in the Middle East.* Reading, UK: Ithaca, pp. 19-46.

Beinin, J., 2020. *Jacobin: Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser Was a Towering Figure Who Left an Ambiguous Legacy.* [Online] Available at: https://jacobin.com/2020/09/egypt-gamal-abdel-nasser-legacy [Accessed 26 September 2022].

Beinin, J., and Vairel, F., 2013 . *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa.* 2nd ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Beltrán, C., 2009. Going Public. *Political Theory,* Volume 37, pp. 565-622.

Benjamin, W., 1968. On the Concept of History/Theses on the Philosophy of History. In: H. Arendt, ed. *Illuminations.* trans by Harry Zohn ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Benjamin, W., 1999. *The Arcades Project.* Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Bersani, L., 1996. *Homos.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Bhatia, G., 2017. *Strange Horizons.* [Online] Available at: http://strangehorizons.com/non-fiction/the-queue-by-basma-abdel-aziz/ [Accessed 23 August 2022].

Biggs, N. K. a. M., 2015. *The Washington Post:* Who actually died in Egypt's Rabaa massacre. [Online]
Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/08/14/counting-the-dead-of-egypts-tiananmen/. [Accessed 31 October 2022].

Black, I., 2011. *The Guradian: Egypt set for mass protest as army rules out force.* [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jan/31/egyptian-army-pledges-no-force [Accessed 19 August 2022].

Blanchot, M., 1988. *The Unavowal Comunity.* Translated by Pierre Joris ed. New York: Station Hill Press.

Bloch, M., 1977. The Past and the Present in the Present. *Man, New Series,* 12(2), pp. 278-292.

Bocock, R., 1988. Psychoanalysis and Social Theory. In: Geoffrey P., Judith T. and Margaret Y. *Social work and the legacy of Freud: psychoanalysis and its uses.* Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, pp. 61-82.

Booth, M., 1987. Women's Prison Memoirs in Egypt and Elsewhere: Prison, Gender, Praxis. *MERIP Middle East Report,* Volume 149, pp. 35-41.

Bourdieu, P., 1989. Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological Theory,* 7(1), pp. 14-25.

Bourdieu, P., 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power.* Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson ed. Cambridge : Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P., 1992. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field (Les Règles de l'art).* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P., 1996. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field.* trans. S. Emanuel ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P., 2000. *Pascalian Meditations.* Redwood City, California: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu. P., and Wacquant, L.J.D., 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Breuer, I., 2019. Phenomenological reflections on the intertwining of violence, place and memory: The memorials of the ungraspable. *Studia Phaenomenologica* , 19 (C. Ciocan, P. Marinescu (ed.)), pp. 153–174.

Brinkmann, S., 2009. Literature as Qualitative Inquiry: The Novelist as Researcher. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 15(8), pp. 1376-1394.

Brooks, R., 2021. *The Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center: Civil-Military Relations in Sisi's Egypt.* [Online] Available at: https://carnegie-mec.org/2021/03/17/civil-military-relations-in-sisi-s-egypt-pub-84074 [Accessed 26 September 2022].

Brown, J., 1998. Historical Fiction or Fictionalized History? Problems for Writers of Historical Novels for Young Adults. *ALAN Review,* 26(1), https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall98/brown.html.

Brown, N. J., September 2011. *Carneige Endowment for International Peace:* Post-Revolutionary Al-Azhar, Washington DC https://carnegieendowment.org/files/al_azhar.pdf.

Brown, R. H., 1977. *A Poetic for Sociology: Toward a Logic of Discovery for the Human Sciences.*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Brownlee, J., 2011-12. Peace before freedom: Diplomacy and repression in Sadat's Egypt. *Political Science Quarterly,* 126(4), pp. 641-668.

Bruff, I., and Tansel, C. B., 2016. Authoritarian neo-liberalism: Trajectories of knowledge production and praxis. *Globalisations* , 16(3), pp. 233-244.

Bruner, J., 1986. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Butler-Kisber, L., 2008. Collage as inquiry. In: *J. Gary Knowles and Ardra L. Cole. Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples and Issues.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 265-276.

Butler, J., 1995. Contingent foundations: feminism and the question of postmodernism. In: Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser, ed. *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* . New York: Routledge, pp. 35-57.

Butler, J., 1997. *The psychic life of power: theories in subjection.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Butler, J., 2008. Violence, mourning, politics. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality,* 4(1), pp. 9-37.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)., 2017. *Toward The Emancipation of Egypt: A study on assembly law 10/1914,* Cairo. Available at: https://www.cihrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Towards_the_em_of_Eg_eng.pdf

Camus, A., 1951. *The Rebel.* London: Penguin Books Limited.

Camus, A., 1955. *The Myth of Sisyphus.* London: H. Hamilton.

Camus, A., December 14, 1957. *A Lecture titled Create Dangerously*: University of Uppsala in Sweden.

Carter, M. J., 2014. How Themes in Literature Can Inform Sociological Theory, Research, and Teaching. *The American Sociologist,* 45(4), pp. 388-411.

Casparini, G., 2004. Anticipation and the surprises of everyday life. *Social Science Information,* 43(3).

Chaffa, M., 2022. *World Literature Today:* Here is a Body by Basma Abdel Aziz. [Online] Available at: https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2022/january/here-body-basma-abdel-aziz [Accessed 2 November 2022].

Chakrabart, D., 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Chamas, S., 2014. *Sisi Rayyisi Capturing all the Sisis.* [Online] Available at: https://www.mashallahnews.com/sisi-rayyisi/ [Accessed 13 May 2022].

Checci, M., 2014. *Engaging with Foucault's Microphysics of Power Through the Primacy of Resistance.* Belgrade, University of Belgrade | Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory.

Chignell, A., 2013. *Rational Hope, Moral Order, and the Revolution of the Will." Divine Order, Human Order, and the Order of Nature.* Edited by Eric Watkins ed. Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Christiaens, T., 2022. Agamben's 'bare life' and Grossman's ethics of senseless kindness. *Journal of European Studies,* 52(1), pp. 3-78.

Christopher Ansell, J. T., 2016. *Handbook on Theories of Governance.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Clifford, J., 1988. *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, J., and E.Marcus, J., 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography: a School of American Research advanced seminar.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cobham, C., 1975. Sex and Society in Yusuf Idris: 'Qā'al-Madīna'. *Journal of Arabic Literature,* Volume 6, pp. 78-88.

Cohen, N., 2011. *NewYork Times: Egyptians Were Unplugged, and Uncowed.* [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/business/media/21link.html [Accessed 24 August 2022].

Cole, A.L., and Knowles, J. G., 2008. Arts-Informed Research. In: *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., pp. 33-36.

Cole, A.L., and Knowles, J. G., 2008. *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Methodologies, Examples, and Issues.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Colla, E., 2011. Egypt's Culture Wars: Politics and practice by Samia Mehrez. *The Arab Studies Journal,* 19(1), pp. 156-160.

Connerton, P., 2008. Seven types of forgetting. *Memory Studies,* 1(59), pp. 59-71.

Conrad, N., 2015 . *DW:* Abu Zaabal survivors hold little hope for justice. [Online] Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/in-egypt-abu-zaabal-survivors-hold-little-hope-for-justice/a-18643997 [Accessed 7 November 2022].

Cook, S.A., 2011. The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to tahrir Square. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cooper, E., and Pratten, D., 2015. *Ethnographies of Uncertainty in Africa.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Coser, L. A., 1963, 1965. *Sociology Through Literature: An introductory reader.* Englewood Cliffs: N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Creswell, R., 2013. *The New Yorker:* Sonallah Ibrahim: Egypt's Oracular Novelist. [Online] Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/sonallah-ibrahim-egypts-oracular-novelist [Accessed 28 October 2021].

Crothers, C., 2010. *Historical Developments and Theoretical Approaches in Sociology-Volume I: Encyclopedia of life support systems.* eBook ed. Singapore: UNESCO.

Czarniawska, B., 2010. The uses of narratology in social and policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies ,* 4(1), pp. 58-76.

Daase , C., and Kessler, O., 2007. Knowns and Unknowns in the 'War on Terror': Uncertainty and the Political Construction of Danger. *Security Dialogue,* 38(4), pp. 411-434.

Dahl, R. A., 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City.* Yale: Yale University Press.

Dana, J., 2016. *The Café and the Unfinished Revolution: On Naguib Mahfouz's 'Karnak Café'.* [Online]. Available at: https://medium.com/@ibnezra/the-café-and-the-unfinished-revolution-on-naguib-mahfouzs-karnak-café-e3f7b938b9ec

Darwish, M., 1987. *Memory for forgefulness.* California: University of California Press.

Darwish, A. A., 1991. The Independent. *Youssif Idris-Egyptian Novelist, playwright and writer.*

Darwish, M., 1987. *Memory for Forgetfulness*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.

Darwish, M., 2006. *In The Presence of Absence (Fīḥaḍratal-ghiyāb).* Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes.

Darwish, M., 2009. The "Red Indian's" Penultimate Speech to the White Man. *Harvard Review,* Volume 36, pp. 152-159 Translated by Fady Joudah.

De La Durantaye, L., 2009. *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction.*Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Dean, M., 2013. *The Signature of Power: Sovereignty, Governmentality and Biopolitics.* New York: SAGE Publications Ltd.

DeCaroli, S., 2013. Political Life: Giorgio Agamben and the Idea of Authority. *Research in Phenomenology,* Volume 43, p. 220–242.

Deen, S. M. E., 2017. *Arab Reform Initiative: Egypt's Unexceptional State of Emergency.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/egypts-unexceptional-state-of-emergency/ [Accessed 11 January 2023].

Deleuze, G., 1988. *Foucualt.* London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G., 1992. What is a dispositif?. In: T. J. Armstrong, ed. *Michel Foucault, philosopher: essays.* London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Della Porta, D. and Keating, M., 2008. *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Denzin, N. K., 1989. *Interpretive Biography.* Newbury Park: Sage.

Derrida, J., 1991. *Letter to a Japanse Friend in A Derrida Reader: Between the blinds.* edited, with an introduction and notes by Peggy Kamuf ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Derrida, J., 1992. *Acts of Literature.* edited by Derek Attridge ed. New York and London : Routledge .

Derrida, J., 2017. *The Death Penalty, vol. 2.* Geoffrey Bennington and Marc Crépon- Trans. Elizabeth Rottenburg ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Di-Capua, Y., 2012. The Traumatic Subjectivity of Sụnʿ Allāh Ibrāhīm's Dhāt. *Journal of Arabic Literature,* Volume 43.

Didion, J., 1983. *Salvador.* New York: Washington Square Press-Simon and Schuster.

DiMeo, D. F., 2012. Egypt's Police State in the Work of Idris and Mahfouz. *Comparative Literature and Culture,* 14(4), pp. 1-10.

DiMeo, D., 2016. *Committed to Disillusion: Activist writers in Egypt from the 1950s to the 1980s.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dostoevsky, F., 1993. *The Grand Inquisitor: With related chapters from The Brothers Karamazov*. edited, with an introduction, by Charles B. Guignon; translated by Constance Garnett ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Douglas, C., 2008. Barricades and Boulevards: Material transformations of Paris, 1795-1871. *Interstice,* Volume 8, pp. 31-42.

Drakulić, S., 2004 . *They Would Never Hurt a Fly.* London: Hachette Digital .

Dreyfus, H., and Rabinow, P., 2013. *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics.* Routledge: Taylor and Francis.

During, S., 1992. *Foucault and Literature: Towards a genealogy of writing.* London: Routledge.

Eagleton, T., 1991. *Ideology: An introduction.* New York: Verso.

Eaves, S., 2014. From Art for Arts Sake to Art as Means of Knowing: A rationale for advancing arts-based methods in research, practice and pedagogy. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods,* 12(12), pp. 147-160.

Eco,U., Rorty, R.,. Culler, J., and Brooke-Rose, C., 1992. Reply. In: S. Collini, ed. *Interpretation and overinterpretation.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Pres, pp. 139-151.

Egypt Today., 2022. [Online]. Available at: https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/117798/I-am-confident-of-our-firm-will-to-launch-into [Accessed 16 September 2022].

Egypt Watch, 2021. *Al-Sisi has built 27 prisons over the past seven years.* [Online] Available at: https://egyptwatch.net/2021/02/26/al-sisi-has-built-27-prisons-over-the-past-seven-years/ [Accessed 11 October 2022].

Eisner, E. W., 2002. What Can Education Learn from the Arts about the Practice of Education?. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* 18(1), pp. 4-16.

Eisner, E.W., and Barone, T., 2011. *Arts based Research.* Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.E.

El Sadda, H., 2012 . *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008.* Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press: Co-published by Syracuse University Press.

El Sayed, A., 2019. *Open Democracy: The battle over the memory of Egypt's revolution.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/battle-over-memory-of-egypt-s-revolution/ [Accessed 26 October 2022].

el-Behary, H., 2013. *Egypt Independent:* Sisi fever' makes its mark on random Egyptian products. [Online] Available at: https://egyptindependent.com/sisi-fever-makes-its-mark-random-egyptian-products/ [Accessed 25 October 2022].

El-Enany, R., 1993. *Naguib Mahfouz: The Pursuit of meaning.* London: Routledge.

El-Gindy, K., 2012. *Egypt, Israel, Palestine,* Cairo: *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*: American University in Cairo.

El-Hamalawy, H., 2011. *How Palestine's uprising inspired Egypt's.* [Online]. Available at: https://electronicintifada.net/content/how-palestines-uprising-inspired-egypts/9253 [Accessed 25 May 2022].

El-Houdaiby, I., 2013. *ahramonline.* [Online] Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/81424/Opinion/Egypt--Nothing-was-inevitable.aspx [Accessed 9 August 2022].

El Rashidi, Y., 2010. *AhramOnline: Hire a thug and other campaign expenditures.* [Online] Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/5/49/Egypt/Egypt-Elections-/Hire-a-thug-and-other-campaign-expenditures.aspx [Accessed 23 October 2022].

El Rashidi, Y., 2016a. *Chronicle of a Last Summer*. New york. Tim Duggan Books.

El Rashidi, Y., June 2013 . *What I think About When I Think of Cairo, On This Date, Twenty-Nine Months After The ______. (Part I).* [Online] Available at: https://www.fkawdw.nl/en/review/desk/what_i_think_about_when_i_think_of_cairo_on_this_date_twenty_nine_months_after_the_part_i [Accessed 28 October 2021].

El Rashidi., Y., 2016b. *Columbia Magazine.* [Online] Available at: https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/book-review-chronicle-last-summer [Accessed 24 May 2022].

El Sadda, H., 2008. *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ellis, C., 2004. *The Ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography.* Walnut Creek: CA: AltaMira.

Emerson, R. W., 1850. *Representative Men.* London: John Champan.

England, S., 2003-2004. The Committee by Son'allah Ibrahim, Mary St. Germain and Charlene Constable. *The Arab Studies Journal,* 11/12(2/1), pp. 115-118.

English, J. F., 2010. Everywhere and nowhere: The sociology of literature after "the sociology of literature". *New Literary History,* 41(2), pp. v-xxiii.

Epstein, C., 2016. Surveillance, Privacy and the Making of the Modern Subject: Habeas what kind of Corpus?. *Body and Society,* 22(2), p. 28–57.

Escarpit, R., 1971. *Sociology of Literature.* London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD.

Essig, A., Leahy, M., and Shea., E., 2020. *Contrasting Neighborhoods of Cairo.* [Online] Available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b14dabaca4c640de93ae53776ff4bb68 [Accessed 22 February 22].

Ewing, R., and Hughes, J., 2008. Arts-Informed Inquiry in Teacher Education: contesting the myths. *European Educational Research Journal,* 7(4), pp. 512-522.

Ezzat, A., 2015. *Rest Dialogues: You are being watched!' Egypt's mass Internet surveillance.* [Online] Available at: https://www.resetdoc.org/story/you-are-being-watched-egypts-mass-internet-surveillance/ [Accessed 25 August 2022].

Ezzat, A., 2020. *Fanack: Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb: A Key Player in Post-Revolution Egypt.* [Online]. Available at: https://fanack.com/faces-en/grand-imam-ahmed-el-tayeb~104166/ [Accessed 27 August 2022].

Fahmy, H., 2012. An Initial Perspective on 'The Winter of Discontent': The Root Causes of the Egyptian Revolution. *Social Research,* 79(2), pp. 349-376.

Fahmy, K., 2013a. *habyat ad-dawla: Ash-shurouq Newspaper.* [Online] Available at: https://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=23082013&id=e1bcec83-b1ef-44f5-abe8-a4a85988a834 [Accessed 4 January 2023].

Fahmy, K., 2013b. *Ahram Online: The threat to Egypt's mighty state.* [Online] Available at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/79835/Opinion/The-threat-to-Egypts-mighty-state.aspx

Fahmy, K., 2015. Opening Politics Black Box: Reflections on the past, present and future of the Egyptian revolution . In: Raja. S. and Penny. J. ed. *Shifting Sands: The Unravelling of the Old Order in the Middle East.* London: Profile Books, pp. 69-81.

Fahmy, K., 2018. *An Officer And An Ottoman Gentleman.* [Online] Available at: http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1186/288193/Egypt/Nasser-a-lasting-legacy/An-officer-and-an-Ottoman-gentleman.aspx

Fahmy, K., 2020. *The Egyptian Army in 1967 Six-day Arab Israeli War.* [Online] Available at: https://khaledfahmy.org/en/category/public-lectures/

Fanon, F., 1963. *The Wretched Of The Earth.* Translated from the French by Richard Philcox ed. New York: Grove Press.

Fanon, F., 1965. *A Dying Colonialism.* Middlesex: Penguin Books ltd.

Fanon, F., 2017. *Black Skin, White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lam Markmann ed. London: Pluto Press.

Faraj, N., 1986. *Naguib Mahfouz: Life and literature*. al-Hay'a al-Miariyah al-Ammah li-al-Kitab: Cairo.

Fathi Imbabi, S. S., 2004. *Zahrat al-Haraka al-Tullabiyya Jil al-Sab'inat.* Cairo: Dar Merit lil Nashr wa al-Ma'lumat.

Febvre, L., 1953. *La sensibilit? et l'histoire: Comment reconstituer la vie affective d'autrefois?" Combats pour l'histoi.* Paris : Armand Colin .

Feroz, E., 2017. *Meeting Yassin al-Haj Saleh, Syria's leading intellectual dissident, The New Arab. Available at:* http://www.yassinhs.com/2017/10/06/meeting-yassin-al-haj-saleh-syrias-leading-intellectual-dissident/

Ferrarese, E., 2018. The use of bodies. Agamben's idea of a non- capitalist form of life. *Journal for Cultural Research* , 22(2), pp. 126-136.

Fichte, J. G., 1982. *The Science of Knowledge.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press .

Fields, G., 2017. *Enclosure: Palestinian landscapes in a historical mirror.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

First Earl of Cromer, (Baring., E.,) 1908. *Modern Egypt: Orientalism early sources volume. VI.* London: Macmillan and Co.

First Earl of Cromer, (Baring., E.,) 1913. *Political & Literary Essays, 1908-1913.* London: Macmillan and Co.

First Earl of Cromer., (Baring., E.,) 1908. *Modern Egypt.* London: Macmillan.

First Earl of Cromer., (Baring., E.,) 1916. *Political & literary essays: 3d series.* London: Macmillan and co., limited.

Flores, A., 1995. Magical realism in Spanish American fiction. *Hispania,* 38(2), pp. 187-192.

Foucault, M., 1967. *Madness and Civilization: A history of insanity in the Age of Reason.* London: Tavistock Publications.

Foucault, M., 1973. *The Birth of the Clinic: An archaeology of medical perception.* Translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith ed. London: Tavistock.

Foucault, M., 1976. *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Volume 1.* trans by R Hurley ed. New York: Pantheon Books .

Foucault, M., 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan ed. London: Allen Lane.

Foucault, M., 1978. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978.* Edited by Michel Senellart; Translated by Graham Burchell ed. New York: Macmillan publishers.

Foucault, M., 1978. *The History of Sexuality, Vol.1: An introduction.* translated from the French by Robert Hurley ed. Newou York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M., 1979. Useless to Revolt. *Le Monde, Extraído de Power – The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984,* Volume 3, pp. 449-453.

Foucault, M., 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M., 1982. The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry ,* 8(4), pp. 777-795.

Foucault, M., 1986. Of Other Spaces. *The Johns Hopkins University Press,* 16(1), pp. 22-27 Architecture/Mouvement/ Continuité October, 1984; ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967.

Foucault, M., 1988. Technologies of the self. In: Martin. L.H., Gutman.h., and Hutton. P.H., , ed. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault.* London: Tavistock, pp. 16-49.

Foucault, M., 1988. *The Care of the Self.* trans by R. Hurley ed. New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M., 1990. *The History of Sexuality: Vol.1: An Introduction.* trans. Robert Hurley, Reissue edition ed. New York: Vintage.

Foucault, M., 1991. *The Foucault Effect Studies in Governmentality.* Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller ed. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Foucault, M., 1994. *Power: Essential works of Foucault 1958–1984- Volume 3.* James D.Faubion ed. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M., 1997-2000. *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984.* Paul Rabinow, series editor; translated by Robert Hurley and others ed. New York: New Press.

Foucault, M., 1998. Foucault. In: J. D. Faubion, ed. *Aesthetics, method, and epistemology: Essential works of Foucault 1958–1984 (Vol. 2).* New York: The New Press.

Foucault, M., 2000 [1981]. The Subject and Power'. In: James D. Faubion. trans by Robert Hurley and others, ed. Power *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Volume Three. New York: New Press, pp. 340-341.

Foucault, M., 2000. *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984.* series editor, Paul Rabinow ed. London: Penguin Books.

Foucault, M., 2001. *Fearless Speech.* ed. Joseph Pearson ed. Los Angeles: CA: Semiotext(e)..

Foucault, M., 2003. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76.* edited by Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana ed. New York: Picador.

Foucault, M., 2006. *Psychiatric Power. Lectures at the Collège de France 1973–1974.* edited by Jacques Lagrange and Translated by Graham Burchell ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M., 2007. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collge de France, 1977-78.* edited by Michel Senellart; general editors, Franòis Ewald and Alessandro Fontana; translated by Graham Burchell ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M., 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979.* edited by Michel Senellart, translated by Graham Burchell ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M., 2014. *On The Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980.* New York : Palgrave: Macmillan.

Foucault, M., 2017. *Subjectivity and Truth: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1980-1981.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucualt, M., 1986. Of Other Spaces. *The Johns Hopkins University Press,* 16(1), pp. 22-27 Architecture/Mouvement/ Continuité October, 1984; ("Des Espace Autres," March 1967).

Foucualt, M., 2006. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984: Volume I.* Edited by P. Rabinow ed. New York: New Press.

Frankfurt, H. G., 1985, 2005. *On Bullshit.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Freud, S., 1917 (1920). *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis: A general introduction to psychoanalysis.* New York: G. Stanley Hall.

Freud, S., 1921/1958. The dynamics of Transference. In: J. Strachey, ed. *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (Vol. 12).* London: Hogarth Press, pp. 97-108.

Freud, S., 2002. *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Translated by David McLintock ed. London: Penguin.

Freud, S., 2003. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings.* New York: Penguin.

Freundlieb, D., 2015. Why Subjectivity Matters: Critical theory and the philosophy of the subject. *Critical Horizons,* 1(2), pp. 229-245.

Fromm, E., 1941. Escape from Freedom. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
G. Smith, R., and B. Clarke, D., 2015. *Jean Baudrillard: From Hyperreality to Disappearance: Uncollected Interviews.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Galbraith J.S., and Marsot, A.S., Nov. 1978. The British Occupation of Egypt: Another View. *Cambridge University Press,* 9(4), pp. 471-488.

Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2006. Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships. *Economics & Politics,* 18(1), pp. 1-26.

Gasparini, G., 1995. On waiting. *Time and Society ,* 4(1), pp. 29-45.

Geer, B., 2009. Prophets and Priests of the Nation: Naguib Mahfouz's 'Karnak Café' and the 1967 Crisis in Egypt. *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 41(4), pp. 653-669 .

Geertz, C., 1980. Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of social thought. *The American Scholar,* 49(2), pp. 165-179.

Gewily, N., 2018. *Cairo: Mapping the Neo-Liberal City in Literature A study of: The Heron, Being Abbas el Abd and Utopia*: Master's Thesis, the American University in Cairo]. AUC Knowledge Fountain.

Ghafar, A. A., 2017. *Egyptians in Revolt: The Political Economy of Labor and Student mobilizations 1919-2011.* Routledge.

Ghoneim, H.,. 2015. *Middle East Monitor: The graveyard: an inside look into Scorpion Prison,* https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/about/

Goffman, E., 1952. On Cooling the Mark Out: Some Aspects of Adaptation to Failure. *Psychiatry: Journal of Interpersonal Relations.*

Goffman, E., 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates.* New York : Anchor Books.

Goffman, E., 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity.* London: Penguin.

Goffman, E., 1981. A Reply to Denzin and Keller. *Contemporary Sociology,* 10(1), pp. 60-68.

Goffman, E., 1990. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goldberg, D. T., 2002. *The Racial State.* Malden, Mass: Blackwell.

Goldie, K. W., 2007. *The Daily Star Lebanon.* [Online] Available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Article.aspx?id=113907

Golia, M., 2019 . *on Bureaucracy.* e book Jean Colombain ed. Cairo : Sympa.

Goodman, P., 1972. *Speaking and language: defence of poetry.* New York: Random House.

Gordon, A. F., 2008. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.* London: University of Minnesota Press.

Gordon, P. E., 2014 . *The New York Review of Books:* Heidegger & the Gas Chambers. [Online]. Available at: https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/12/04/heidegger-and-gas-chambers/ [Accessed 23 January 2023].

Gorman, A., 2021. Introduction: Occupation, independence, revolution. In: Robert Springborg, Amr Adly, Anthony Gorman, Tamir Moustafa, Aisha Saad, Naomi Sakr, and Sarah Smierciak, ed. *Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Egypt.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 7-21.

Gramsci, A., 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* ed. and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smi ed. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Gramsci, A., 1992, [1947]. *Prison Notebooks: Vol 1.* Joseph Buttigieg ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Grey, S., 2004. America's Gulag. *New Statesman*, 17 May.

Griswold, W., 1992. The Writing on the Mud Wall: Nigerian Novels and the Imaginary Village. *American Sociological Review,* 57(6), pp. 709-724.

Guardian, T., 2019. *Trump reportedly calls Egypt's president his 'favorite dictator' – as it happened.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2019/sep/13/greta-thunberg-climate-crisis-protest-white-house-donald-trump-live-news [Accessed 22 September 2022].

Gutting, G., 2005. *Foucault: A very short introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

H. Martin, L., Hutton, P.H., and Gutman, H., 1988. *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault.* e-book ed. University of Massachusetts Press.

Habermas, J., 1996. Citizenship and National Identity. In: J. Habermas, ed. *Between Facts and Norms.* Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 491-515.

Hacking, I., 2002. *Historical Ontology.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Hafez, S., 1976. The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties. *Journal of Arabic Literature,* Volume 7, pp. 68-84.

Hafez, S., 2001. Jamaliyyat al-Ruwaya al-Jadida: Al-Qatiy'a al-Ma'rifiyya wa al-naza'a al-Mudadda li al-Ghina'iyya — Aesthetica of the New Novel: Epistemological Rupture and Anti-Lyrical Poetics. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics,* 21 (https://fount.aucegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/3169), pp. 184-246.

Hafez, S., 2010. The New Egyptian Novel: Urban Transformation and Narrative Form. *New Left Review,* July-August, Volume 64, pp. 47-62.

Hafez, S., 2012. No longer a bargain: Women, masculinity, and the Egyptian uprising. *American Ethnologist,* 39(1), pp. 37-42.

Haley, A., 1976. *Roots.* Bronx, NY: Ishi Press International.

Hall, D. E., 2004. *Subjectivity.* New York: Routledge.

Hammad, H., 2016. Arwa Salih's "The premature": Gendering the history of the Egyptian left. *The Arab Studies Journal,* 24(1), pp. 118-142.

Hammer, J., 2017. *The New York Times Magazine: How Egypt's Activists Became 'Generation Jail.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/14/magazine/how-egypts-activists-became-generation-jail.html [Accessed 11 October 2022].

Hamzawy, A., 2017. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.* Legislating Authoritarianism: Egypt's New Era of Repression., 16 March. https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/03/16/legislating-authoritarianism-egypt-s-new-era-of-repression-pub-68285.

Hamzawy. A., and Grebowski, S., 2010. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. From Violence to Moderation Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya and al-Jihad., April, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Hamzawy-Grebowski-EN.pdf.

Hanafy, I. A., 2002. *Magic Realism In Jorge Luis Borges's Fictions and Naguib Mahfouz's Arabian Nights and Days.* Benha: Benha University.

Hannum, M., 2016. *After the Fall: Women Writers on Post-Revolutionary Egypt.* [Online] Available at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/fall-women-writers-post-revolutionary-egypt/ [Accessed 13 August 2022].

Hanspeter, M., 2008. *Formal and Informal authority in Libya since 1969: Qadhafi's revolution revisited.* Edited by Dirk Vanewalle ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harrington, A., 2002. Knowing the social world through literature: Sociological reflections on Robert Musil's The Man Without Qualities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology,* 5(1), pp. 51-59.

Harrison, N., 1980. *The Christian Science Monitor: Opposition, Egypt has second thoughts on law curbing.* [Online] Available at: https://www.csmonitor.com/1980/0314/031444.html [Accessed 30 November 2021].

Harter, S., 2012. *The Construction of the Self: Developmental and socio-cultural foundations.* 2nd ed. New York and London: The Guilford Press.

Hartnett, S.J., and Engels, J.D., 2005. "Aria in time of war": Investigative poetry and the politics of witnessing. In: Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, ed. *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage, pp. 1043-1067.

Harvey, G., 10 June 1925. *Note on the Special Political Office: Correspondence from Thomas Russell, Commandant, Cairo City Police, to the Director-General, European Department, Ministry of the Interior.* FO 141/474/1.

Haugaard, M., 2012. Rethinking the four dimensions of power: Domination and empowerment. *Journal of Political Power,* 5(1), pp. 33-54.

Hawthorne, A. and Miller, A., 2019. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:* Worse Than Mubarak. [Online] Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/27/worse-than-mubarak-pub-78470 [Accessed 25 October 2022].

Haykal, M. H., 1982. *The Autum Fury: The Assassination of Sadat.* London: Wm Collins & Sons & Co.

Heater, D., 1999. *What Is Citizenship?.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hegel, G. W. F., 2018. *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* trans by Pinkard, Terry P. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M., 1962. *Being and Time.* New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M., 1976. *Gesamtausgabe, Part 3, Volume 79.* Frankfurt, Hessen: Vittorio Klostermann.

Heller, K. J., 1996. Subjectification and Resistance in Foucault. *Substance,* 25(1).

Henry Levy, B., 1977. *"Power and Sex: An Interview with Michel Foucault"* [Interview] (12 March 1977). Originally published in Le Nouvelle Observateur. Translated by David J.

Hersh, J., 2013. *Egypt's Catastrophe of Choice.* [Online] Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/egypts-catastrophe-of-choice [Accessed 31 October 2022].

Hijab, N., 2011. The rise of the intifada generation: The Palestinian liberation struggle was "the rock that was thrown in the still water." *The Nation* https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/rise-intifada-generation/.

Hochschild, A. R., 2012. *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of human feeling.* California: University of California Press.

Hoggart, R., 1963. Why I Value Literature. *Times Educational Supplement,* reprinted in The Critical Moment: Essays on the nature of literature (London: Faber, 1964).

Hoggart, R., 1966 . Literature and Society. *The American Scholar ,* 35(2), pp. 277-289 .

Hoggart, R., 1970. *Speaking to Each Other: Essays VII About Litertaure.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Hoggart, R., 1971. *The Literary Imagination and the Sociological Imagination.* Les Langues Modernes.

Hoggart, R., 1973. *Speaking to Each Other: Essays Vol. II About Literature.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Holmes, A. A., 2019. "Sisi is a Killer": First Wave of Counter-Revolution: Sisi as Minister of Defense (July 4, 2013–June 7, 2014). In: A. A. Holmes, ed. *Coups and Revolutions: Mass Mobilization, the Egyptian Military, and the United States from Mubarak to Sisi.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 139-192.

Holmes, A. A., 2019. *Coups and Revolutions: Mass mobilisation, the Egyptian Military, and The United States from Mubarak to Sisi.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Honneth, A., 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts..* Cambridge: Polity .

Hospers, J., 1960. Implied Truths in Literature. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 19(1), pp. 37-46 .

Huma Rights Watch., 2012. *Egypt: Protester Killings a Test for Morsy.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/19/egypt-protester-killings-test-morsy [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 1992. *Behind Closed Doors: Torture and Detention in Egypt,* New York: Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch, 2013. *Egypt: Protester Killings Not Being Investigated Impunity Encourages Excessive Force.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/02/egypt-protester-killings-not-being-investigated [Accessed 7 November 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 2014. *All According to Plan The Rab'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/12/all-according-plan/raba-massacre-and-mass-killings-protesters-egypt [Accessed 21 September 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 2014. *Egypt: Rab'a Killings Likely Crimes against Humanity No Justice a Year Later for Series of Deadly Mass Attacks on Protesters.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/12/egypt-raba-killings-likely-crimes-against-humanity [Accessed 30 October 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 2021. *Egypt: Emergency Provisions Made Permanent.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/05/egypt-emergency-provisions-made-permanent [Accessed 22 September 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 2021. *Egypt: Rash of Deaths in Custody Holding Police Accountable Key to Saving Lives.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/21/egypt-rash-deaths-custody [Accessed 7 November 2022].

Human Rights Watch, 2021. *Ending State of Emergency a Start But Insufficient Little Impact on Civil Liberties Without Changing Abusive Laws.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/26/egypt-ending-state-emergency-start-insufficient [Accessed 11 October 2022].

Human Rights Watch, H. R., 2014. *All According to Plan The Rab'a Massacre and Mass Killings of Protesters in Egypt,* https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/12/all-according-plan/raba-massacre-and-mass-killings-protesters-egypt

Human Rights Watch., 2019. *Egypt: A Move to Enhance Authoritarian Rule.* [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/12/egypt-move-enhance-authoritarian-rule [Accessed 1 September 2022].

Human Rights Watch., May 2005 Vol. 17, No. 5 (E). *Black Hole: The Fate of Islamists Rendered to Egypt.*

Hurewitz, J. C., 2011. *Treaty of Preferential Alliance: Britain and Egypt, 26 August 1936 In Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956.* Whitefish MT, United States: Literary Licensing.

Hussein, W., 2017. *Al Monitor:* How Egypt hopes to protect, educate street children. [Online] Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2017/04/egypt-street-children-poverty-workforce-future-development.html [Accessed 13 October 2022].

Husserl, E., 1989. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy – Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution.* Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Ibrahim, S., 1966. *That Smell and Notes from Prison.* Translated by Robyn Creswell ed. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.

Ibrahim, S., 1980. My Literary experience: Tajribati al-riwa iyyah. *al-Adab,* 28(1-6).

Ibrahim, S., 1981 [2002]. *The Committee.* trans by Mart St.Germain and Charlene Constable ed. Cairo: The American University In Cairo Press .

Ibrahim, S., 1992. Sonallah Ibrahim and the narration of the novel's history. *Majallat al-naqd al-adabi,* 11(3), pp. 176-181.

Ibrahim, S., 2021. The dynamics of the Egyptian social contract: How the political changes affected the poor. *World Development,* Volume 138. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20303818.

Idris, Y., 1962 [1990]. The Black Policeman. In: Yūsuf Idris. trans by Catherine Cobham, ed. *Rings of Burnished Brass.* Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, pp. 53-97.

Ingle, S., 2007. Lies, Damned Lies and Literature: George Orwell and 'The Truth'. *Political Studies Association BJPIR,* 9(4), p. 730–746.

International, A., 2011. *Virgnity Tests for Egytpian Women Protesters.* [Online] Available at: https://www.amnestyusa.org/virginity-tests-for-egyptian-women-protesters.

Irigaray, L., 1998. *The Blind Spot of an Old Dream of SymmetIy: Speculum of the other woman In Gender and Envy by Nancy Burke.* London and New York: Routledge.

Irwin, R., 2001. Briefing for an Inquisition: *The New York Times* [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2001/12/16/books/briefing-for-an-inquisition.html. Originally published on December 16, section 7, page 7. [Accessed 11 November 2021].

Iser, W., 1989 . *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology.* Baltimore, MD and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Iser, W., 1993 . *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ismail, S., 2012. The Egyptian Revolution against the Police. *Social Research,* 79(2), pp. 435-462.

Jackson, S., and Scott, S., 2002. *Gender: A Sociological Reader.* London and New York : Routledge .

Jahine, S., 2018. *Nasser is my father, Sadat my stepfather* [Interview] (Al Watan Newspaper 21 April 2018).

Jaquette, E., 2013. *Madamasr.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2013/07/07/feature/culture/the-queue-by-basma-abdel-aziz/

Jaquette, E., 2018 . *Shot in the Dark: An Interview with Elisabeth Jaquette* [Interview] (20 February 2018. Available at: https://www.catranslation.org/blog-post/shot-in-the-dark-an-interview-with-elisabeth-jaquette/ .

Jaraba, M., 2014. Why Did the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Year-Long Rule Fall?. *Zeitschrift für Politik,* 61(1), pp. 61-80.

Jarnagin, A., 2016. When Coca-Cola grows citrus on the Nile, who wins? Revisiting the end of the Arab boycott in Egypt. *Grand Valley Journal of History,* 1(4), pp. 1-16.

Jay, M., 1995. The Limits of Limit Experience: Bataille and Foucault. *Constellations,* 2(2), pp. 155-174.

Johan Loos, M., Kaszti. J. and Van der Waarden R., 2021. The body as heterotopia. *Junctions,* 5(2), pp. 18-32.

Johnson-Davies, D., 2009. *The Essential Yusuf Idris: Masterpieces of the Egyptian Short Story.* Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Julien Grimm, J., 2022. *Middle East Eye: Egypt:* How the Rabaa massacre cemented political polarisation. [Online]. Available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/egypt-rabaa-massacre-anniversary-political-polarisation [Accessed 2 November 2022].

Kaaki, L., 2007. *Arabnews.* [Online] Available at: https://www.arabnews.com/node/300375 .

Kabesh, A. T., 2013. *Postcolonial Masculinities: Emotions, histories and ethics.* Farnham: Ashgate.

Kabesh, A. T., 2015. Political upheaval in Egypt: Disavowing troubling states of mind. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society,* 20(4), p. 343–358.

Kandil, H., 2012. *Soldiers, Spies and Statesmen: Egypt's Road to Revolt.* London: Verso .

Kandil, H., 2014a. *Inside the Brootherhood.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kandil, H., 2014b. Sisi's Turn. *London Review of Books ,* 36(4).

Kandil, H., 2016a. *The power Triangle: Military, security, and politics in regime change.* New York : Oxford University Press.

Kandil, H., 2016b. *New Left Review:* Sisi's Egypt. [Online] Available at: https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii102/articles/hazem-kandil-sisi-s-egypt [Accessed 7 November 2022].

Kandiyoti, D., 1988. Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society,* 2(3), pp. 274-290.

Kant, I., 1997. *Critique of Pure Reason.* trans by P. Guyer and A. Wood ed. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kazem, S., 1986. *On Prison and Freedom.* Cairo: Al-Zahra for Arabic Media .

Khaled, F., 2022. *45 Years On: Remembering the Egyptian Bread Intifada*: Egyptian Streets https://egyptianstreets.com/2022/01/18/45-years-on-remembering-the-egyptian-bread-intifada/.

Khalifah, O., 2013. *Nasser in the Egyptian Imaginary.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: Columbia University.

Khalil, A., 2012. *Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Khan, H., 2022. *Bidoun:* Archetypal intellectuals, devastated revolutionaries, kitsch mythologies, and a writer who dared to look at herself. The disenchanted. [Online] Available at: http://new.bidoun.org/articles/archetypal-intellectuals-devastated-

revolutionaries-kitsch-mythologies-and-a-writer-who-dared-to-look-at-herself [Accessed 2 July 2022].

Kharrat, E., 1990. *al-Kitāba ʻabra al-nawʻiyya Trans-genre Writing.* Cairo: Dar al-ʻAdab.

Khazbak, R., 2011. *Egypt Independent: The revolution's sheikh, killed at 52.* [Online] Available at: https://egyptindependent.com/revolutions-sheikh-killed-52/ [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Khorshid, S., 2014. *The New York Times: Egypt's New Police State.* [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/opinion/egypts-new-police-state.html?_r=0 [Accessed 10 January 2023].

Khosravi, S., 2021. The Weight of Waiting. In: S. Khosravi, ed. *Waiting: A project in conversation* . Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp. 13-26.

Kimball, S., 2015. *After Arab Spring Surveillance in Egypt Intensifies.* [Online] Available at: https://theintercept.com/2015/03/09/arab-spring-surveillance-egypt-intensifies/ [Accessed 24 August 2022].

King, N., 2012. *DW:* Comeback for metal scene?. [Online] Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/satanism-slurs-shake-egypts-metal-fans/a-16375029 [Accessed 31 January 2023].

Kundera, M., 1988. *The Art of the Novel.* Translated by Linda Asher ed. London; Boston: Faber.

Kurpershoek, P. M., 1981. *The Short Stories of Yūsuf Idrīs: A Modern Egyptian Author.* Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Kurylo, B., 2022. The discourse and aesthetics of populism as securitisation style. *International Relations,* 36(1), pp. 127-147.

Lacan, J., 1977. *Écrits: A selection.* Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan ed. New York: Norton.

Lacan, J., 1977. *The Seminar of Jaques Lacan, Book VI: Desire and its interpretation.* Translated by Cormac Gallagher ed. http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/THE-SEMINAR-OF-JACQUES-LACAN-VI.pdf.

Lacan, J., 1981. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis.* New York: Norton.

Lacouture, J., 1973. *Nasser: A biography.* New York: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd.

Laing, R. D., 1960. *The Divided Self: An existential study in sanity and madness.* New York: Penguin Publishing Group.

Langbein, H., 1988. *Auschwitz. Zeugnisse und Berichte.* Hans Günther Adler, Ella Lingens-Reiner, Katharina Stengel ed. Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum.

Larsen, E., 1980. *Wit as a Weapon: The Political Joke in History.* London: F. Muller.

Latour, B., 1988. The politics of explanation: an alternative. In: S. Woolgar, ed. *Knowledge and reflexivity.* London : Sage , pp. 155-177.

Lauretis, T. D., 2008. *Freud's Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film.* eBook ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Layton, L., 2008. What divides the subject? psychoanalytical reflections on subjectivity, subjection and resistance. *Subjectivity,* Volume 22, p. 60–72.

Leavy, P., 2012. Fiction and the Feminist Academic Novel. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 18(6), p. 516–522.

Leavy, P., 2015. *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice.* 2nd ed. New York; London: The Guilford Press.

Leavy, P., 2016. *Fiction as Research Practice: Short stories, novalles and novels.* New York: Routledge.

Lefebvre, H., 1991. *The Production of Space.* Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H., 1995-1974. *The Production of Space.* Cambridge: Mass.: Blackwell Pub.

Lefebvre, H., 2000. *Everyday Life in The Modern World.* London: Athlone Press.

Lemanski, C., 2004. A new apartheid? The spatial implications of fear of crime in Cape Town, South Africa Charlotte LemanskiView all authors and affiliations. *Environment and Urbanisation ,* 16(2), pp. 101-112.

Lewis, D. Rodgers, D., and Woolcock, M., 2008. The Fiction of Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge. *The Journal of Development Studies,* 44(2), pp. 198-216.

Lindsey, U., 2019. Lessons of defeat: Testimonies of the Arab left. *Politics*, 14 January, Issue 18, pp. https://thepointmag.com/politics/lessons-of-defeat-testimonies-of-the-arab-left/.

Lindsey, U., 2022. *The New York Review:* Refusing Silence in Egypt. [Online] Available at: https://www.nybooks.com/contributors/ursula-lindsey/ [Accessed 6 October 2022].

Linthicum, N. S., 2019. *Writing in Cairo: Literary Networks and the Making of Egypt's Nineties Generation.* Michigan: University of Michigan.

Lloyd, M., 2015. Travelling theories. *Redescriptions,* 18(2), pp. 121-125.

Locke, J., 1980. *Second Treatise of Government.* C.B Macpherson ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Longo, M., 2017. *Fiction and Social Reality: Literature and narrative as sociological resources.* Routledge: Routledge.

Lorenz, C., 2012. If You're so smart, why are you under surveillance? Universities, neo-liberalism, and new public management. *Critical Inquiry,* 38(3), pp. 599-629.

Lukacs, G., 1923, 1971. *History & Class Consciousness.* Translated by Rodney Livingstone ed. s.l.:Merlin Press.

Lukes, S., 1974. *Power: A radical view.* London: Palgrave: Macmillian.

Lukes, S., 2005. *Power: A radical view.* 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillian.

Lybarger, J., 2013 . *Love, Loneliness, Rot: "That Smell" and Egypt Under Nasser.* [Online] Available at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/love-loneliness-rot-that-smell-and-egypt-under-nasser/ [Accessed 14 January 2023].

Brinthaupt, T. M., and Lipka, R.P., 1994. *Changing the Self: Philosophies, Techniques, and Experiences.* New York: State University of New York Press.

M. Labelle, M. J., 2014. De-coca-colonizing Egypt: Globalization, decolonization, and the Egyptian boycott of Coca-Cola, 1966–68. *Journal of Global History,* 9(1), pp. 122-142.

Machiavelli, N., 2009. *The Prince.* London: Penguin Classics.

Mada Masr., 2017. *Aya Hegazy and Belady Foundation Staff Acquitted After More Than 2 years In Detention.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/04/16/news/u/aya-hegazy-and-belady-foundation-staff-acquitted-after-more-than-2-years-in-detention/ [Accessed 24 October 2022].

Magdi, A., 2017. *Human Rights Watch:* 'We need to talk' about al-Sisi's Twisted Take on Human Rights. [Online] Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/11/20/we-need-talk-about-al-sisis-twisted-take-human-rights [Accessed 20 October 2022].

Maggie M., Holmes., R., Jones, L., and MacRae., C., 2010 . Silence as Resistance to Analysis: Or, on Not Opening One's Mouth Properly. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 16(6), pp. 492-500.

Mahfouz, N. 1974 [2007]. *Karnak Café*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Mahfouz, N., 1982. *The Final Hour.* Translated by Roger Allen ed. Cairo- New York: The American University in Cairo Press.

Mahmoud, F. M., 1989. Depth of Vision: The Fiction of Naguib Mahfouz. *Third World Quarterly,* 11(2), pp. 154-166.

Mahmoud, S., 2012. *AhramOnline: Dive deep into Ibrahim Aslan's world.* [Online] Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/18/0/31401/Books/Dive-deep-into-Ibrahim-Aslans-world.aspx [Accessed 18 February 2022].

Malmström, M. F., 2019. *The Streets Are Talking to Me Affective Fragments in Sisi's Egypt.* California : University of California Press .

Mamdouh, R., 2019. *Mada Masr:* Voting in the dark: Ramming the constitutional amendments through. [Online]. Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2019/04/24/feature/politics/voting-in-the-dark-ramming-the-constitutional-amendments-through/ [Accessed 9 Translated from Arabic by Ian Louie October 2022].

Mandour, M., 2020. *Carneige Endowment for International Peace*: Sisi's War on the Poor. 23 September, https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/82772.

Mandour, M., 2021. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:* The Sinister Side of Sisi's Urban Development. [Online]. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/84504 [Accessed 26 October 2022].

Mann, M., 1993. *The Sources of Social Power, Volume 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States 1760–1914.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mansfield, P., 1973. Nasser and Nasserism. *International Journal ,* 28(4), pp. 670-688.

Marcuse, H., 1964. *One-Dimensional Man.* London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Marcuse, H., 2007. *Art and Liberation: Collected papers of Herbert Marcuse Volume 4.* edited by Douglas Kellner ed. London and New York: Routledge.

Marfleet, P., 2009. State and Society . In el-Mahidi R., and Marfleet, P., ed. *Egypt: The Moment of Change.* London and New York: Zed Books, pp. 14-33.

Marfleet, P., 2013. Mubarak's Egypt — Nexus of Criminality. *State Crime Journal ,* 2(2), pp. 112-134.

Marx, K., 1932. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* Mineola, New York: Dover Publications .

Marx, K., 1975. Marx to Engels, 1865. In: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, ed. *Marx, Engels collected works: Volume 42.* London: Lawrence and Wishart, p. 172.

Marx, K., 2007. *Marx. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844.* trans by Martin Milligan ed. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Marx.K., and Engels, F., 1949. *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: Selected Works in Two Volumes, Volume II.*Moscow: Foreign Language.

Masalha, N., 2012. *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, narrating the subaltern, reclaiming memory.* London: Zed Books.

Masr, M., 2018. *University of Washington PhD student, missing for 4 days, brought before prosecution and detained.* [Online] Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/05/28/news/u/phd-student-missing-for-4-days-brought-before-prosecution-and-detained/ [Accessed 27 December 2022].

Matthies-Boon, V., 2018. Injustice Turned Inward? Continuous Traumatic Stress and Social Polarization in Egypt. *Middle East – Topics & Arguments,* Volume 11, pp. 89-98.

Matthies-Boon, V., 2022. *Breaking Intersubjectivity A Critical Theory of Counter-Revolutionary Trauma in Egypt.* Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Mbembe, A., 2003. Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola. *Research in African Literatures,* 34(4), pp. 1-26.

McCorkel, J. A., 1998. Going Down to the Crackhouse: Critical Space as a Form of Resistance in Total Institutions and Everyday Life. *Symbolic Interaction* , 21(227), p. 251.

McDermott, A., 2014. *Egypt from Nasser to Mubarak: A flawed revolution.* London: Routledge.

Media Ownership Monitor Egypt., 2018. *Sisification - or: the winner takes it all.* [Online] Available at: https://egypt.mom-rsf.org/en/findings/secret-services/ [Accessed 24 September 2022].

Mehrez, S., 1993. Respected Sir. In: Michael B. &. A. Haydar, ed. *Naguib Mahfouz: From Regional Fame to Global Recognition.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, pp. 61-80.

Mehrez, S., 1994. *Egyptian Writers Between History and Fiction: Essays on Naguib Mahfouz, Sonallah Ibrahim, and Gamal al-Ghitani.* Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.

Mehrez, S., 2001/2002. Where Have All the Families Gone: Egyptian Literary Texts of the Nineties. *The Arab Studies Journal,* 9/10(2/1), pp. 31-49.

Mehrez, S., 2011. *The Literary of Cairo.* Cairo : The American University in Cairo Press .

Mellard, J. M., 1998. Inventing Lacanian psychoanalysis: Linguistics and tropology in "the agency of the letter". *Poetics Today,* 19(4), pp. 499-530.

Michaelson, R., 2019. *The Guardian.* [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/17/mohamed-morsi-dead-ousted-president-egypt-collapses-after-court-session [Accessed 9 August 2022].

Middle East Eye., 2018. *Amnesty slams 'disgraceful' mass trial as 75 sentenced to death in Egypt over Rabaa protest.* [Online] Available at: https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/amnesty-slams-disgraceful-mass-trial-75-sentenced-death-egypt-over-rabaa-protest [Accessed 3 November 2022].

Mikkonen, K., 1996. Theories of Metamorphosis: From Metatrope to Textual Revision. *Style,* 30(2), pp. 309-340.

Mill, J. S., 1963. *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill.* John M. Robson etal. ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Pres.

Mills, C. W., 1956. *The Power Elite.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Mills, C. W., 1959. *The Sociological Imagination.* Oxford : Oxford University Press.

Mills, C., 2004. Agamben's Messianic Politics: Biopolitics, Abandonment and Happy Life. *Contretemps,* Volume 5, pp. 42-62.

Milson, M., 1998. *Najib Mahfuz - The Novelist-Philosopher of Cairo*. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem: The Magnes Press.

Mitchell, T., 1988. *Colonising Egypt.* Berkley and Los Angeles, California : University of California Press .

Moghadam, V. M., 2004. Patriarchy in Transition: Women and the Changing Family in the Middle East. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* 35(2), pp. 137-162.

Moglen, H., 1992. Theorizing Fiction/Fictionalizing Theory: The Case of "Dombey and Son". *Victorian Studies,* 35(2), pp. 159-184.

Mohy El. Deen, S., 2017. *Arab Reform Initiative*. Egypt's Unexceptional State of Emergency. [Online]. Available at: https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/egypts-unexceptional-state-of-emergency/
[Accessed 22 September 2022].

Mokbel, R., 2014. *Al-Monitor: Egyptians fear return of surveillance state.* [Online] Available at: https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2014/01/egypt-eavesdropping-scandal-fear-return-police-state.html [Accessed 25 August 2022].

Monbiot, G., 2016. *The Guradian: Neo-Liberalism is creating loneliness. That's what's wrenching society apart.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/12/neoliberalism-creating-loneliness-wrenching-society-apart [Accessed 29 January 2023].

Monitor, M. E., 2018. *Egypt arrests PhD student researching judicial system.* [Online] Available at: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180530-egypt-arrests-phd-student-researching-judicial-system/ [Accessed 27 December 2022].

Monitor, M. E., 2020. *Egypt police kill Luxor man then shoot mourners at his funera.* [Online] Available at: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20201001-egypt-police-kill-luxor-man-then-shoot-mourners-at-his-funeral/ [Accessed 20 December 2022].

Monroe, E., 1963. *Britain's moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956.* London: Chatto & Windus.

Montagine, M. d., 1905. *Of Books.* Greenwich, Conn: Literary Collector Press.

Montaigne, M. d., 1580. *Essays of Montaigne: Of Vanity Volume 9.* trans by Charles Cotton ed. New York: MCMX.

Montesquieu, 1845 . *Esprit Des Lois.* Paris : Librairie De Firmin Didot Frères.

Morawski, L. B. &. S., 2006. *Marx and Engels on Literature and Art.* 2nd ed. Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press.

Morrison, T., 1987. *Beloved.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Morsy, A., 2011. *Carneige Endowment for International Peace (Sada): An Independent Voice for Egypt's al-Azhar?.* [Online] Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/45052 [Accessed 26 August 2022].

Morsy, A., 2013. Middle East Institute*: The Grand Sheikh and the President,* Available at: https://www.mei.edu/publications/grand-sheikh-and-president.

Morsy, L., 1984. The Military Clauses of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, 1936. *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 16(1), pp. 67-97.

Mostafa, D.S and el-Bendary, A., 2020. *The Egyptian Coffeehouse: Culture, Politics and Urban Space.* Bloomsbury Academic.

Mourad, M., 2011. *AhramOnline.* [Online]. Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/6209.aspx

Mubarak, 2011. *Mubarak Speech: 'Choice Is Between Chaos And Stability'* [Interview] (1 February) https://www.npr.org/2011/02/01/133410060/Thousands-Demand-Ouster-Of-Egypts-Mubarak

Naeem, M., 2021. *History of Al-Assameya and Al-Jarbaa: Critical Reflections on Modern Political Sociology.* Cairo: El Mahrousa .

Naga, N., 2019. *Granta:* Best book of 2013: The Crocodiles. [Online] Available at: https://granta.com/best-book-of-2013-the-crocodiles/ [Accessed 3 July 2022].

Naguib, S., 2010. *Horizons and Limitations of Muslim Feminist Hermeneutics: Reflections on the Menstruation Verse.* [Online] Available at https://www.academia.edu/2968529/Horizons_and_Limitations_of_Feminist_Muslim_Hermeneutics [Accessed 25 May 2020].

Nancy, J.-L., 1991. *The Inoperative Community.* Minneapolis: The University of Minneapolis press.

Nasr, S., 1999. *Muzakirat Salah Nasr (al-guze'al-awal): Al-Sou'd (The Memoirs of Salah Nasr, Part One: The Rise)..* Cairo: Dar al-Khayal.

Nasser, T. A., 2015. Revolution and Cien años de Soledad in Naguib Mahfouz's Layālī Alf Layla. *Comparative Literature Studies,* 52(3), pp. 539-561.

Ndebele, N. S., 1991. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture.* Fordsburg: COSAW.

Negri, A. and Hardt, M., 2012 . *Empire.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press .

Nelson, B. R., 2006. *The Making of the Modern State: A Theoretical Evolution.* New York : Palgrave Macmillan.

Neundorf. A., and Pop-Eleches, G., 2020. Dictators and Their Subjects: Authoritarian Attitudinal Effects and Legacies. *Logo Comparative Political Studies,* 53(12), pp. 1839-1860.

Newman, S., 2004. New Reflections on the Theory of Power: A Lacanian Perspective. *Contemporary Political Theory,* Volume 3, pp. 148-167.

News, A., 2015. *Egypt women protest killing of Shaima Sabbagh.* [Online] Available at: https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2015/01/29/Women-demonstration-in-Cairo-demands-investigation-into-protestor-deaths [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Nietzsche, F., 1968. *The Will to Power.* Translated to English by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. ed. New York: Random House.

Nietzsche, F., 1979. On truth and lies in a nonmoral sense'. In: D. Breazeale, ed. *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebook of the Early 1870s.* Atlantic Highlands: NJ: Humanitie, pp. 79-97.

Nisbet, R., 1976. *Sociology As An Art Form.* London: Heinemann .

Noah, T. A., 2017. *Frantz Fanon's Conceptualization of Decolonization in Sonallah Ibrahim's The Committee In Ernest N. Emenyonu ALT 35: Focus on Egypt: African Literature Today.* Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, James Currey .

Nossier, M., 2016. *Daily News Egypt:* Al-Sisi's 'evil people' myth. [Online] Available at: https://dailynewsegypt.com/2016/06/19/al-sisis-evil-people-myth/ [Accessed 20 September 2022].

Oakley, A., 2019. *Writing Fiction as a Soicologist: An interview with Ann Oakley. The Sociological Review Magazine* [Interview] (29 March 2019). Available at: https://thesociologicalreview.org/collections/sociology-and-literature/writing-fiction-as-a-sociologist-an-interview-with-ann-oakley/ .

Odgen, T. H., 1992. The dialectically constituted/decentred subject of psychoanalysis. I. The Freudian subject. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 73(3), pp. 517-526.

Ogden, T. H., 1992. The dialectically constituted/decentred subject of psychoanalysis. II. The contributions of Klein and Winnicott. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 73(4), pp. 613-626.

Oksala, J., 2008. *How to Read Foucault.* London: Granta.

Omar., Y, and El-Sadany M., 2021. *Indefinite Pretrial Detention in Egypt: Rotation and Detention Pending Multiple Cases,* Washington DC: The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. Available at: https://timep.org/explainers/indefinite-pretrial-detention-in-egypt-rotation-and-detention-pending-multiple-cases/.

Orwell, G., 1936 . *Shooting an Elephant.* London: Secker and Warburg.

Osman, A. Z., 2011. *Egypt's police: From liberators to oppressors,* Egypt Independent https://egyptindependent.com/egypts-police-liberators-oppressors/.

Osman, T., 2010. *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to Mubarak.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Ottaway, M., 2010. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *Egypt: From Semi-Authoritarianism to One-Dimensionality.* [Online] https://carnegieendowment.org/2010/02/25/egypt-from-semi-authoritarianism-to-one-dimensionality-pub-35629 [Accessed 8 May 2022].

Ottaway, M., 2015. *Al-Sisi's Egypt:The Military Moves on the Economy,* Woodrow Wilson International Center: Middle East programme. Washington, DC. Available at: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/al-sisi_egypt_military_moves_on_economy.pdf

Ottaway, M., 2020. *Authoritarian Governance in Egypt: A Return to the Past.* [Online] Available at: https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/authoritarian-governance-egypt-return-past-27405 [Accessed 23 October 2021].

Ottaway, M., 2020. Italian Institute for International Political Affairs. *Authoritarian Governance in Egypt: A Return to the Past* [Online] Available at: https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/authoritarian-governance-egypt-return-past-27405 [Accessed 23 October 2021].

Ouf, I., 2018. *The Arab Weekly:* In Sisi's Egypt, army plays major role across society. [Online] Available at: https://thearabweekly.com/sisis-egypt-army-plays-major-role-across-society [Accessed 25 October 2022].

Ouyang, W-C., 2012. *Poetics of Love in the Arabic Novel Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Oweidat, N., Benard, C., Stahl, D., Kildani, W., O' Connell, E., K Grant, A., 2008. *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative.* https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg778osd

Pandit, A., 2017. *The Wire: Exploring State Repression and Its Psychological Aftermath.* [Online]
Available at: https://thewire.in/books/the-queue-dictators-basma-abdel-aziz-egypt [Accessed 14 August 2022].

Parsons, T., 1967. On the concept of political power. In: T. Parsons, ed. *Sociological Theory and Modern Society.* New York : Free Press , p. 297–354.

Perkins, A. M., 2010 . *Mubarak's Machine: The Durability of the Authoritarian Regime in Egypt.* University of South Florida : Graduate Theses and Dissertations.

Philp, M., 1983. Foucault on Power: A Problem in Radical Translation?. *Political Theory,* 11(1), pp. 29-52.

Pioppi, D., 2013. The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Leviathan. *The International Spectator,* 48(4), p. 51–68.

Polsby, N. W., 1963. *Community Power and Political Theory.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Porter, B., 2012. *The Lion's share: A history of British Imperialism, 1850 to the present.* Harlow: Pearson.

Posselt, G., 2021. Self-care and truth-telling: Rethinking care with Foucault. *Le Foucaldien,* 7(1).

Postone, M., 1993. *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A reinterpretation of Marx critical theory.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Powell, B., and Almond., G.,A., 1978. *G.B.: Comparative Politics. System, Process and Policy.* Boston: Brown and Co.

Rabie, M., 2017. *Naguib Mahfouz: The man we all wronged.* Mada Masr https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/01/07/feature/culture/naguib-mahfouz-the-man-we-all-wronged/.

Rabinow, P., 1984. *The Foucault Reader.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Radwan, N., 2016 . One hundred years of Egyptian realism. *Novel: A forum on fiction* , 49(2), p. 262–277.

Rafati, F. A. a. A., 2018. *A Comparative Study of Isabel Allende "Ines of My Soul" and Gabriel Garcia Marquez "Love in the Time of Cholera" from the View Point of Features of Magic*

Realism. Iran: Canadian Center of Science and Education - School of Humanity and Social Science.

Raggal, A. A., 2022. *Alssafir Alarabi:* Egypt's Informal Settlements: Soldiers, Gangs, Poverty, and Construction. [Online] Available at: https://assafirarabi.com/en/44982/2022/05/11/egypts-informal-settlements-soldiers-gangs-poverty-and-construction/ [Accessed 25 October 2022].

Rakha, Y., 2013 [2014]. *The Crocodiles.* trans by Robin Moger ed. New York: Seven Stories Press .

Rakha, Y., 2015. *A Conversation with Youssef Rakha* [Interview] (6 March 2015). Available at: https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2015/3/6/a-conversation-with-youssef-rakha).

Rakha, Y., 2015. *Rakha Sees Egypt Through Poets 'Eyes In 'The Crocodiles'* [Interview] (16 July 2015).

Rakha, Y., 2020 . *Barra and Zaman: Reading Egyptian modernity in Shadi Abdel Salam's The Mummy.* e-book: Springer International Publishing .

Ramadan, Y., 2012. *Shifting Ground: Spatial Representations in the Literature of the Sixties Generation in Egypt.* PhD dissertation : Columbia University .

Ranciere, J., 2010. *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics.* Edited and translated by Steven Corcoran ed. London and New York: Continuum.

Raslan, U., 2018. John Updike's Terrorist (2006) and Yusuf Idris's al-Askari al-Aswad (1982). *A Psyhcho-comparative study,* 7(4), pp. 159-199.

Rasmussen, D., and Bernauer, J., 1988. The ethics of the care of the self as a practice of freedom: An interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984. In: J Bernauer & D Rasmussen ed. *The final Foucault.* trans. J D Gauthier ed. Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, pp. 1-20.

Rebughini, P., 2014. *Subject, Subjectivity, Subjectivation.* Milan, State University of Milan, Italy.

Richards, A., and Waterbury, J., 1990. *A political economy of the Middle East: State, class, and economic development.* Boulder: Westview.

Richardson, L., and St. Pierre, E.A., 2005. Writing: A method of inquiry. In: Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, ed. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks : CA: Sage, pp. 959-978.

Ricoeur, P., 1984. *Time and Narrative. Volume 1.* Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ricoeur, P., 1985. *Time and Narrative*: *Volume 2.* Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Rieger, A. B., 2005. Der Papst ist ein weltlicher Priester: Interview with Giorgio Agamben. *Literaturen,* pp. 21-25.

Roberts, A., J. Willis M., and Garton Ash, T., 2016. M. Cherif Bassiouni In Egypt's unfinished revolution: triumphs and disasters. In: *Civil resistance in the Arab Spring.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 55-88.

Roberts, K. A., 1993. Toward a Sociology of Writing. *American Sociological Association,* 21(4), pp. 317-324.

Robertson, R., 1995 . Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity. In: Featherstone, M., Lash, S., and Robertson. R, ed. *Global Modernities.* London: Sage Publications, pp. 25-44 .

Rogers, M. F., 1991. *Novels, Novelists, and Readers: Toward a phenomenological sociology of literature.* e-book ed. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Rolling, J. H., 2010. A Paradigm analysis of arts-based research and implications for education. *Studies in Art Education,* 51(2), pp. 102-114.

Rosenblatt, P. C., 2002. Interviewing at the border of fact and fiction. In: Jaber F. Gubrium. &. James A. Holstein, ed. *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and method.* Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage, pp. 893-909.

Ross, K., 1989. *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune.* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Roty, R., 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Roughghosts, 2016. *Weighing the Power of Words: The Crocodiles by Youssef Rahka.* [Online]. Available at: https://roughghosts.com/2016/02/25/1363/ [Accessed 18 July 2022].

Roushdy, N., 2010. Baladi as performance: Gender and dance in modern Egypt. *Surfacing,* 3(1).

Rousseau., J., J., 1968. *The Social Contract.* trans by Emile. Maurice Cranston. London: Penguin Books.

Rutherford, B. K., 2018. Egypt's New Authoritarianism under Sisi. *Middle East Journal,* 72(2), pp. 185-208.

Ryan, C. R., 2001. Political strategies and regime survival in Egypt. *Journal of Third World Studies,* 18(2), pp. 25-46.

S.Shehata, S., 1992. The Politics of laughter: Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarek in Egyptian political jokes. *Folklore,* 103(1), pp. 75-91.

Sa'ad, A. S., 2002. Hagatuna ila Isktirakiyya Gadida: Qira'a Thaniyya Fil Ahdath Yanayir 1977. *Mutamaddin,* Volume 322.

Saadawi, N., 2002. *Walking Through Fire: The Later years of Nawal Saadawi,.* London: Zed Books Ltd..

Saari, P., 2017. *Arab Literature and Arabic: Naguib Mahfouz,* Alexandria: VA: Source: ATA's Literary Division.

Sabry, Z., 2015. *Alienation in the Egyptian Novel under Nasser: A Study of Naguib Mahfouz's The Beggar and Son'allah Ibrahim's That Smell* :City College of New York (CUNY).

Said, E. W., 1983. *'Traveling Theory' in The World, the Text, and the Critic.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Said, E.W., 1978. *Orientalism.* Oxfordshire: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Said, E.W., 1986. Foucault and the Imagination of Power. In: D. C. Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A critical Reader.* Cambridge: MA: Blackwell, pp. 149-156.

Said, E.W., 1993. The Reith Lectures: Speaking Truth to Power: *The Independent.* [Online] Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/the-reith-lectures-speaking-truth-to-power-in-his-penultimate-reith-lecture-edward-said-considers-the-basic-question-for-the-

intellectual-how-does-one-speak-the-truth-this-is-an-edited-text-of-last-night-s-radio-4- [Accessed 18 November 2021].

Said, E.W., 1994. *Representations of the Intellectual.* New York: Random House.

Said, E.W., 2000. *Out of Place: A Memoir.* 1st ed. London: Granta Books.

Said, E.W., 2001. *Reflections on Exile: and Other Literary and Cultural Essays.* New York City: Granta.

Said, E.W., 2003. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin.

Said, E.W., 1982 . Travelling Theory. *Raritan: A Quarterly Review,* 1(3), pp. 41-67.

Saidel, M. L., 2014. Form(s)-of-life. Agamben's reading of Wittgenstein and the potential uses of a notion. *Trans/Form/Açâo,* 37(1), pp. 163-186.

Salama, I., 2018. *Qantara: The role of Egypt's armed forces A military empire.* [Online] Available at: https://en.qantara.de/content/the-role-of-egypts-armed-forces-a-military-empire [Accessed 26 September 2022].

Salem, S., 2019. *Postcolonialism And Its Discontents.* [Online]. Available at: https://saramsalem.wordpress.com/2019/09/22/what-does-it-mean-to-write-about-decolonisation/

Salem, S., 2020. *Anticolonial Afterlives in Egypt The Politics of Hegemony.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salih, A., 1996 [2018]. *The Stillborn: Notebooks of a Woman from the Student-Movement Generation in Egypt.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Sallam, H., 2018. An Ongoing Naksa: When everday is 1967. *Middle East Studies Pedagogy Initiative (MESPI).* Available at: https://mespi.org/2018/06/05/hesham-sallam-an-ongoing-naksa-when-every-day-is-1967/

Sansom, A. W., 1965. *I Spied Spies.* London: George G.Harrap & Co Ltd.

Sayed, N., 2017. *Egypt Today: MB leaders fear 'intellectual revisions': Brotherhood member.* [Online]. Available at: https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/32025/MB-leaders-fear-'intellectual-revisions'-Brotherhood-member [Accessed 3 November 2020].

Sayigh, Y., 2012. Above the State: The Officers' Republic in Egypt. *Carnegie Middle East Center*. Available at: https://carnegie-mec.org/2012/08/01/above-state-officers-republic-in-egypt-pub-48972.

Sayigh, Y., 2014. *Carnegie for Endowment for International Peace:* Taking Egypt back to the first republic. [Online] Available at: https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/02/06/taking-egypt-back-to-first-republic-pub-54448 [Accessed 16 September 2022].

Sayigh, Y., 2019. *Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center:* Owners of the Republic: An Anatomy of Egypt's Military Economy. Available at: https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/11/18/owners-of-republic-anatomy-of-egypt-s-military-economy-pub-80325

Sazzad, R., 2013. 'Life would be a meaningless game and a bad joke' without freedom: Naguib Mahfouz as an oppositional writer. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication,* 6(2), pp. 194-212.

Schmitt, C., 1932. *The Concept of the Political.* Translated by George Schwab ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C., 1985. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,.* trans by George Schwab ed. Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Schmitt, C., 1996. *The concept of the Political.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C., 2006. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C., 2014. *Dictatorship: From the origin of the modern concept of sovereignty to proletarian class struggle.* Cambridge: Polity.

Scholes, R., 1979. *Fabulation and Metafiction.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Schwartz, B., 1974. Waiting, Exchange, and Power: The Distribution of Time in Social Systems. *American Journal of Sociology ,* 79(4), pp. 841- 870.

Seikaly, S., 2014. *Jadaliyya:* Our Man: Sisi. [Online] Available at: https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30726 [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Sellerberg, A.-M., 2018. Waiting and Rejection: An Organizational Perspective. *Time & Society,* 17(2-3), pp. 349-362.

Serio, A. I., 2015. *Reporting Conspiracy (Theory): Sonallah Ibrahim's Al-Lajna and Paul Auster's City of Glass.* Beirut: American University of Beirut: A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Shahin, E., 2012. The Egyptian revolution: The power of mass mobilization and the spirit of Tahrir square. *Journal of the Middle East and Africa,* Volume 3, pp. 46-69.

Shams El Din, M., 2014. *Mada Masr*: Sisi in his own words. [Online] Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/03/26/feature/politics/sisi-in-his-own-words/ [Accessed 17 October 2022].

Shapiro, F. R., 2006. *The Yale Book of Quotations.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Shawky, A. A., 2014. *Mada Masr: Egypt's cinematic gems: 'Land of Hypocrisy'.* [Online] Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/07/05/feature/culture/egypts-cinematic-gems-land-of-hypocrisy/ [Accessed 27 10 2021].

Shay, A., and Sellers-Young, B., 2003. Belly dance: Orientalism: Exoticism: Self-exoticism. *Dance Research Journal,* 31(5), pp. 13-37.

Sheffer, Y., 2018. *The Individual and the Authority Figure in Egyptian Prose Literature.* New York and London: Routledge.

Shehata, D., 2018. *Sixty Years of Egyptian Politics: What Has Changed?,* Cairo : American University in Cairo- The Cairo Review of Global Afairs. Available at: https://www.thecairoreview.com/essays/sixty-years-of-egyptian-politics-what-has-changed/.

Shehata, S., 2015. *Egypt: The New Founders,* Washington DC: Wilson Center.

Sheridan, C., 2016. *Foucault, Power and the Modern Panopticon.* Trinity College: Hartford Connecticut.

Shorbagy, M., 2007. Understanding Kefaya: The New Politics in Egypt. *Arab Studies Quarterly,* 29(1), pp. 39-60.

Shoukri, G., 1988. *Naguib Mahfouz: From Gamalya to Nobel.* Cairo: Dar El-Farabi.

Shukrallah, S., 2011. *AhramOnline:* Who are Egypt's thugs. [Online] Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/15715/Egypt/Politics-/Who-are-Egypts-thugs-.aspx [Accessed 23 October 2022].

Siba'i, Y., 1987. *Ard al-Nifaq.* Cairo: Maktabat Masr.

Sik, D., 2021. Power from indirect pain: A historical phenomenology of medical pain management. *Continental Philosophy Review,* Volume 54, pp. 41-59.

Sirrs, O. L., 2010. *A History of the Egyptian Intelligence Service: A History of the Mukhabarat, 1910–2009.* New York: Routledge.

Sirrs, O. L., 2013. Reforming Egyptian Intelligence: Precedents and Prospects. *Intelligence and National Security,* 28(2), pp. 230-251.

Sloterdijk, P., 2010. *Rage and time.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Smet, B. D., 2016. *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and counter-revolution in Egypt.* London: Pluto Press.

Snow, C. P., 1959. *The Two Cultures.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sobhi, S., 2019. *Egyptian Café Opinion.* [Online] Available at: https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/50/1204/355373/AlAhram-Weekly/Opinion/Egyptian-café-opinion.aspx.

Soliman, N. A., 2021. Remembering the 1977 bread riots in Suez: Fragments and ghosts of resistance. *International Review of Social History ,* 66(S29), pp. 23-40.

Soliman, S., 2011. *The Autumn of Dictatorship: Fiscal crisis and political change in Egypt under Mubarak.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Sontag, S., 1969. *The Aesthetics of Silence.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Sorby, K.R., 2018. Britain's Effort to Continue its Tutelage of Egypt after the WW II, 1945 – 1947. *Institute of Oriental Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences: Asian and African Studies,* 27(2).

Spencer Hartnett, A., J. Lotito, N., and R. Nugent, E., 2020. *Internal Occupation: The Colonial Origins of Coercion in Egypt.* s.l. :the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University.

Springboard, R., 2020. *Italian Institute for International Political Studies: Sisi's Egypt Moves from Military Economy to Family Firm,* https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/sisis-egypt-moves-military-economy-family-firm-28504

Springborg, R., 1979. Patrimonialism and Policy Making in Egypt: Nasser and Sadat and the tenure policy for reclaimed lands. *Middle Eastern Studies,* 15(1), pp. 49-69.

Springborg, R., 2021. Introduction. In: Robert Springborg, Amr Adly, Anthony Gorman, Tamir Moustafa, Aisha Saad, Naomi Sakr, and Sarah Smierciak, ed. *Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Egypt.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 1-4.

Stone, C., 2002. The Committee: A novel by Sonallah Ibrahim, Mary St. Germain, and Charlene Constable. *Al- 'Arabiya,* Volume 35, pp. 153-159.

Sudradjat, I., 2012. Foucault, the other spaces, and human behaviour. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences,* Volume 36, pp. 28-34.

Suuronen, V., 2018. Resisting Biopolitics. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political,* 43(1), pp. 35-53.

T.W. Adorno, Aron, B., Hertz Levinson, M., and Morrow W., *The Authoritarian Personality.* New York: Wiley.

Tam, A., 2018. *Cairo's Coffeehouses In The Late Nineteenth- And Early Twentieth-Centuries: An Urban And Socio-Political History:* PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Tamboukou, M., 2012. Truth telling in Foucault and Arendt: Parrhesia, the pariah and academics in dark times. *Journal of Education Policy,* 27(6), pp. 849-865 .

Tauber, E., 2006. Egyptian Secret Societies, 1911. *Middle Eastern Studies,* 42(4), pp. 603-623.

Hamamra. B.T., and Abusamra, S., 2020. "What's in a Name?" The Aesthetics of Proper Name and Diasporic Identity in Darwish and Said. *Interventions,* 22(8), pp. 1065-1078.

Telegram from Creswell (Alexandria) to FO, no. 1094, 25 July 1952, BNA, FO 371/102703.

Telmissany, M., 1996. Al-Kitaba cala Hamish al-Tarikh. In: *Al-Adab wa al-Wata.* Cairo: Nur: Dar al-Mar'a al-Arabiyya and Markaz al-Buhuth al-cArabiyya, pp. 97-106 Sayyed el-Bahrawi, ed.

The Arab Writers Union, 2010. *Arablit and Arablit Quarterly.* [Online] Available at: https://arablit.org/2010/04/23/the-best-100-arabic-books-according-to-the-arab-writers-union-1-10/ [Accessed 26 April 2022].

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)., 2016. *There is Room for Everyone… Egypt's Prisons Before & After January 25 Revolution,* Cairo : https://anhri.net/?p=173532&lang=en.

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)., 2021. *Waiting for you; 78 prisons, including 35 built after the January Revolution "On the difficult conditions of prisoners and prisons in Egypt",* Cairo. Available at: https://www.anhri.info/?p=23376&lang=en.

The New Arab., 2016. *President Sisi uses conspiracy to explain Egypt's political mess.* [Online]. Available at: https://english.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/president-sisi-uses-conspiracy-explain-egypts-political-mess
[Accessed 28 September 2022].

The Tahrir Institite for Middle East Policy. 2021. *Egypt Lifted its State of Emergency: What Now?.* [Online] Available at: https://timep.org/explainers/egypt-lifted-its-state-of-emergency-what-now/ [Accessed 2022 May 08].

The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy., 2013. *El Sisi Asks for Mandate to Combat Terrorism.* [Online]. Available at: https://timep.org/timeline/jul24-13/ [Accessed 21 September 2022].

Timcke, S., 2013. Is All Reification Forgetting?: On Connerton's Types of For- getting. *tripleC,* 11(2), pp. 375-387.

Tocqueville, A. d., 1955. *The Old Régime And The French Revolution.* Translated by Stuart Gilbert ed. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.

Tocqueville, A. d., 1994. *Democracy in America.* London: David Campbell.

Today, E., 2017. *April 6 Youth Movement.* [Online] Available at https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/9/3340/April-6-Youth-Movement [Accessed 23 May 2020].

Tomblin, J., 2011. *How Eyepatches Became a Symbol of Egypt's Revolution.* [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2011/dec/18/eyepatches-egpyt [Accessed 30 August 2022].

Tonsy, S., and el-Raggal, A., 2021. How Did Sisi Reproduce Authoritarianism in Egypt?. *Rowaq Arabi,* 26(1), pp. 47-63.

Trager, E., 2013. *Trapped and Untrapped: Mubarak's Opponents on the Eve of His Ouster.* University of Pennsylvania: Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations. 711..

U.S. Department of State. 1998. *Egypt Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997*. [Online] Available at: https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/1997_hrp_report/egypt.html [Accessed 20 May 2022].

UN General Assembly 2012. *'Follow-Up to Paragraph 143 on Human Security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome', September 10,* Geneva: https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/290.

United Nations General Assembly (2012) 'Follow-Up to Paragraph 143 on Human Security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome', September 10, available at: www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/290 (accessed April 7, 2021).

Váňa, J., 2020. Theorizing the Social Through Literary Fiction: For a New Sociology of Literature. *Cultural Sociology,* 14(2), pp. 180-200.

Vatikiotis, P. J., 1978. *Nasser and His Generation.* London: Croom Helm.

Vatikotis, P., 1991. *The History of Modern Egypt, From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak.* 4th ed. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Vaughan-Williams, N., 2009. The generalised bio-political border? Re-conceptualising the limits of sovereign power. *Review of International Studies,* 35(4), pp. 729-749.

Villa, D. R., 1999. *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Waked, M., 2010. *Jadaliyya: Egypt's Power Cuts- Part 2.* [Online] Available at: https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/23503 [Accessed 10 May 2022].

Walsh, D., and Yee, V., 2022. *The New York Times:* A New Capital Worthy of the Pharaohs Rises in Egypt, but at What Price?. [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/08/world/middleeast/egypt-new-administrative-capital.html [Accessed 26 October 2022].

Walter, B., 1996. Critique of Violence. In: Bullock, M., and. W.Jennings, M., ed. *Selected Writings, vol. 1, 1913–1926.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 236–252.

Walter, B., 2021 . *Towards the critique of violence: A critical edition.* Peter Fenves and Julia NG ed. Standford: Standford University Press .

Warner, M., 2018. *The Truth in Stories.* [Online] Available at: https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/the-truth-in-stories/ [Accessed 28 December 2022].

Warner, M., 2018. *The Truth in Stories.* Lecture at UCD Humanities Institute. [Online] Available at: https://soundcloud.com/ucd-humanities/marina-warner-the-truth-in-stories .

Waterbury, J., 1983. *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: The Political Economy of Two Regimes.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Waterbury, J., 1985. The 'Soft State' and the Open Door: Egypt's experience with economic liberalization. *Comparative Politics,* 18(1), pp. 65-83.

Waterbury, J., 1991. 'Twilight of the State Bourgeoisie?. *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* Volume 23, pp. 1-17.

Way, L., and Levitsky, S., 2010.*Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the cold war.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weaver, M. A., 1995. *The New Yorker.* [Online] Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1995/01/30/the-novelist-and-the-sheikh

Weber, M., 1919. *The Spirit of Work and Vocation: Politics as a Vocation.* e-book: Duncker & Humblot.

Weber, M., 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Weber, M., 1978a. *Economy and Society: An outline of interpretive sociology.* Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich ed. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Weber, M., 1978b. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills ed. London: Routledge.

Wellek, R., and Warren, A., 1956. *Theory of literature.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

White, H., 2005 . Introduction: Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality. *Rethinking History,* 9(2-3), pp. 147-157.

Wieland, G., and Drobisch, K., 1993. *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939.* Berlin: De Gruyter Akademie Forschung.

Wilde, O., 1899. *The Ballad of Reading Gaol.* London: Leonard Smithers.

Williams, W. C., 1923. *To Elsie.* [Art] (from The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Volume I, 1909-1939).

Windfuhr, V., and Steinvorth, D., 2011. *Spiegel International: Mubarak's Hired Thugs Rural Poor Paid to Attack Opposition Supporter.* [Online] Available at: https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/mubarak-s-hired-thugs-rural-poor-paid-to-attack-opposition-supporters-a-743537.html [Accessed 23 October 2022].

Winegar, J., 2021. The power of nonsense: humour in Egypt's counter/revolution. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 48(1), pp. 44-58.

Wortham, S., 2010. *The Derrida Dictionary.* London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Wren, C. S., 1978. *The New York Times:* Sadat and Liberalisation. [Online] Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/1978/05/29/archives/sadat-and-liberalization-egyptian-cracking-down-on-his-critics.html [Accessed 16 November 2021].

Wright, A., 2015. *The New Arab:* Sisi declares himself Egypt's God-send. [Online] Available at: https://english.alaraby.co.uk/opinion/sisi-declares-himself-egypts-god-send [Accessed 22 September 2022].

Wright, J., 2020. *An interview with translator Jonathan Wright* [Interview] (26 November 2020). Available at: https://thecommapressblog.wordpress.com/2020/11/26/an-interview-with-translator-jonathan-wright/).

Wright, R., 1945. *Black boy: A record of childhood and youth.* New York, London: Harper & brothers.

Wringer, A. d., 2020. *Trauma as a Life-World Lived Experiences of Space, Time and the Body in The Queue and Otared.* MA Thesis Middle Eastern Studies Conflict in the Middle East: University of Amsterdam.

Wynne-Hughes, E., 2021. The Battle of the Camel: Revolution, transition and tourism in Cairo. *Political Geography ,* Volume 91, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102491.

Yahya, M., 2014. *Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center:* Choosing Security and Freedom in Egypt. [Online] Available at: https://carnegie-mec.org/2014/07/01/choosing-security-and-freedom-in-egypt-pub-56052 [Accessed 19 October 2022].

Younis, S., 2005. *The Sacred March: The Step down protests and worshipping Abdel-Nasser.* Cairo: Al-Tanweer publishing house.

Youssef, A., 2017 . *Mada Masr: The uprising will not be filmed: Cinematic representations of the 1977 bread riots.* [Online] Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/01/31/feature/culture/the-uprising-will-not-be-filmed-cinematic-representations-of-the-1977-bread-riots/
[Accessed 8 March 2022].

Zaalouk, M., 1989. *Power, Class and Foreign Capital in Egypt—The Rise of the New Bourgeoisie.* London and New York: Zed Books Ltd.

Zain, M., 2019. *National Police Day: Battle of Ismailia, no retreat, no surrender.* [Online] Available at: https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/1/63828/National-Police-Day-Battle-of-Ismailia-no-retreat-no-surrender. [Accessed 7 March 2021].

Ziada, H., 2016. Thus The Sadness Of The Heron: Interpreting Aslan's Imbaba. *The Arab Studies Journal,* 24(2), pp. 42-70.

Zimbardo, P., 1971. *The Stanford Prison Experiment: A Simulation study of the psychology of imprisonment.* Standford: Stanford University, Stanford Digital Repository.

Žižek, S., 1993. *Tarrying With The Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Zollner, B., 2007. Prison Talk: The Muslim Brotherhood's Internal Struggle during Gamal Abdel Nasser's Persecution, 1954 to 1971. *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 39(3), pp. 411-433.

Zureik, E., 2016. *Israel's Colonial Project in Palestine: Brutal pursuit.* Abingdon: Routledge.