Cairo Studies in English

Editor
Sahar Sobhi Abdel-Hakim

Editorial Assistant
Fatima-al-zahraa Ahmad Ramy

The Department of English Language and Literature
The Faculty of Arts, Cairo University

Summer 2019
Cairo Studies in English (CSE) is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal of research in literature, linguistics and translation studies, issued by the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.

ISSN: 0575-1624; Online ISSN: 2682-2504

Chief Editor: Hala Kamal.
Advisory Board: Susan Bassnett, Uma Chaudhuri, Hoda Gindi, Salwa Kamel, Mahmoud Ali Qudah, Galila-Ann Ragheb, John Carlos Rowe, Fatima Sadiqi, Robert Young.
Online Managing Editors: Ahmed El-Shamy, Dalia Youssef, Muhamad Kamal.

Reviewers involved in this issue:

Online:
https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
http://edcu.edu.eg/publications/cairo-studies-in-english/

Contact: Cairo Studies in English Editorial Board, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, 12613 Orman, Giza, Cairo, Egypt.
cairostudies@edcu.edu.eg
edcu.edu.eg

EDCU website publishing: Mohamed Abdel-Aaty.
Cover design: Hala Kamal.

Printed at: Cairo University Press.

CSE 2019-Summer
Copyright©2019
Department of English Language & Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.
CONTENTS

Editorial 1

The Reification of Aesthetics: Reading Heidegger’s Destructive Critique of Modernity in the Light of his Early Philosophy
Amr Elsherif 2

Political Symbolism and Censorship:
The Tree Climber and Al-Farafir Revisited
Dina Amin 26

Emerging Configurations of Time in Facebook Prod-user Culture
Doaa Ghazi 45

The Interdisciplinarity of Post-colonialism and Environmentalism in Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart and Abdel Rahman Munif’s Cities of Salt
Doaa Sayed 65

The Reification of Revolutionary Consciousness:
A Cultural Critique of Egypt’s January 25 Revolution
Karam AbuSehly 84

The Production of Heterotopic Spaces Between Theory and Practice:
Tahrir Square in Light of Michel Foucault’s and Henri Lefebvre’s Theories
Naglaa Saad Hassan 102

Writing Out of the Box: Literary Journalistic Tropes in Norman Mailer’s The Armies of Night
Wael Mustafa 119

Resisting the Zionist Grand Narrative and Defying the Palestinian/Arab Metanarrative in Ibrahim Nasrallah’s Time of White Horses
Zainab Saeed El-Mansi 145
Emerging Voices:
The Cartography of Confinement/Escape: Crossing Over from Margin to Center in Carol Ann Duffy’s The World’s Wife
Nariman Eid

Generic Exile and Liminal Being in Waguih Ghali’s Published Writings
Zainab Magdy
EDITORIAL

This issue of Cairo Studies in English (CSE) – the Journal of Research in Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies – marks a further development in its long history which goes back to the 1950s. With this issue, we start a new phase, where instead of appearing annually, we begin publishing two issues of CSE every year – a Summer issue and a Winter issue, that coincide with the two terms of the academic year. Moreover, in addition to the papers typically included in the journal, we here introduce a new section, entitled “Emerging Voices”, devoted to papers written by PhD researchers who seek to publish work derived from their doctoral theses. These particular papers are highlighted as reflecting the most up-to-date works of academic research carried out at the postgraduate level, and hence add a new dimension to Cairo Studies in English as a forum where young scholars can share their research and develop their experiences with academic publishing.

The two Emerging Voices papers included here have been initially presented at the Symposium of Comparative Literature in its 2018 edition focusing on “Writing Across Borders” (held in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University in November 2018). These two papers, representative of the research carried out at the postgraduate level, add to the variety and interdisciplinarity marking the other papers included in this issue, which offer a wide range of texts, genres, theories and approaches. Together, the papers provide stimulating discussions of philosophical, literary, cultural and digital texts; thus establishing CSE as a forum for original scholarship in the humanities and social sciences.

We wish to conclude by expressing our thanks to Prof. Sahar Sobhi Abdel-Hakim who initiated this issue and worked on developing its content. We would also like to extend our thanks to all the reviewers of the articles published in this issue, as well as to all the authors who showed much understanding for the delays in the publication process. We also wish to acknowledge the work done by editorial assistant Abdel Rahman Nasser who helped in the earliest stage of this issue. Grateful thanks are due to the team working on developing the CSE website, Muhamad Kamal and Dalia Youssef, led by Dr. Ahmed El-Shamy. And most importantly, it is without the hard work and dedication of Fatima-al-zahraa Ahmad Ramy that this issue would not have come to light.

Hala Kamal
CSE Chief Editor
October 2019
The Reification of Aesthetics: Reading Heidegger’s Destructive Critique of Modernity in Light of his Early Philosophy

Amr Elsherif

“Art then belongs in the domain of the pastry chef.”
(Heidegger 2000, 140)

Heidegger’s Understanding of Reification

One of the acknowledged goals of Being and Time (2010) is to contest and destroy the modern idealist tradition from Descartes to Nietzsche which presupposes the priority of knowledge, and consequently the knowing subject, over practical involvement in life. This tradition is based on the Cartesian illusion of wiping out the world through doubt in order to establish knowledge on indubitable ground. The subject who abolishes the world is, according to this vision, autonomous from it and able to judge it as if he were not part of it. The ego, hence, becomes an entity in itself separate from the world, standing against it and able to judge it. This separate entity has taken multiple forms in the modern philosophical tradition, all of which share the basic aspect of being a thing-like entity. The Husserlian rejection of the autonomous subject in favor of a pole of receptivity sought to challenge this tradition. Yet in its abolition of the world through the phenomenological practice of Epoché or bracketing, it repeated the Cartesian gesture and situated the receptive pole over and above the world. In Being and Time, Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976) challenged this whole tradition and introduced the idea of Dasein to describe the individual as being-there in the world not autonomous from it or standing above it (Dreyfus 1993, 17). From this position of finitude, he sought to reinterpret the whole of modern tradition which tried to overcome finitude into absolute knowledge.

In Being and Time, originally published in 1927, Heidegger acknowledges Georg Lukács’ newly introduced term “reification” and the whole Marxist problematic of viewing consciousness as a thing. Unlike Lukács (1885 – 1971), nevertheless, Heidegger does not regard reification as a modern phenomenon nor does he ascribe it to the dominance of the capitalist mode of commodity

---

* Lecturer in the Department of English, Damanhour University, Egypt.  
Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
production as is evidenced by his inclusion of the religious concept of a substantial soul among the reified forms of consciousness. Heidegger writes:

One of our first tasks will be to show that the point of departure from an initially given ego and subject totally fails to see the phenomenal content of Dasein. Every idea of a “subject” – unless refined by a previous ontological determination of its basic character – still posits the subjectum … ontologically along with it, no matter how energetic one’s ontic protestations against the “substantial soul” or the “reification of consciousness” [are]. Thingliness itself needs to be demonstrated in terms of its ontological source in order that we can ask what is now to be understood positively by the nonreified being of the subject, the soul, consciousness, the spirit, the person. All these terms name definite areas of phenomena which can be “developed.” But they are never used without a remarkable failure to see the need for inquiring about the being of the beings so designated. (Heidegger 2010, 45)

Nevertheless, Heidegger’s acceptance of Lukács’ criticism of bourgeois philosophical notions of consciousness as reified is not unconditional. He says that no matter how vehement one’s condemnation of reification is, this criticism remains parasitic on an unacknowledged reference to a healthy non-reified state which the latter does not explain. This would be Heidegger’s first remark. The second is implied in his inclusion of the premodern religious concept of the “substantial soul” in the forms of reified subjectivity. This shows that Heidegger does not take reification to be a modern problem resulting from the capitalist mode of production as Lukács does. The problem predates the modern age yet it seizes control of the project of modernity. In order to understand what is meant by reification (Verdinglichung) according to Heidegger, one needs to understand the “being of beings so designated.” Heidegger proceeds to investigate the unreified being of Dasein, “nicht-verdinglichten Sein des Subjekts, der Seele, des Bewußtseins” as well as the being of beings (Seienden) or things (Dinge) which are characterized by thinghood, “Dinglichkeit,” in order to distinguish between them (Heidegger 1977 Sein, 62).

As is clear from Heidegger’s constant complaint about the forgetfulness of being (Seinswegessenheit) in the history of western thought, Dasein forgets its being and being in general because it is part of its nature to do so. In all his life, Dasein is surrounded by things. It is not surprising that he forgets his being and interprets himself as an entity among other entities, a thing-like being. Reification happens not due to the dominance of commodity production in the
The Reification of Aesthetics

modern capitalist age as Lukács thinks but because it is the nature of Being (Sein) to conceal itself.

Axel Honneth brings Heidegger and Lukács closer to each other in his comparison of the structures of their philosophies. Both condemn social life and bourgeois philosophy as reified. In so doing, they acknowledge the existence of a state prior to the onset of reification. Reification would be the forgetfulness of this prior healthy state and acceptance of the reified forms of life as the only reality. From an ethical point of view, reification “signifies a type of human behavior that violates moral or ethical principles by not treating other subjects in accordance with their characteristics as human beings, but instead as numb and lifeless objects—as ‘things’ or ‘commodities’” (Honneth 2008, 19). Heidegger and Lukács condemn reified behavior not because it disregards certain moral standards but because it does not acknowledge ontological facts whether this leads to negative ethical consequences or not. Therefore, to treat another person as a thing or as an instrument to achieve a goal may be morally reprehensible and is an instance of reification but it is only the moral manifestation of a deeper problem. If Dasein forgets being and interprets himself as a thing-like entity or a substantial soul, this would lead to wrong epistemological conclusions but not to ethical problems. One of the wrong conclusions that Heidegger finds a result of a reifying vision of the world is the dominance of the epistemological model of the subject as a passive contemplative entity that seeks to understand the world through a cognitive gap. For Heidegger, this is one example of a reified vision of the subject as an autonomous entity in itself separate from the world (Honneth 2008, 30). This attitude which characterizes the whole idealist tradition is based on forgetting an essential inalienable characteristic of Dasein which is being-in-the-world.

Lukács refers to a mode of life prior to capitalist mass production in which people lived and communicated with each other without their everyday dealings being determined by the form of commodity exchange. People’s lives and dealings were not determined by being providers or consumers of commodities. They did not contemplate the market and society as functioning automatically according to their own selfless objective laws and mechanisms. Consequently, they did not regard their own lives as being determined by alienating objective laws over which they had no control. Another aspect is that they did not turn into passive perceivers of the functioning of the market and society. The passive onlooker mode which characterizes the modern individual becomes a “second nature” which denies first nature and is based on its forgetfulness (Lukács 1967, 63). Doubtlessly, this change in human nature to the passive contemplative
attitude is regrettable. This is also the same attitude of the subject in the idealist epistemological theories. Yet Heidegger does not ascribe it to the dominance of capitalist production but rather to an essential forgetfulness of being.

Apart from the reason why a healthy state dwindles and is covered over by the onset of a reifying attitude, both Lukács’ and Heidegger’s philosophies share an essential understanding:

Both Lukács’ allusions to engaged praxis and Heidegger’s notion of care designate that form of practical orientation that is especially characteristic of the structure of the human mode of existence. For in opposition to the prevailing conception that has become second nature, and according to which humans primarily and constantly strive to cognize and neutrally apprehend reality, humans in fact exist in a modus of existential engagement, of “caring,” through which they disclose a meaningful world…. In this sense, both thinkers are convinced that even in the midst of the false, ontologically blind present circumstances, the elementary structures of the human form of life characterized by care and existential interestedness are always already there. (Honneth 2008, 32)

Honneth, thus, describes reification through Heidegger, and also through Lukács, as forgetting that primary mode of engagement with and care about (Sorge) the world. Heidegger finds the metaphysically congealed concepts of epistemology also reified because they are based on the denial of this primary mode.

In order to overcome the reification of consciousness and “positively” understand what the nonreified being “nicht-verdinglichten Sein” of Dasein is, Heidegger resorts to formal indication (formale Anzeige) which he utilized in his earlier studies. The basic idea of formal indication, that of a critical philosophical methodology which reaches the essential via investigating the accidental, predates Heidegger’s concern with the project of being per se. It appears in his early 1919 course lectures published as Towards the Definition of Philosophy in which he attempts to establish philosophy as the primordial science by means of examining particular sciences:

It is meaningful to deduce the derivative from the origin; the reverse is nonsense. However, precisely from the derivative I can go back to the origin as spring (since the river flows, I can return to its source). Although it is absurd, and precisely because it is absurd, to wish to derive primordial science from any particular science (or the totality thereof), the possibility
of a *methodological return* to primordial science from the particular sciences is necessary and illuminating. Further: every particular science is as such derivative. It is therefore evident that, from *each and every* particular science (whether actual or merely possible), there is a *way* leading back to its origin, to primordial science, to philosophy. If, therefore, we are to solve the problem as to how our own problematic — the concretion of the idea of philosophy as primordial science — can be scientifically validated, [25] this must be through a methodological return from the non-original to the origin. (Heidegger 2008, 21)

It is this critical methodology which performs a “return” from the non-essential to the essential via excluding “everything individual, conditioned, historical and accidental” that defines formal indication as the critical procedure he utilizes in *Being and Time* after the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*) is abandoned (2010, 30). In the ontological project, the return is not performed from a particular science to the primordial science of mental processes that underlie all cognition but rather from the non-essential features of experience to the basic structure of Dasein as the being having experience.

The purpose of formal indication is to overcome the particular qualities of each individual into a transcendental account of what makes this individual an individual. It is “the method by which, out of my individual, factical existence, I am able to reflexively generate a transcendental account of my being, i.e., an account of that which constitutes me as a first-person singular entity as such, rather than just the particular one I happen to be” (Shockey 2010, 526). Formal indication is, hence, a reflexive technique that Dasein employs to reflect on and understand himself. Dasein has to overcome the interpretations of his being in terms of “thing-concepts” with which the history of thought works and which pose the “danger of ‘reifying consciousness’” (Heidegger 2010, 414). “Formal indication does precisely this unveiling of the conceptual limitations of traditional philosophy and language” (De Oliveira 2012, 42).

Through formal indication, Heidegger starts by “referring to some object or class of objects provisionally, using contingent features, and arrives at the referent’s essential features only after an investigation” (Dreyfus 2010, 192). He might start by referring to the Kantian transcendental concept of space which is part of the a priori structure of consciousness and proceed to show that Dasein never sees space as an empty container to be filled out later with objects. Dasein is always in the world. The concept of empty space is an idealist abstraction from the real world, one which never materializes because Dasein is always
surrounded by things. Heidegger, thus, starts with the Kantian transcendental concept of space and proceeds to destroy it in order to show its dependence on an unacknowledged engagement with the world. By making the Kantian concept of space indicate one of the formal categories characteristic of Dasein – namely being-in-the-world – Heidegger reaches the structure of Being of Dasein. Being can be roughly defined as “the set of standards in terms of which entities make sense as entities” (Blattner 2006, 117). In other words, it is the sum total of the conditions which make something what it is, or which make something understandable as what it is. In addition to being-in-the-world (In-der-Welt-Sein), the Being of Dasein is also characterized by temporality and care (Sorge) – aspects which the things surrounding Dasein do not and cannot share as part of their being. In order to indicate the Being (Sein) of a given phenomenon, the technique of formal indication proceeds via three concepts:

A concrete experience consists in both having and conceiving of “something.” The “having,” “conceiving” and “performing” are all, in a sense, formal properties of any concrete experience: they constitute the structure of the pre-worldly something, as Heidegger understands it. A living experience can now be understood as a living experience provided that we grasp the three “senses” or modalities figuring into any experience and whose “completion” or fulfilling is the concrete, ordinary, factual experience: the content-sense (Gehaltsinn- the “whatness”, the formal character of that which the experience is about; for example, “objectively real,” “worldly significant” etc.), the relating-sense (Bezugsinn - the formal character of the attitude, comportment, relation to the content; for example, perceptual, loving, cognitive, emotional etc.), and the performing-sense (Vollzugsinn - the formal character of the manner in which the relating-sense is performed, “and thus governing the manner in which the content is presented”). (Lepadatu 2009, 142)

Heidegger’s use of formal indication makes his understanding of reification and the un-reified state clear. In experiencing any phenomenon, the content-sense, relation and performance of the relation to the phenomenon must be in harmony. When one does not acknowledge the humanity of another human being – a colonized subject or a woman – he misses the content-sense or the “whatness” of the phenomenon. When he deals with a colonized subject or people as less than human or as an underdeveloped stage in the evolutionary chain or with a woman as a sex object, he performs the relation to the whatness of the phenomenon in a wrong way. When Dasein forgets his being (Sein) as
temporality, care, being-in-the-world, and being-towards-death as well as dealing with himself as a being (Seienden) in the sense of a thing-like entity, he has a reified sense of being. He forgets what he authentically is. In this case, the authenticity (Eigentlichkeit) – or what is properly (eigentlich) of one’s own (eigen) as the literal meaning of the German word suggests – of the being of Dasein is missed and he is treated as another phenomenon. This happens because Dasein tends to interpret his being in terms of the being (Sein) of the beings (Seienden) that are closest to it, i.e. in terms of things at hand (Vorhandenheit). Authenticity is the state when Dasein interprets his being in a way that is proper to it and does not confuse it with the being of other phenomena – “authentic, that is, it belongs to itself” (Heidegger 2010, 42).

Whereas authenticity is interpreting Dasein’s being according to what belongs properly to it, reification is interpreting it in terms of the being of another thing, in ways which do not belong properly (eigentlich) to it. Reification is a deformation of authenticity. It can be best understood in terms of the correspondence of the formally indicated content-sense and its interpretation as its relation-sense. Authenticity, one of Heidegger’s important ideas, can hence be understood as being true to the formally indicated being of Dasein lurking beneath the reified forms of modern subjectivity and other premodern formulations of consciousness and spirit. Reification, as an inauthentic vision of Dasein, starts as categorical confusion in which the content-sense (Gehaltsinn) is confused with another. Upon this primal confusion, a forgetting of what Dasein or any phenomenon authentically is ensues. The third step when reification is more than categorical confusion and becomes morally reprehensible is when the performance of the relation to the phenomenon is mistaken. This is when actual damage occurs. Thus, Heidegger reached an understanding of reification as categorical confusion via the reflexive technique of formal indication.

The Project of Modernity as Part of a Reified Concept of Being

With all the change that Being and Time triggered, it was supposed to be only the first division of a larger project that Heidegger never finished. The reason was a Kehre or a turning in his thought which led him to realize that his occupation with Dasein is a remnant of the German idealist interest in the subject – the idealist tradition which formed the backbone of the project of modernity that he set out to destroy. After the Kehre, Heidegger moved to offer ontological studies of other phenomena such as art and technology. While the former offered better access to being (Sein), the latter threatened any revelation of it.
Technology is part of the modern inauthentic concept of being. Its expansion to invade all aspects of life makes any revelation of being outside its sway hard to conceive. Modernist art is also part of an inauthentic concept of being centered on subjectivity. When applied to art – old or modern – technology (Techné or method) results in the aesthetic vision and in literary theory.

Modern art, aesthetics, and technology are all parts of a reified concept of being which Heidegger seeks to destroy because it obstructs a more original revelation of being. In this part of the article, the modern concept of being and its inauthenticity will be explained. The centrality of method or techné to this concept will also be discussed. In the last part, aesthetics – part of the modern concept of being – as a reified vision of art will be tackled in light of the definition of reification as categorical confusion that has been offered in the first part. While the idea of formal indication was no longer employed – because it was originally developed as a reflexive technique through which Dasein can reflect on itself as Heidegger had already moved from investigating the being of Dasein to the being of other phenomena, – the resulting understanding of reification as categorical confusion and forgetfulness of the primary character of the phenomenon – the content-sense or Gehaltsinn – remains. It lies at the ground of his understanding of aesthetics as a reified vision of art.

For Heidegger, the failure of the modernity project – of which aesthetics is one part – was neither haphazard nor corrigible. The modern tradition was doomed to failure because it is predicated on an essentially reified vision of being. Modern thought – starting from Descartes, via Kant and Hegel and ending with Nietzsche whom Heidegger regards as part of this tradition – is based on two premises: first, the subject can separate himself from the world and achieve autonomy and, second, knowledge can be established on a secure ground and absolved of any contingencies – i.e. Hegelian absolute knowledge. Both these premises deny one fundamental feature of Dasein which is his involvement in the world. Being-in-the-world cannot separate itself from the world or gain absolute knowledge. Man is finite and cannot overcome his finitude; he can neither be autonomous nor separate from the world. The reified concept of subjectivity on which the project of modernity is predicated denies the being of Dasein. All the modernist concepts based on this initial reification are, hence, based on concealment of being and are, consequently, inauthentic.

One result of the modern separation of the subject from the world or the object is that the subject became the source of value; something is valuable if I regard it as bearing importance to me in some sense. The Kantian separation of pure reason – knowledge, truth, and science – and practical reason – moral value – is, hence, a subjectivization of value. Although Kant meant it as a foundation of
value on the subjective structure of consciousness, Heidegger read it as an early expression of the modern value crisis. This crisis manifested itself, for instance, in the invention of the atomic bomb which is a result of great scientific development devoid of any ethical value. The modern positing of the subject as the sphere of value and ground of certitude has, thus, robbed the world of meaning and value – any meaning or value other than those which the subject endows. Heidegger reaches his harsh conclusion on modernity: “The essence of modernity is fulfilled in the age of consummate meaninglessness [which] does not stand on its own. It fulfills the essence of a concealed history” (Heidegger 1987, 178). The meaninglessness and the crisis of valuation of late modernity are the results of the concealment of authentic being throughout history. They are, hence, the result of the reified concept of Dasein as subject which conceals its being (Sein). The contradictions which trouble Nietzsche’s thought, as part of the metaphysical project of modernity, are the result of the reified concept of the subject. These contradictions are the result of a vision of the subject as separate from the world. In other words, they deny Dasein’s formally indicated being-in-the-world. The inauthentic, reified concept of being on which the project of modernity is grounded misses the whatenss or the content-sense of Dasein. Heidegger’s destructive reading of modernity is, thus, best understood in terms of formal indication.

The value crisis which Heidegger sees in the late modernity of Nietzsche is the logical result of the Kantian foundation of ethics on a subjective ground that denies Dasein’s essential being-in-the-world. Although Friedrich Nietzsche dedicated a considerable part of his writings to criticizing Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, Heidegger realizes that he did not depart from the modern tradition. Heidegger saw the Kantian attempt to renounce tradition and establish knowledge on a firm ground through the subjective structure of consciousness as an illusory attempt to establish empty subjectivity as the source of knowledge and value. This robbed the world of any intrinsic value. This attitude culminated in Nietzschean nihilism where all values are rejected as illusory and the only remaining value is the will to power: that which increases power is considered valuable. Yet even the Nietzschean power ideals of “amor fati” or loving one’s fate, self-affirmation, and the pursuit of the Übermensch become problematic because there is no certain fate to love; it simply becomes “not wanting anything to be different” (Nietzsche 2007, 35). While Nietzsche meant this as criticism of idealism, loving one’s fate as it is, no matter what, ends up with confirming the world as it is rather than attempting to create a better world: “[R]esignation bows down in the amor fati, the glorification of the absurdest of all things, before the
powers that be” (Adorno 2005, 98). It ends up in acquiescence. The subject is not strengthened before the world, but weakened instead. Moreover, “[s]elf determination, or Nietzschean ‘affirmation’ could now no longer be linked in any way to the cosmos, one’s true self, real happiness, complete, rational autonomy, or one’s realization within the historical community” (Pippin 1999, 117).

Robbing things of value and relating them to the subject is, for Heidegger, the logical conclusion of the modern Kantian beginning where the dissolution of the substantial reason that was expressed in religion and the division of reason into three spheres turned value – practical reason and ethics – into something subjective. The end – Nietzschean nihilism – is implied in the beginning. Although Nietzsche heavily criticized the metaphysical tradition starting as it does with Plato’s establishment of the real world as separate from the actual world, – which found its medieval manifestation in the religious separation of heaven and earth and modern expression in the philosophical differentiation of the intelligible and the sensible worlds – Heidegger finds that he still belongs to this tradition. His analysis of nihilism does not move him beyond it. The reason is that metaphysics robbed the actual world – the mundus sensibilis of changing appearances – of value and located it in what it considered the real world – the stable mundus intelligibilis. While Nietzsche rejects metaphysics and the idea of the real world together with the separation, the crisis of values in which he is still involved, his vision of the lack of value in the world, and setting the will to power as the standard of valuation display the same metaphysical deprivation of any value from the world. Simply put, Nietzsche, like the metaphysical tradition he criticizes, still sees the world as deprived of value. This is why Heidegger finds him part of this tradition, “the last metaphysical thinker of the West” (qtd. in Pattison 2001, 177).

Moreover, setting the subjective will to power as the standard of valuation shows entanglement in the subjective tradition no matter how heavily Nietzsche criticized it. Thus, the failure of the modernity project perceptible in the late modern relativity and value crisis is the result of concealing the authentic being of Dasein as engagement in the world which has been forgotten – but not totally lost – under the reified concepts of the subject and object. To forget Dasein’s authentic being and treat him as subject is the reification criticized in Being and Time. This reification is the reason behind the contradictions that the modernity project is entangled in. The epistemological project of modernity misses the formally indicated content-sense of Dasein. Not only does epistemology conceive of the relation between the subject and the content-sense of Dasein, i.e. the relating-sense, in a mistaken way – seeing the subject as autonomous hides
being-in-the-world – but it also performs this relation wrongly by turning the world into a standing-reserve. The three concepts of formal indication conceived early on in Heidegger’s career, thus, cast light on Heidegger’s late critique of the project of modernity.

Heidegger’s harsh criticism of modernity is not a mere condemnation of the crisis of values that occurred in Nietzsche. It is not even just an understanding of how this crisis was implied in the early foundational attempts of Descartes and Kant. All these are parts of an investigation of how a whole new concept of being came into existence and how it dominated all the different aspects of life and thought:

At the inception of the modern age the beingness of beings changed. The essence of that historical inception consists in this very change. The subjectivity of the *subiectum* (substantiality) is now defined as self-representing representation. Yet it is man, as rational creature, who is in a distinctive sense self-representing representation. Thus man becomes a distinctive being (*subiectum*), becomes the “definitive” “subject.” (Heidegger 1987, 220)

Prior to the modern age, substantial matter existed in its own right: “Formerly every being was a *subiectum*, something lying before us on its own basis” (Heidegger 1987, 220). In the modern frame of being, substantial matter becomes something that represents itself to the beholder. The concept of being becomes that of what can be represented. Perhaps George Berkeley’s famous dictum “*Esse est percipi*” or “to be is to be perceived” is the clearest vindication of Heidegger’s analysis of the shift in the concept of being (Berkeley 1999, xxxiv). To be no longer means to exist in itself. In religion, a lot of beings are thought to exist without being perceivable in any form. In modern science, to be means to be visible and measurable. The concept of being shifts from one in which being means “permanence of presence” to “bringing-before-oneself;” “Permanence of presencing, that is, beingness, now consists in representedness through and for such representation; it consists in such representation itself” (Heidegger 1987, 220). This resulted in a monumental shift towards the modern concept of being. First, man becomes the subject. Formerly, the word subject “*subjectum*” meant the material from which something is made. When matter became that which can be represented, the word subject stopped referring to matter *per se*. “The subjectivity of the *subiectum*” or the substantiality of substance came to mean that which appears and represents itself. Since man is a
distinctive creature who both represents himself and the one to whom representation is made, “subjectum” came to refer to man.

In the modern age, man becomes the subject to whom everything is represented. The subject becomes the center of the world. Second, being is not permanence of presence but representation to the subject. Man started to see himself as autonomous from the world. Since man as the subject became the center of the world, the latter has to be represented to him. What cannot be represented in any way cannot be said to exist. Being came to mean representation to the subject. Third, man started to see the world as a picture that he represents to himself. The concept of the world as a picture came into existence. Fourth, knowledge became representation which is already clear in Descartes. Fifth, the search for truth was replaced by the desire to guarantee the certitude of knowledge or of representation. Truth came to be replaced with certitude; the pursuit of truth has been supplanted by the need to guarantee the correctness of information, hence the necessity of method. Methodology is an indispensable part of the modern concept of being; this has dominated thought since Descartes’s essay on the method of doubt (1641) until the modern literary theories with all their diverse methodologies. This is a total shift from one concept of being – one way man understood himself to be – to another. The modern concept of being is inauthentic because it is grounded in the reified epistemological concept of the subject that misses the content-sense of Dasein and performs the relating-sense to the world in a way that subscribes to autonomy and forgets the nature of Dasein as being-in-the-world.

The failure of the modernity project is a manifestation of the inauthenticity of the modern concept of being which this project has as its ground. Two aspects of this inauthentic concept of being are the dominance of technology and the movement of art into the sphere of aesthetics. The idealist tradition has invested heavily in its investigation of the nature of the subject and in its attempt to overcome the subject-object dichotomy which occurs once one thinks in terms of a subject standing opposed to the world. In its pursuit of the certitude of knowledge, the Cartesian ego as the first manifestation of the modern subject cancelled out the world. The ego starts by doubting everything and accepts nothing that cannot be proven correct. A method which guarantees the certitude of knowledge, hence, becomes necessary. The fact that René Descartes (1596 –1650) who formulated the ego as the first manifestation of modern subjectivity was himself also the one who wrote Discourse on Method is not coincidental. Method is a necessary part of the subject-object relation. In order to bridge the gap between the ego and the world, the subject has to devise some method that guarantees the certitude of knowledge in order not to allow
superstition to infiltrate knowledge as was the case in the Middle Ages, for instance. Any knowledge represented by the senses must be filtered by method to avoid error. Method, hence, becomes the means of revealing the world to the subject.

Since his early phenomenological studies guided by the desire to go “back to the things themselves” – “Wir wollen auf die ‘Sachen selbst’ zurückgehen” as Edmund Husserl wrote – Heidegger has been sensitized against methodology (Husserl 1982, 168). Even in Being and Time, he still maintains the same sensitivity towards method and the desire to be in contact with phenomena or the things themselves:

The more genuinely effective a concept of method is and the more comprehensively it determines the fundamental concept of science, the more originally is it rooted in confrontation with the things themselves and the farther away it moves from what we call a technical device – of which there are many in theoretical disciplines. (Heidegger 2010, 26)

Against the mediating function of method, Heidegger seeks the revelation of being through phenomena. This early understanding is later developed in his study of techné or method. Technology is usually grasped as a means to achieve ends. Heidegger accepts this definition yet finds it both humanist and instrumental (Heidegger 1977 Question, 5). It is based on a deeper confrontation with being which it denies. This instrumental concept of technology, techné or method, is based on the possibility of revealing one aspect of matter. Something cannot be used as a method or instrument to achieve an end if the possibility to achieve this end is not present in it. Technology, hence, is a means of revelation. The dangerous aspect of technology is that it is a limited revelation of being. It frames phenomena as usable objects and denies any other aspect of their being. It turns phenomena into instruments, i.e. equipment. It deals with all phenomena according to the model of equipmental being (Zuhandenheit). Since it deals with the diversified content-sense (Gehaltsinn) of all phenomena – including things and artworks – on the model of equipment being, it reifies them. Thus, methodology – an indispensable part of all idealist systems – is a reifying vision.

As a reifying vision, technology makes possible only a limited framed revelation of being and therefore denies being itself: “The rule of Enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth”
(Heidegger 1977 *Question* 28). Since method or *techné* is a necessary part of the modern worldview, it takes control of all that may be revealed to man:

But Enframing does not simply endanger man in his relationship to himself and to everything that is. As a destining, it banishes man into that kind of revealing which is an ordering. Where this ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. Above all, Enframing conceals that revealing which, in the sense of poiēsis, lets what presences come forth into appearance…. Where Enframing holds sway, regulating and securing of the standing-reserve mark all revealing. They no longer even let their fundamental characteristic appear, namely, this revealing as such. Thus the challenging Enframing not only conceals a former way of revealing, bringing-forth, but it conceals revealing itself and with it that wherein unconcealment, i.e., truth, comes to pass. (Heidegger 1977 *Question*, 27)

Method as *techné* results in a kind of framed revelation which passes itself as the only possible vision of phenomena and conceals the truth of being. Even more, it conceals itself as concealment. It passes itself as the only revelation. It turns the world and all phenomena into “standing-reserve” to be used in time of need. It turns the whole world into instruments to be used by the subject. The world becomes both controllable and secure. As a sign of control, the world becomes measurable. Space and time are homogenized and can be measured. Every point in space or time is similar to any other point. Unlike the religious view of the world in which certain places and times are more special and enjoy more holiness than others, modern science creates a sense of homogeneity which levels off differences and renders phenomena ready for scientific treatment. By securing its framed revelation as the only one possible, the homogeneity engendered by the dominance of technology leads to theory:

Theory makes secure at any given time a region of the real as its object-area. The area-character of objectness is shown in the fact that it specifically maps out in advance the possibilities for the posing of questions. Every new phenomenon emerging within an area of science is refined to such a point that it fits into the normative objective coherence of theory…. Because modern science is theory in the sense described, therefore, in all its observing, the manner of its striving-after, i.e., the manner of its entrapping-securing procedure, i.e., its method, has descriptive security. (Heidegger 1977 *Question*, 169)
The descriptive security of science ascertains that the methodologically revealed nature of phenomena is not challenged. Thus, technology makes the world manageable and science secures the idea of phenomena as instruments. The idea of modern science is not limited by Heidegger to the natural sciences. It includes “psychiatry” (Heidegger 1977 Question, 174), “history” and “philology” (175).

The human sciences, employing methodology like the natural ones, have their areas of objectivity and reveal certain aspects of phenomena. Each literary theory has a certain concept of what the literary object is and develops techniques for analyzing it out of this concept. The results reached via the method confirm the concept adopted by the theory. Aesthetics and the literary approaches stemming from it view the work as a beautiful object and pursue the source of beauty in the artwork, i.e. harmony. Since beauty and harmony are formal concepts, this determines the literary techniques influenced by aesthetics and used in investigating the artwork to be formal. Analyzing the literary object from a formal perspective leads to discovering its unity and harmony; it shows that the parts work together in harmony to create the whole and that the whole is embodied in each of the parts. This confirms the idea of the work as a source of beauty, a concept which aesthetics starts with. In a self-confirming circular manner, theory determines the nature of the object and the methodological procedures employed by theory confirm the concept already adopted. It is not surprising, hence, that a literary critic who approaches a given artwork from a feminist, post-colonial or psychoanalytic perspective always ends up with results related to the approach s/he adopts. The sociological approach turns the artwork into a social document that can prove or disprove a point about the society which produced it – i.e. equipment. The psychoanalytic approach deals with the literary work of art on the model of a dream revealing the subconscious of the author or the society which produced it. The results reached through methodological analysis confirm the concept adopted by theory in each case.

Seen through Heideggerian ontology, theory reifies the artwork by making only ordered revelation possible. While literary theory reveals a certain aspect of the artwork, it banishes all others. It turns the artwork into a manageable entity. Theory reveals one aspect of the artwork and secures the revealed meaning. Yet this also means that the encounter with the being of the artwork has been aborted. Theory and methodology are reifying because they ignore the content-sense of phenomena and recruit them in subjective use. Technology deals with all phenomena, including artworks with their different ontological mode – on the model of equipment being – Zuhandenheit – and turns them into
tools. The being of the artwork which lies beyond the subject’s methodological “entrapping securing procedure” is concealed.

**The Reification of Aesthetics**

Method turns the artwork into a “standing-reserve” as it does with all other phenomena. As a reserve, it is used in time of need. It becomes an instrument. Aesthetics, as part of the idealist project and the attempt to establish science, morality, and beauty on subjective grounds, deals with art as a source of mental pleasure. It is established on the subject’s ability to realize “the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end” or, in other words, to take the harmony and meaningfulness of form as the source of mental pleasure without any practical results (Kant 2000, 106). Aesthetics takes art’s ability to induce subjective pleasure to be its sole *raison d’être*. Aesthetics is, hence, the product of an instrumental and technological mentality that recruits everything in the service of the subject. For Heidegger, this denies the being of the artwork and deals with it on the model of equipment being. The artwork is used as an instrument to achieve pleasure to the subject. Modern aesthetics, like the whole project of modernity, is inescapably related to the subject and is, hence, based on the forgetfulness of being. Instead of revealing the being of the artwork, its misses the content-sense of the phenomenon and performs the relation between Dasein and art as the former’s attempt to derive mental pleasure from the latter rather than witness the revelation of what comes to presence in the artwork. By missing the content-sense, banishing the work being of the artwork and treating it as equipment, aesthetics reifies the work of art.

The fact that Kant has distinguished between art and cheap forms of entertainment -- in that the pleasure induced by art is mental resulting from the harmonious form of the artwork whereas the pleasure in cheap entertainment comes from pleasing the senses -- does not absolve aesthetics from Heidegger’s criticism that it stems from an inauthentic subject-centered concept of being. It is still grounded in a concealment of being. Julian Young finds the same concealment of being in modernism which is “nothing more than a fully integrated part of ‘the sphere of the techno-scientific world-construction’ ... modern (so-called) art is a farewell to everything that art once was” (Young 2001, 120). For him, modernist art, like aesthetics, is part of the same subject-centered vision of the world.

Thus, aesthetics as part of the modernity project, is grounded in the subjective understanding of art which views it as a source of pleasure to the subject. It is based on a concept of the artwork as equipment the goal of which is to induce
mental pleasure. Criticizing the aesthetic vision of the artwork, Heidegger writes:

In contrast, for us today, the beautiful is the relaxing, what is restful and thus intended for enjoyment. Art then belongs in the domain of the pastry chef. Essentially it makes no difference whether the enjoyment of art serves to satisfy the refined taste of connoisseurs and aesthetes or serves for the moral elevation of the mind…. For aesthetics, art is the display of the beautiful in the sense of the pleasant, the agreeable. And yet art is the opening up of the Being of beings. We must provide a new content for the word “art” and for what it intends to name, on the basis of a fundamental orientation to Being that has been won back in an originary way. (Heidegger 2000, 140)

As a part of the modernity subject-centered project, aesthetics treats the artwork as performing a service to the subject. It deals with art on the model of equipment being not according to its own being. It confuses the content-sense of artwork with that of equipment and reifies it. Aesthetics offers a reified vision of the artwork since it confuses one aspect of art – its ability to please and edify – with its being. Thus, while the technique of formal indication was no longer used after the investigation of the being of Dasein, the resulting understanding of reification as categorical confusion still directed Heidegger’s thought even in his later philosophy and lies at the ground of his vision of aesthetics as a reification of art.

Since aesthetics reifies the artwork, a destructive reading becomes necessary in order to dissolve the hold of the metaphysical concepts on our understanding of art. This destruction will be accompanied by an attempt to restore an authentic understanding of the artwork that corresponds to the being of art. In the history of thought, many concepts are created to capture human experience without reaching down to the original temporal and worldly experience of Dasein; they conceal being rather than reveal it: “This destruction is based upon the original experiences in which the first, and subsequently guiding, determinations of being were gained” (Heidegger 2010, 21-2). Destruction seeks to recover the “original experiences” through showing that the reified concepts cover up and misrepresent unacknowledged experiences: “That destruction has as its aim to recover possibilities of thinking that the tradition has covered over or sedimented. It does not so much aim to think what the other thinker thought once again, but to think the unthought of his thought, to think what he did not or
perhaps could not think” (Wood 2002, 83). If aesthetics blocks access to a more original revelation of the being of the artwork, destruction (Destruktion) promises a revelation of that being.

Aesthetics, whether Kantian or Hegelian, is conceptual. The concepts employed by Kant and Hegel seek to capture the presumably eternal unchanging nature of art. Even Hegel’s historicization of the Kantian concepts presupposes Greek art as a focal point in history in which the perfect materialization of form in matter occurs. It, thereby, eternalizes one concept of form and establishes it as the irretrievable standard of perfection against which the imperfection of all other forms can be judged. As part of the absolute spirit in Hegel’s system, aesthetics seeks knowledge that is absolved of contingency and dependence on materiality. While the artworks themselves are historical products, the concepts which Hegel employs to capture the different art forms rise above materiality and become part of absolute knowledge. In its grasp of the nature and function of art, aesthetics seeks to deny time and reach the atemporal nature of art. It, thus, shares the basic feature of Hegelian thought and becomes subject to destruction for the same reason. “What is a being? According to Heidegger, Hegel’s answer is that a being as such, ‘the actual in its genuine and whole reality,’ is the idea or concept. But this, he says, is ‘the power of time,’ i.e. it allows time to be annulled” (Wood 2002, 85).

Aesthetics – part of Hegel’s conceptual system which restores all material phenomena to the subject via capturing them in concepts – is based on an inauthentic concept of being as subjectivity that denies the temporality and finitude of Dasein in its hope for absolute knowledge free of the changeability and contingency of non-conceptual materiality. Due to the idealist desire to capture everything in concepts – which Heidegger reveals as a desire to annul time – aesthetics presupposes the total recuperability of sense through the artwork. Heidegger reveals that the idealist hope to capture the artwork conceptually cannot be materialized due to the impossibility of overcoming finitude and temporality: “We owe the possibility of escaping the idealistic conception of sense to a step taken by Heidegger in our time. He enabled us to perceive the ontological plenitude or the truth that addresses us in art through the twofold movement of revealing, unconcealing, and manifesting, on the one hand, and concealing and sheltering, on the other” (Gadamer 1987, 34). The experience manifested in the artwork cannot be totally revealed. Thinking in light of temporality and finitude forces the thinker to acknowledge his limitations and abandon the idealist hope for absolute knowledge. Due to its conceptual nature – its attempt to capture art in concepts – aesthetics participates in the denial of temporality and finitude which are essential conditions of Dasein.
Having offered a destructive criticism of aesthetics, – both through showing that it depends on a denial of the essential possibilities and conditions of being and that it deals with the work of art on a model that does not suit its content-sense – Heidegger must offer an authentic (eigentlich) understanding of the artwork that is proper (eigen) to its being, an understanding that moves beyond the reified aesthetic concepts. In his famous article “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger enquires about the “work-character of the work” (Heidegger 1971, 79). He starts by affirming that “[i]f we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are things” (Heidegger 1971, 19). Heidegger, then, proceeds to add that “the art work is something else over and above the thingy element” (19). This leads the investigation in two directions: first, identifying what a thing is and, second, identifying the work-character of the work as different from its thingliness.

Heidegger starts by destroying three thing concepts that have congealed over the thing being of the thing. The first concept of thing is that of a “substance with its accidents,” or the “thing as bearer of its characteristics” (23-24). This concept is found inappropriate since it does not belong to the thing but is rather derived from the sentence structure consisting of subject and predicates. The second is that of the thing as “the unity of a manifold of what is given in the senses” (25). Yet this concept which may be ascribed to the idealist reduction of phenomena to subjective perception is also rejected because it does not reach the thing itself. One does not encounter things as groups of sensations. Things are closer to us than mere sensations. “We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds” (26). The third concept which Heidegger rejects is that of the thing as “formed matter” which he finds inappropriate since it is derived from the being of equipment (26). This is the most important concept here because it is the one on which aesthetics is based.

Aesthetics conceives of the artwork as something formed in a harmonious way to induce pleasure. This concept is unfit for the artwork because in equipment matter is formed to be useful, it is hence used and also used up. In the work of art, matter or thing – stone, color, or sound – is flaunted not used up. No one thinks of the qualities of the color red in a traffic light. It simply means to stop. The color is absorbed in the use it is put to. Red in a painting, by contrast, draws attention to itself. The same is true of the language of a poem. It does not simply deliver a message but celebrates itself as language and reveals more than it says. Matter in the artwork is flaunted not exhausted. These concepts of thingness and equipmentality do not fit the being of the work. Heidegger
destroys them by showing that they mistake the content-sense of the work which is not only a thing but something else over and above the thing.

In order to investigate the being of the artwork *per se*, Heidegger chooses a Greek temple. This strategic choice is made because the temple does not represent anything. The idea of art as representation is precisely what Heidegger rejects because it is part of the old metaphysical tradition of ancient ontology that he seeks to destroy. Representation means that the artwork is a thing formed in a certain way to represent something else whether mental or actual. Again the idea of equipment being steps in though in a different form. Representation is problematic for two reasons: first, it diverts the beholder or reader from the artwork to the object represented in it. Art becomes the representation of someone else’s subjective experience or an essence that exists in consciousness; this is both humanistic and subjective. Second, if one pays attention to the form of representation, s/he focuses on the aesthetic qualities – i.e. the framed revelation of only that which appeals to the subject’s senses – and forgets what is revealed in the artwork. Heidegger does not deny that art bears subjective experiences or that it causes aesthetic pleasure. He objects to focusing attention on these aspects since they occlude the more original being of the work of art *per se*.

Having destroyed the concept of formed matter which fits equipment being – the ground of aesthetics – as well as the idea of representing an essence that exists elsewhere as concepts which enframe art, Heidegger proceeds to investigate the being of the work of art *per se*. In Van Gogh’s famous painting of the peasant girl’s shoes, Heidegger sees the world of the peasant girl coming into presence. It is not represented. It is evoked by the shoes and the dust that hangs on to them from the daily tread and toil of the peasant girl. Heidegger does not invest in a technical discussion of the post-impressionist aesthetics of Van Gogh for this would entangle his investigation in the frame he seeks to destroy. This would lead him to focus on how the mind perceives the world on the one hand and how it forms the painting on the other. In short, it would get his investigation entangled in modernist aesthetics and the modern concept of experience which would hide the more original being revealed through the painting of the shoes due to the subjective concepts.

The modern enframing of art as the object of “sensuous apprehension” or aesthetic experience kills it: “Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies” (Heidegger 1971, 77). Whether art is considered the object of aesthetic experience or appropriated by a critical methodology, in both cases it is framed,
it is incorporated in a technical frame that regards it as an equipment either to induce aesthetic pleasure through its harmonious form or to prove or disprove a point from a critical perspective. Enframement is the form of reification that corresponds to the modern inauthentic concept of being, “the Being that defines the modern period—Being as framing, framework” (84). Aesthetics is reification in the sense of enframement which denies the more original unconcealment (aletheia) of being. It disregards the content-sense of art and performs the relation-sense in two inauthentic ways that do not suit its content-sense, i.e. art as a source of pleasure or proof. Dealing with art must overcome both forms of reification and attend to the more original revelation of what comes to presence in the work of art – i.e. being.

Heidegger proceeds to investigate a Greek temple as an example of art that cannot be regarded representational. If one thinks of a Greek temple as an aesthetically pleasurable object due to its symmetry and harmony, one absorbs it into an aesthetic framework that is geared towards the pleasure of the subject and misses the original call of being unconcealed via the temple. Moreover, he deals with it from a perspective that was not devised when the temple itself was built. Subjective considerations hide the original being unconcealed via the temple. Heidegger starts by peeling off the reified humanist idea of representation as making present of a previously existing essence: “Who could maintain the impossible view that the Idea of Temple is represented in the building?” (Heidegger 1971, 36). Having moved beyond the idea of art as representation and the humanist frame within which it works, Heidegger attends to what presences in the temple. He sees the Greek experience of divinity shining through the temple:

A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. The temple is not a representation of the religious life of ancient Greeks; it brings their mode of being into presence. (Heidegger 1971, 40)

The presence of god in the temple sets him apart from the Deus absconditus of other religions. A certain way of how people conceived of the experience of divinity and, most importantly, of their existence, – their mode of being – is revealed via the temple; this is “the basic Greek experience of the Being of beings in the sense of presence” (Heidegger 1971, 23). This revelation happens
when the technical methodologies that frame art are bracketed out. Only then
does art start to indicate some of the formal features of the mode of being that
prevailed when the artwork was produced. Thus, art freed from reified frames,
indicates the formal features of the being of a historical nation.

The work of art has a thingly aspect – pigment in the case of the painting and
stone in that of the temple – which brings into presence a world. Yet just as the
temple cannot bring the whole Greek world of worshippers into presence, the
girl’s shoes cannot bring her whole world into presence either. It also conceals
it. In the artwork, there is a “strife” between revelation and concealment
(Heidegger 1971, 48). Moreover, the girl does not conceive of the equipmental
being of the equipment, the shoes, as she wears them in the being-for-hand
(Zuhandenheit) mode of everyday existence; she merely uses them. It is only in
the artwork that we can understand serviceability as the being of equipment. The
work of art brings the being (Sein) of beings (Seienden) into presence in the strife
between its thingly aspect – which Heidegger calls the earth – and the world it
reveals: “The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to
work” (Heidegger 1971, 35). The being of the work of art, thus, consists in the
revelation of the Being of beings via setting itself to work of the truth of beings
through the strife between the earth and the world or the thingly aspect and the
revealed world.

The being of the artwork is revealed only when the technological concepts
that recruit it as an aesthetically pleasurable object in the service of the subject
or a technologically usable entity to prove or refute are destroyed. Both concepts
are based on the serviceable being of equipment. Heidegger does not deny that
the artwork can induce aesthetic pleasure or that it can represent the artist’s
subjective experiences but he refuses these visions as the essence of the artwork
because they occlude a more original revelation of the being of the artwork. They
reify it by mistaking its content-sense for that of another mode of being –
(Zuhandenheit). Thus, Heidegger’s understanding of aesthetics as reifying the
artwork is based on his early notion of reification as categorical confusion which
he developed in his early philosophy via formal indication.

Works Cited
Oxford: Oxford University Press.
The Reification of Aesthetics


Political Symbolism and Censorship: 
*The Tree Climber* and *Al-Farafir* Revisited

*Dina Amin* *

The period that followed the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 was euphoric with enthusiasm as the expectations of the population as well as that of the intelligentsia were soaring high. No sooner however, did the optimism escalate that it receded as Gamal Abdel Nasser\(^1\) who started off as an advocate for freedom and democracy turned into a despot (at least from the point of view of a portion of the population). Attempts at criticism were met with censorship on all fronts. After a number of writers and artists were imprisoned for their political views, some writers opted to stay silent, some conformed and some went around censorship by using symbolism and metaphor.

An art form that suffered tremendously from censorship was theatre and playwriting. While theatre in Egypt could have been debilitated by censorship throughout the 1960s, a decade that suffered greatly from the suppression of speech, it ironically flourished instead, largely due to the pervasive use of symbolism and metaphors by dramatists. How playwrights converted their skepticism about the failure of the revolution to fulfill its promises of democracy into creative art is what I will try to examine herein. Taking *Ya Taliʿ al-Shagarah* (1962; published in English as *The Tree Climber*, 1966) by Tawfiq al-Hakim and *Al-Farafir* (Flipflap and His Master, 1964) by Yusuf Idris as projections of political discontent, I will argue that while both use theatre of the absurd as a form, the two texts uphold political symbolism as *modus operandi* in their covert criticism of the regime.\(^2\)

According to Abner Cohen in “Political Symbolism,” the poetics of symbols lie in their ambiguity and multileveled connotations, 

It is the very essence and potency of symbols that they are ambiguous, referring to different meanings, and are not given to precise definition. The most dominant symbols are essentially bivocal, being rooted, on the one hand, in the human condition, in what may be called “selfhood,” and on

\(^{1}\) Associate Professor of Drama and Performance Studies in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.  
\(^{2}\) Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
the other the relations of power. (1979, 87)

Cohen also expresses that direct political critiques are less interesting than symbolic allusions as they tend to lack depth, and in his opinion, “the less obviously political in form symbols are, the more efficacious politically they prove to be” (87). However, to problematize political symbolism on stage, I must first delve, albeit briefly, into a discussion of freedom of expression and censorship.

In “Censorship and Creative Freedom,” Catherine O’Leary maintains that,

While it is clear from recent discussions that censorship is more than top-down repression, the notion of a productive or constitutive censorship incorporating forms of cultural control not covered by the obvious apparatuses of official state regulation is both contentious and difficult to pin down. (2016, 5)

Despite the fact that sources of prohibitions often oscillate between political, religious or cultural biases in society, the dynamics between artists and censorship are virtually always the same worldwide. Within the realities of Arab and Egyptian theater though, the topic of censorship and freedom is perennial and has been tackled heavily from the mid-1950s (and before) until today. Weighing in onto it as well, it would be valuable to consider Althursser’s and Foucault’s opinion on the matter of censorship as an opportunity to produce new and different art forms. O’Leary argues that both thinkers, “explored [censorship] as a constitutive or productive force in society” (1). This is in fact a case in point in Arab and Egyptian theater whereby under dictatorships and repressive governments playwrights have continued to produce highly creative dramatic works, that bespeaks the angst of their societies, without articulating blatant criticism towards the powers that be. Margret Litvin asserts that in Egypt,

By the 1960s … playwrights and directors began to code their political suggestions in more subtle ways. In performance, actors conveyed political messages by inserting ab-libbed phrases or by directing certain lines or genres to the president’s box … In scripts, allegory replaced, or channeled the concerns of social realism. (2011, 48)

Litvin also comments on the fact that according to Louis Awad, “Critics half-ironically dubbed this technique ‘symbolic realism’ or ‘social symbolism’” (48). While this mode of communication has been a formula for dramatists globally
to defy censorship whenever their creativity clashed with the various forms of censorship, in the Arab World and Egypt, it is virtually a norm. Muhammad al-‘Amidi asserts that “Drama, with all its concerns, is essentially a search for the reality that is hidden behind illusions, therefore drama is a search for what is kept unspoken” (112). However ‘Abd al-Nabi Staif’s opinion articulated in “The Question of Freedom,” is that:

Arab critics seem to have an ambivalent attitude towards freedom in literature. For while they all insist on the writer’s freedom to write in the way dictated by his artistic sensibility, they counterbalance this by a constant reference to his commitment towards his society, nation and humanity, to the necessity or inevitability of orientation in literature and art, or to the social, moral, and political function of literature. (1995, 167)

Staif thus implicates artists insofar as their use of political symbolism. He maintains that some of their literary productions are auto-dictated by self-censorship rather than by state oppression. This compromise arises from their knowledge that “Political authority does not only have the means to stop the dissemination of the work of art but also of making its producer pay for his or her opposition to or even criticism of established order” (167). Today, Nora Amin describes freedom on stage as a “forbidden tree” (Amin 2019, 17); and explains the process of speech suppression as dominated by “the power of those who have the loudest voice; those who can terrorize; this explains the narrow margin allowed for literary and artistic expression.” Similar to what Litvin and Staif have mentioned, she too insists that “the ghoul of censorship, prohibition and exclusion have moved from the outside to the inside of [the subconscious of] the creative artist, thus the mind obstructs its own creativity and freedom by itself” (20).

In most accounts two suggestions about Egyptian theater arise: that there has been censorship as long as there has been theater, and that dramatists more often than not use allegory and political symbolism to communicate their dissent without any blatant criticism to the repressive powers in order to by pass prohibitions of their work. It is also imperative to note herein that value of drama (unlike other forms of literature) is that plays are presented in front of a live audience. This particularity allows for innuendoes and insinuations that outdo the boundaries of the written word and create a subliminal ‘other’ level of meaning between performers and spectators. This performative level represents the uniqueness of drama as a genre that cannot be controlled or traced by censors.
Dina Amin

for the most part. Likewise, Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Yusuf Idris experimented with political symbolism in order to be a “constitutive or productive force” in society rather than become repressed and silenced artists. After all, Litvin states the following: “Many [Egyptian artists in the 1960s] were eager to play their own historic role, that of mediators between the revolution and society… They sought to mediate in the other direction as well, conveying the people’s concerns to those in power” (44-45). Ironically, while using the formalistic and elusive form of symbolism, both dramatists believed that they were fulfilling a social and political commitment to their society by way of challenging censorship.

More specifically, it is necessary to shed some light on the promises of the 1952 Egyptian revolution and its general initial goals before presenting an analysis of the two plays under study herein within the perception of political symbolism. At the outset of the 1952 revolution, the Free Officers, architects of the insurgency, did not have a clear ideology but established themselves first and foremost as a reform movement (Goldschmidt 1988, 89). Later they chose an older figurehead, namely General Muhammad Naguib to be their leader (89). Both Naguib and Khaled Mohieldin (another Free Officer) proclaimed that their movement was ad hoc and did not start as a political one, but a reform one intending to hand power to the military afterwards. This is not what happened ultimately for they “set up a watchdog committee to oversee the government, which was called the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC)” (91).

One of the architects of the 1952 Revolution was Gamal Abdel Nasser, who came to power in 1954 after a period of internal power struggle within the RCC. Ultimately, Nasser won the governing seat and General Naguib became a prisoner of his own home, stripped of all power. Nasser's primary concern apart from developing Egyptian Nationalism was to maintain the environment of democracy inherited from the monarchy (Goldschmidt 1988, 99). This desire did not last long, as he soon changed to one who “did not like to share authority, either with his closest associates or...render power to people less qualified and this, in his opinion, included almost everyone” (Wheelock 52). The truth of the matter is that Nasser toppled all the opposing members of the RCC except for a few like Sadat, Mohieddin and al-Shafe‘i, and for sixteen years exercised sole rulership over Egypt. This naturally aggravated both his friends and enemies, but in the face of criticism Nasser resorted to secret police and censorship to clampdown on opposition. The former resulted in violent atrocities and the latter affected Egypt's cultural scene tremendously; that will be the central issue of this paper.

Nasser's major contribution to modern Egypt is resurrecting the country’s national identity, and although he started off fighting for democracy, he changed
to calling for the rule of one party. Mustafa Amin, in his book *Li Kul Maqal Azmah* (A Story for Every Article, 1987), discusses Nasser's insistence on the one-party rule and his unrelentless efforts to silence all those who opposed him regarding that matter. He says that Nasser, “insists on the one party, and regards that Egypt needs thirty years at least of one-party rule and one-man and one-vision” (126). Amin also mentions the fact that Nasser was at the beginning a fervent advocate for free press and that he defended people's rights to criticize him or anyone else in his government for that matter, however, this attitude changed following the opinion of other members of the RCC, Marshall Amer's for instance, whose opinion on the role of the press – which Nasser became in favour of later on – was that “today the solution for the press in Egypt is for the revolution to arrest all journalists without any exceptions, and to put them all in a military prison, and this way the revolution can settle down, so can the press and so can Egypt” (140).

This confusing and shifting policy caused great disappointment to many Egyptians; and in the face of censorship, writers had to chose between writing or not writing. For those who chose the first, it was a hard task to continue making their writing – in spite of restrictions – worth reading. Therefore, some of them resorted to the use of symbolism and metaphor to express their dismay at the political and social situation in Egypt without being harassed for it by the authorities. Some of these writers excelled at the use of symbolic and metaphoric language in their work that they actually passed the scrutiny of censorship inspectors, and others were not as successful and their works were banned. I will take Al-Hakim and Idris as a case in point of dramatists who managed to produce works that created strong reactions within the literary world, but were not considered transgressive or objectionable by the authorities. I will demonstrate that both used political symbolism in *The Tree Climber* and *Al-Farafir* respectively and that their political criticism is layered with symbolism, which came through “as part of the very fabric of the play functioning within, as well as enlarging, its surface meaning” (Zimberdo 1962, 10). I will maintain that it is very possible that what allowed the two plays to fall off the radar of censorship at the time is the fact that both playwrights wrote long prefaces to their plays outlining that their intention for writing them was to introduce the (then) new dramatic form of absurdism and to revive indigenous Egyptian popular performance arts for the sole purpose of reinstating the spirit of nationalism, which the regime upheld steadfastly.

Tawfiq Al-Hakim took the theatre of the absurd as a device by which to express his repressed opinions concerning the regime and its failed promises.
Martin Esslin defines theatre of the absurd as “that which is devoid of purpose…. Cut off from his (man’s) religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” (1983, 23). This is analogous to the situation of creative writers under Nasser's regime, for they were trapped and lost amidst censorship and restraints. Many authors felt cut off from the social and political environment of their country and consequently underwent phases of alienation from the regime. Some found in theatre of the absurd a reflection of their own predicament and a convenient release to a few of their frustrations as well as an abstruse medium of expression. The opaqueness inherent in the dramatic style of absurdism was a safe space for writers to express their disenchantment with the regime without articulating it overtly. Al-Hakim found refuge in both the form and content of the theatre of the absurd. His definition of the genre appears in his preface to the play, and he expresses both his and Egypt’s need for such theatre: “absurd means expressing reality without realism, the reaching out for the ridiculous or illogical in every expression of art; using abstraction to reach new rhythms and new influences” (Al-Hakim 1962, 24).

Thus, by using abstractions and symbols, which are inherent elements in absurdism, he tried to reach new levels of satire by which to influence the political and social order in Egypt without stirring up authorities against him. While Al-Hakim was already considered a cornerstone on the Egyptian drama and cultural scene, he voiced his criticism of the political status quo carefully, perhaps because he realized that expressing opposition would be enough to place him in prison or ban his work. As a result of his excessive caution, Al-Hakim was often accused of conforming to Nasser's censorship and dictatorship (Farag 1987, 67-69). Those claims drove him to defend himself in a book published during Sadat's rule called The Return of Consciousness; in it he asserts that Nasser's era was one that witnessed stern censorship on the press, performance arts and the written word, therefore it was a period of loss of direction and lack of consciousness (Al-Hakim 1985, 19).

Al-Hakim, thus, found a forum for his political discontent and freedom of expression by way of the symbolism and abstractions, which are implicit within the highly nebulous form of the theatre of the absurd. In fact, The Tree Climber can be construed as a representation of Al-Hakim's inner struggle as the opacity of its metaphors and symbols can only demonstrate the level of oppressive censorship surrounding him at the time. The dense symbolism of the play can, therefore, only be deciphered through a process of dismantling the complexity and layers of the symbols in order to make the connection between the political and social currents in Egypt in the sixties, on the one hand, and the characters
and plot of the play, on the other.

_The Tree Climber_ is Al-Hakim's first absurdist drama, and it takes its title from an old folk song. The play is written in two acts and revolves around the relationship of Bahhadir and his wife Bahhanna, who disappears one day, and he gets arrested for it. She reappears in the second act so he gets released and they both return to their home together. At home, the husband asks his wife about her disappearance: “Bahhadir: Where were you?” (1966, 161). This simple question soon develops into a full-fledged argument that enrages Bahhadir and leads him to kill Bahhanna because she refuses to answer.

In the story there are two other important characters: the old servant and the dervish. Their presence in the play intensifies the symbolic dimension for they represent two important elements within the political realm of that time. The old maid serves the purpose of exposition in the dramatic structure. She becomes an important agent presenting a general picture of the life of the couple in question. She mentions in the interrogation process, which takes place after the disappearance of Bahhanna, that both the husband and wife are harmonious and happy together. She also mentions the fact that Bahhanna was married to another man – now deceased – before Bahhadir, and that she was pregnant with a baby girl that she had to terminate her pregnancy in her fourth month. She also reports that Bahhadir is, more than anything else in the world, attached to an orange tree and a green lizard, living under that tree, in the garden of the couple’s house.

The dervish, a symbol of faith and religious authority, is one of the most mysterious dramatic characters in the play, for he is the first to inspire Bahhadir with the concept of an ‘ideal’ tree, one that produces four fruits a year. Moreover, once convinced of the idea, Bahhadir confesses to the dervish that his dream is to kill his wife and bury her under the tree in order to offer her as the greatest sacrifice and fertilizer to the tree. It is worth mentioning that the dervish had already prophesied earlier on in the play that Bahhadir would kill Bahhanna and present her as fertilizer for the tree. When the prophesy comes true, Bahhadir lets the dervish in on his secret, that he has killed his wife, hoping for his support. Instead of defending his endeavor, the dervish detaches himself from all responsibilities toward the crime, which leaves Bahhadir feeling forsaken by his spiritual leader:

Bahhadir: You knew that I was going to kill her.
Dervish: Knowing is not consenting. (196)

It is obvious that the dervish denies any connection to the crime, which he had
previously foreseen. Not just that, he advises Bahhadir to bear the responsibility of his actions and points out the importance of burying Bahhanna. The dervish also explains to Bahhadir that he is up against two choices: either admit his crime and bear the consequences or be silent about it and live with a guilty conscience and fear lest his crime is ever discovered in the future. Bahhadir chooses to be silent, and severs his ties with the symbol of faith, the dervish; he continues with his plan and offers Bahhanna's body as fertilizer to his tree so that it may grow bigger and produce more.

After having explored the plot of the play rather briefly, it is necessary to reflect on the Bahhanna and Bahhadir relationship, for it is the material point of the play and virtually all actions are centered another around it. From the course of events we understand that both these characters are rather peculiar, each lives with a certain obsession that dominates their thoughts: Bahhanna is obsessed with the memory of her aborted daughter, which is an emotional journey filled with pain, memories and idealization of the past. Bahhadir, on the other hand, is obsessed with his orange tree and the green lizard, which he calls, Al-Sheikha Khadra that lives under the tree (and while everybody knows of her, nobody has ever seen her except for him). Bahhanna is focused on her failures in the past, and Bahhadir on the promise of prosperity and materialism of the future – none of them lives for the present moment. When the husband and wife converse, they practically talk at cross-purposes and convey nothing but their respective fixations. They don't even listen to one another; each just picks the last word uttered by the other and builds on it another sentence corresponding to his/her obsession.

Bahhadir: ... what I can't understand is that the wind is very still today, nevertheless, some oranges dropped ... what dropped them?
Bahhanna: (busy with her embroidery) I am the one who dropped her ... she was the first fruit ... and I am the one who dropped her with my own hands.... (54)

Obviously, Bahhadir is talking about his tree and she about her aborted daughter. They continue as such, each in their private world yet believing that there is actually communication between them. Interestingly, the only time they change this conversation pattern and talk to one-another instead of ‘at’ each other, and actually start talking about the same subject – her disappearance – the situation ends with one killing the other.

On examining the meanings of the play, one realizes that al-Hakim uses symbolism profusely, for each component of the play corresponds to an aspect
within the political reality of the period. While there are many symbolic elements, it is necessary to start with the tree as it is of the utmost importance for Bahhadir. The tree is in fact the centre of his life; he works for its growth and he is the one who collects its produce. Therefore, he is the owner and ruler of the world of this tree, and his ambitions for it brinks on the impossible if not sheer lunacy. He dreams of it being the ‘ideal’ tree that produces oranges in winter, apricots in spring, figs in summer and pomegranates in autumn. The tree to Bahhadir can also be compared to Egypt in the eyes of Nasser as he dreamed of an Egypt that would become a model society and ‘ideal’ country, to be industrial and agricultural on the one hand, and the strongest militarily in the region as well as the leading Arab country in culture and art, on the other, all at the same time. But his dreams led to losses on all fronts like Bahhadir looses everything meaningful in his life. The separation of the dervish and Bahhadir represents the ideology of secularism and materialism that Nasser chose over Islamism, and which turned religious sects against him.

As for Bahhanna, she becomes the symbol of the Egyptian educated and middle class citizens, who endorsed Nasser and hoped that he might compensate Egypt for her past sorrows and tragedies. Her deceased husband represents Egypt’s forefathers and patriarchs who historically let the population down. The years of the agony of war and misery of occupation and the loss of Palestine and hope for a better Egypt are symbolized in the aborted embryo of Bahhanna, which represents that Egyptians never realized their dreams. Al-Sheikha Khadra (the green lizard living under the tree) stands for the ideal development and growth of Egypt, green being symbolic of progress, for whom Nasser (Bahhadir) toils, but which only presides in his mind, for no one else has ever seen her (progress), as the servant declares,

The prosecutor: Al Sheikha who?
The maid: The lizard ... he calls that ... I have never seen her ... but he sees her everyday. (50)

The servant represents the working class of Egypt, she totally subscribes to the existence of the green lizard, yet she never saw her herself. Like the people of Egypt who trusted in the presence of prosperity but have not really experienced it, but their belief in Nasser's vision was bigger than their belief in themselves or the reality on the ground around them. Similarly, the servant believes that the presence of the green lizard is unquestionable, simply because her master says so.
Bahhanna who is mentioned above as being the symbol of intellectuals, forms a symbiotic unit with the maid as two factions of the population. Bahhanna loves her husband and believes in him, as the intellectuals supported Nasser, thinking that he was the upholder of sciences and enforcer of development, until he started encroaching on their freedoms in general. After all,

Most discussions of the question of freedom in literature and art take place within the larger context of the question of freedom in the Arab society, particularly intellectual freedom and the role of thought in general in shaping the modern Arab society or in confronting the challenge facing it at all levels. (Staif 167)

Within the framework of the play this is represented in the character of Bahhanna who stands by her husband until he starts harassing her to tell him where she had been when she disappeared for three days,

Bahhadir: I know how to force you to speak ... I will forcefully make you ... I will make that tongue of yours utter ... I will show you how to speak the answer ... speak now. (183)

But Bahhanna insists on her right to remain silent, and this insistence projects a new dimension in Bahhadir’s character that never surfaced before. It is a violent side of him that almost brinks on madness,

Bahhadir: Don't let me press on your neck more that I am already. Speak up ... let your tongue utter the answer. (184)

Her resistance to respond in the face of his violence makes him even more aggressive until he actually kills her. She dies for having held tightly to her beliefs and principles. On the other hand, he kills her as he cannot relinquish total control over her.

This situation parallels the political situation in Egypt at the time, when Nasser's ideology turned from one of securing freedoms to one of trampling over freedoms. Al-Hakim expresses his opinions many years later and after the death of Nasser under the title, ‘Absolute ruler’, in his book, The Return of Consciousness. He states:

Abdel Nasser became the first man in the country. The country became accustomed to the one-man rule ... The iron curtain was gradually lowered
between the people and the conduct of the absolute ruler. We loved him without knowing the inner springs of his thoughts or the true motivation for his conduct. Our heart penetrated the curtain to reach him, but the mind remained separated from him. (1985, 19)

Nasser’s isolation from and avoidance of the intelligentsia was effective in that their voices stopped reaching him and their silence became irrelevant to him. Oppressing them is symbolized in the play by Bahhadir’s violence against Bahhanna. Nasser’s disregard of criticism emerged from a need to silence opposition and the way to do so was through isolating thinkers and writers, who were the first to realize the absurdity of his aspirations for quick, accelerated and unstudied development. Bahhadir speaks out this desire in a discussion with the dervish,

Bahhadir: To me she [Bahhanna] is meaningless, except when I serve her as a meal for the tree, and the tree grows its glorious growth, and produces its unique fruits. (1966, 199)

The comparison here is between Bahhadir's dream of the ideal tree, and Nasser's dream of the ideal Egypt, and how those dreams turned into nightmares demolishing growth potentials rather than building them. The analogy is also that both men failed immensely in attaining their dreams. After all, murdering Bahhanna resulted in the death of the lizard, which Bahhadir found at the bottom of the pit that was dug up as burial place for Bahhanna. With her death, the symbol of a prosperous future for Bahhadir was amputated in the same way Egypt's cultural soul, embodied in her intellectuals, were stifled by Nasser's oppressive regime.

*Al-Farafir*, on the other hand, is a play that questions and deconstructs authority, hierarchy and rank. Like al-Hakim, Idris adopts the absurdist style for his play, but instead of using *fuṣḥa* (standard Arabic), he uses *‘ammīyyah* (colloquial Egyptian). This added in many ways to the success of the play in the 1960s, as the layperson could enjoy it just as well as the educated. However, in this case, what was harder to understand was its underlying symbolism, which referred to corruption on all levels of authority. According to Al-‘Amidi, Idris’s symbolism speaks to the idea that “the notion of make-believe is born from reality. Illusion is the unattained desire to be real” (Al-‘Amidi 2014, 112). While many elements within the play fit with the dictates of theatre of the absurd, in the preface, Idris explains that he uses indigenous Egyptian *Al-Samir*[^3]
performance art as inspiration (Badawi 1987, 156). He elsewhere further explains that reviving local dramatic forms is necessary in the post-colonial period as it indicates a return to national roots in order to attain independence from western art forms: “We are an autonomous, self-sufficient nation. We have our own songs, music, dance and theater. We thank God that we are living in a period in which we have started to search for our identity and are proud of it and [want to] show it” (Idris 2010, 51).

From this point, Idris’s approach was deemed a patriotic endeavor, meant to revive national performance heritage. As a sincere effort to connect present dramatic arts with past ones both Egyptian and Arab nationalism, his project was highly debated (and still is today) within important cultural and artistic conversations. Idris introduced the concept of tamasruh as a state of suspension of the role of spectator as a silent viewer of a performance. While tamasruh can at times also includes aspects of didacticism whereby performers can impart wisdom to spectators, in Al-Farafir, “[i]nstead of tamasruh conveying a socially conservative didacticism, however, it generates an open critique that the community explores together, returning to an adab based in communicative relationality” (Sibley 2019, 46). As the form attracted so much attention, its content became less visible to censors within the context of Egyptian theater, thus escaped their censure.

While exploring the play for its anthropological and historical as well as its structural importance has been at the forefront of previous studies, focusing on its political message (as opposed to its philosophical outlook), which is clearly obscured in the play by the poetics of symbolism, is of great importance within the context of Egyptian drama throughout the different periods. Sibley states that “[i]nstead of the global/local binary, Idris posits the model of greater or lesser diffusion. That diffusion, whether it be of language, art, or theater, is grounded in the political conditions that facilitate or hinder the spread of cultural forms” (46). From this point of view, it can be construed that Idris uses political symbolism and absurdism to challenge traditional dramatic forms in order to generate deeper reflections on the political status quo of his time.

This responds to J.L.Styan’s suggestion that “[i]n the theatre an object or a situation can immediately suggest an idea or a feeling that is greater than itself” (1981, 3). He continues saying that symbolism came about in Europe for the specific need of moving away from naturalism (4); likewise, it peaks in Egypt every time political freedom of expression is being curbed. After all, “despite Idris’s poking fun at the Theatre of the Absurd in more that one place, he has certainly made use of its technique in Al-Farafir” (Badawi 1987, 160). Revisiting those techniques used by dramatists in the post-1952 revolutionary
Egypt can inevitably shed light on contemporary predispositions in dramatic playwriting in the present time.

*Al-Farafir* is a play in two acts, it starts with an author behind a podium addressing the audience; he introduces his main character Farfur, who is a combination of a clown and a drifter, described by Sibley in the following terms:

the farfur, a harlequinesque persona whose role is to lampoon figures of authority and engage in bawdy banter with the onlookers. As a figure who both entertains and satirizes, the farfur functions as the gadfly who serves a social function for the community engaged in the performance. His satirical representations are educative, ultimately advocating moral conduct, heightening awareness of social responsibilities, and drawing attention to instances of failure among members of the community. (2019, 47)

When Farfur first enters he is looking for a master, any master, and he finds him asleep among the audience. He summons him to the stage and together they explore the meanings and implications of being a master as opposed to being a servant. Once the master is identified the author gets ready to leave, as he walks away from the podium, we realize that he is wearing the top garments of a tuxedo suit but is only in his boxer shorts underneath. The pattern is established that the author will be called upon whenever there are problems in the plot, and every time he reappears he has grown smaller in size until he practically disappears. As for Farfur and his master, they spend most of the first act discussing the role of a master and servant, and the different occupations that they can possibly perform. During this long exchange the Farfur gets to satirize the entire professional set up in Egypt,

Master: Well, what exactly is my work?
Flipflap: You work as my master ... All right you can be a patriotic man of independent means, in a small way of course.
Master: Um. You don't have anything better?
Flipflap: Oh yes. How about being an intellectual?
Master: Well, what do they do where you come from, intellectuals?
Flipflap: They don’t do anything. (Idris 1977, 350-351)

Auto-criticism of the effectiveness of intellectuals and their complacency under Nasser’s regime is quite blatant in this exchange, and, as they disparage
intellectuals, the two characters continue mocking the different occupations from law to taxi driving, and quite explicitly criticizing the corruption on all levels,

Yet far from being a solemn work, the play is full of humour: largely through Farfur, his licensed Fool, the author never tires of ridiculing not only political tyranny and social injustice, but also all forms of hypocrisy and cant, and current fashions in thought and art, from existentialism to the Theatre of the Absurd. (Badawi 1987, 159)

After a very protracted exchange, the Master and Farfur ultimately decide to become grave-diggers but the one who is asked to do all the digging is the Farfur. When the latter realizes that he will be doing all the menial work while the Master will get all the credit, he objects, and a dispute over roles ensues; eventually this disagreement calls for the summoning of the author. When the Author shows up, he tells the Farfur never to ask 'why', which clearly pigeonholes him into the subordinate place. The Farfur realizes that the author has prescribed his subordination and therefore, his destiny cannot change, so he accepts the role. After choosing a profession for themselves, the Master and Farfur decide to find wives. They start looking for partners; the master finds two attractive women to marry and the Farfur gets a masculine-looking one (that can possibly be played by a man). After marriage financial concerns become more pressing, as they don't find anyone to bury. Eventually, they come across a volunteer who is willing to die; the master kills him and orders the Farfur to bury him. This pushes the Farfur over the edge so he decides that he has had enough and leaves.

The second act starts after some time has passed with the two characters running into each other again and deciding to go on doing what they did before, namely digging graves. This time the Farfur rebels and clearly refuses to be marginal, however:

They decide to resume their life together but not on the old basis: first, on an equal footing, both as servants ... and then both as masters ... [but] when all these attempted solutions fail, they resolve to turn back to the Author. This time the author is delivered in the form of a bundle, looking like a newborn baby. (Badawi 1987, 159)

Realizing that his destiny is to forever serve the Master, the play ends with Farfur addressing the audience and complaining to them about disorder, inequality and the impossibility of getting rid of the class system or attaining an egalitarian
society. However, the play also ends with the impression that the action will restart (the same way it did in Act Two) and will keep repeating. This circular structure is expressed by the last utterance of Farfur,

Flipflap: Good people! Flipflaps! Save your brother! My voice is going. Find us a solution! A solution, someone. A solution, otherwise I’ll stay like this. There must be a solution; there must be a way out. Your brother’s finished. I’m just acting. (*His voice fades*) It’s you who are going round and round. (Idris 1977, 453)

Compounded with this statement, stage directions indicate that the Farfur keeps twirling around the Master and, “revolving silently in rhythm with the beating of the drum. After a minute the curtain comes down, leaving him still revolving” (454).

The movement clearly indicates a continuing rotating motion that does not end with the closing of the curtain, which renders a circular plot reminiscent of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. The final direct address of the Farfur to the audience represents a wake up call that points to the fact that exploitation and class disparity will continue as symbolized by the actor’s continuous revolving physical action around his master. Idris obviously had a very bleak opinion of the present and no high expectations for the future, as the play ends with Farfur calling on the readers/spectators to stop ‘repeating’ the pattern of complacency.

The play certainly bashes authority and pokes fun at people at the top. If one of the themes in *Waiting For Godot* implies that God is dead, Idris implies that God is there but he is mediocre as symbolized in the character of the author, for he is the creator of the world of the play, but he is incapable of running it efficiently and fairly.

The ever-diminishing size and status of the Author is certainly a direct spoof on intellectuals and artists who have become inconsequential within their country’s political and cultural scenes. The character of the author can also be interpreted as the state figurehead (Nasser), who is the top authority of the country. The analogy between Nasser and the Author can be assessed through Farfur's relationship with the second, for he constantly looks up to him for answers, but in vain, as the author is so detached that he can no longer empathize with Farfur’s predicament. This is suggestive of Nasser's distancing himself from the people who had elected him, and who believed in his ability to change their status to the better, but their expectations were dashed out when no positive resolutions came forth. Therefore, there is a semblance between Nasser and the
Author insofar as their disconnectedness with and detachment from their subjects lies. The author becomes harder to call upon as the play unfolds, leaving his characters to sort out their problems alone and to fend for themselves, but when he does answer, it is only if they praised him,

Flipflap: Hey! Author!
Master: Be polite you fool! Don't you know all authors like to be respected and revered. And flattered. Especially flattered.
Flipflap: Your Honor the Author! Your Worship the Author! You, best, finest, biggest, greatest, stoutest author!

*Author enters, now in the form of a small boy (or, if preferred a midget) only half as tall as the previous AUTHOR. He still wears short trousers.*
(Idris 1977, 365)

Idris is obviously playing with the metaphor of an ever-diminishing figurehead, referring to the image of Nasser, which in the opinion of intellectuals kept recoiling. Also, the fact that the author responds only to flattery is more than just a hint about hypocrisy, which had become the means by which to communicate with the new aloof Nasser.

The Farfur represents the farmers and working class of Egypt, who thought that Nasser would free them from the master/servant order in society, but who discovered that getting rid of one master meant being bound to another. The play clearly illustrates that the class structure in Egypt never disappeared as the socialist policies of Nasser promised for “the revolution aim[ed] at creating a socialist society without class distinction”, only to reappear under a different disguise (Wheelock 53). For most of the RCC members and many of the early supporters of the revolution emerged later on as the pseudo aristocracy of that period: “The young captains, majors and colonels were creating their own elite, and they were loath to surrender their newly gained privileges” (48). This idea is projected very openly in Idris's play, for he portrays the lower classes in Egypt as trapped in the positions of servitude, that there is no way out for them but to accept their subordinate status. It is indeed an extremely pessimistic view of things for as Roger Allen points out:

It is hardly surprising therefore that Idris's nihilistic comments concerning governmental frameworks in this play were not popular in certain quarters … and one very suitable for the genre of the theatre of the absurd, that was founded to express man's cumbersome existence and his entrapment in life. (1979, 118)
The master, on the other hand, is the epitome of this nihilism as Allen mentions, for if there is no chance for the lower classes to attain a better life and independence, then through the symbolism implicit in the character of the master there is no chance for the country either. The master, who symbolizes the new ruling class created by Nasser, is presented as lethargic, conceited and possessing absolutely no skills or qualification. In effect, the image ties in very well with Wheelock’s idea that those who came to power under Nasser attained their positions for absolutely no reason, except that they happen to be affiliates of the president or that they were at the right place at the right time. Just like the figure of the master who happened to be there when the author and the Farfur were in the process of looking for a master.

If Al-Hakim presented Bahhadir, the symbol of Nasser, as caring, naive and idealistic, Idris presented him in the character of the Author as mediocre, uncaring and grotesque. And while the al-Hakim chose not to ascribe blame, for in the implications in the play is that the tragedy was that of Nasser and not the country. His use of symbolism expressed that political miscalculations invariably result in isolation and increased violence. Whereas Idris blatantly ascribes blame, not only to authorities but also to the unaware population, who allowed Nasser to become a dictator. He ends the play with unanswered questions and warnings about (in)equality and how it can never be attained so long as there is complacency. In his last speech the Farfur sends a warning to all Egyptians that they are trapped in their own fear of authority, and with is revolving movement, he illustrates that that fear is perpetual, thus until they free themselves they will never experience real freedom and that the pattern of censorship and oppression will also be long lasting.

**Endnotes**

1 I am using the Egyptian spelling of all names, politicians, characters and titles of plays, rather than standard Arabic.
2 While I am using M.M. Badawi’s translation of *Al-Farafir* into English, I will be using the Arabic title, *Al-Farafir*, when referring to Yusuf Idris’s play instead of the translated title, *Flipflap and His Master*. I will also refer to the main character in the play by his Egyptian name, Farfur, rather than the translated one, Flipflap. The reason for this choice is that I do not agree with the translation of the word farafir as flipflaps. In my opinion, the translation of “Al-Farafir” is best rendered as ‘Underdogs;’ translating it as
Dina Amin

flipflaps (which is an obscure noun) is quite an odd choice that does not communicate Idris’s intention accurately.

3 My definition of this kind of performance is as follows: “Al-Samir, in general, can be considered a variety show of sorts for it included singing, dancing, dramatics skits and animal shows” (Amin, 2006).

Works Cited
---. 2010. “Nahw Masrah Misri,” *Al Farafir*. Cairo: Nahdat Misr lil-Tiba`a wa-
al-Nashr.
Emerging Configurations of Time in Facebook Prod-User Culture

Doaa Ghazi*

“We are that strange species that constructs artefacts intended to counter the natural flow of forgetting.” William Gibson (1984, n. pag.)

“This gives us the right and the duty to call this emerging society a utopia. It will no longer be found in any place or time but in imagined surfaces, in surfaces that absorb geography and history.” Vilém Flusser (2011, 4)

This study tackles the new concept of time that Facebook and social media have construed. Cybernetics sought to exit the traditional forms of existence inside a burdensome temporality where events slipped into a past that always left behind an existential quest for understanding its vicissitudes, and always activates open-ended hermeneutic exertions. The future, on the other hand, is eluded in cybernetics as the unknown and meta-physical. Facebook, as medium and digital form, has intercepted the gruesome division of the tenses by liquifying experiential time and formulating it as an epistemologically de-coagulated flowing ‘now,’ structuring, thus, a decontextualised/ing presentist culture instantly processed and prod-used as renewable information.

The digital medium’s establishment in everyday existence as well as its production of a new kind of everydayness invites Michel de Certeau's theory and methodology. It will serve here as an analytical tool to configure how culinary posts, memetic production and digital photo-pos(t)ing are expressive forms of this new prod-used everydayness different from pre-social media modes of subverting linear time flow. This ubiquity of a medium dealing with the everyday components of living has effectuated new mergers in terms of high and low

* Lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University.
Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
cultural spheres and paradigms that had come closer at the hands of popular culture theorists since the sixties in their notions of active consumption.

Today, new media, have transformed consumption into real production at the hands of the practitioners of daily life themselves, the prod-users. This has erased the high-low epistemic gap and almost rendered the whole concept obsolete nowadays. Technologies alter the space they penetrate, both material and conceptual space. They dissolve former binaries. In the hands of prod-users, new media reshuffle former conceptual structures and create revolutionary fusions that are today radically refashioning cultural contexts.

**Cybernetic Time**

Time is among those concepts to have been majorly re-invented within the cybernetic re-conceptualisation of the individual as a potential transmittable piece of information and not a psychological thickness or an unfathomable interiority. The telematic goal was also to eliminate the temporal and spatial distance between desire and commodified objects, between occurrences and their representations. Real-time technologies thus collapsed the frictions of the real world.

Speed came to be the qualifier of time, not the real motion through real space in chronological time, but the simplification of reality in the form of data transmitted at the speed of light. This technology turned the negation of durée, terrestrial distance and physical constraints in geography, into revolutionary realities. Time no more signified outside the human mind but it emanated from networks and technologies within an algorithmic rationality of logic circuits; and post-war cognition was framed in terms of on-going experiments and processes, not final facts or conclusions (Halpern 2016, n. pag.).

The departure from futuristic notions to establishment in the everyday is the technological aspect that is culturally signifying and in need of researching. It is the area where technology and culture are converging in unprecedented ways reshaping our day-to-day living and creating new epistemological mental maps where time, body and reality are newly reconfigured concepts. The old linearity and causality that decreed things has, in cybernetic times, become characterised by the precedence of effect over cause, a notion that has strictly refashioned the world we inhabit. To put it succinctly, machines have refashioned time outside its linear(real)ity.

This techno-conceptual reversal of the Cartesian cause-effect binary sequence has transited the world of ideas from one epistemic form (where the cogito was the centre of reference) to another, characterised by its rhizomatic, capillary
structure(s) where we navigate virtual networks as recyclable pieces of information de-contextualised of the teleological here and now. This is “how we became post-human” in the words of N. K. Hayles (1999). This new virtual existence was described in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* as existence inside “the matrix […] bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colourless [spatio-temporal] void” (1984, 63).

**De Certeau’s Digital and Everyday Culture**

De Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) is a diffuse text elaborating an overall “operational logic” of everyday practices (Sheringham 2006, 213). Its non-linear form as well as its conceptual liberation of consumers from their panoptic entrapment by the images and representations which seek to manipulate them reflect the text’s tactical play with systems and disciplines. The book is concerned with a kind of “anti-discipline” in Sheringham’s reference to the relation de Certeau has to Foucault (2006, 218).

De Certeau conceptually isolates the everyday as cultural paradigm. His temporal concept materially weaves time with space in his distinction between tactics and strategies. The latter function through spatial domination and the former through productiveness in time, in reaping the opportune moment for action against controlling strategies. The everyday is regarded by de Certeau as “invent[ing] itself through countless forms of poaching” (1984, xxxvi). The subjects of everyday practice have tact, flair and aesthetic judgement and re-appropriate what is imposed on them with myriad forms of poaching and inverting strategies into tactics to re-appropriate meanings hijacked from them.

These tactics take the form of contingent utterances, textual poaching, ruses, spatial re-appropriations, jokes, inventing new languages, etc. In short, forms of creative linguistic performances ably undo the epistemological burden of controlling discourses by creating cracks and fragments in the system’s frameworks. De Certeau stresses the form of everyday cultural operations rather than their content (Sheringham 2006, 219). The linguistic productions of consumers are also ephemeral and tied to specific trending contexts.

Having said this, it becomes clearer why Michel de Certeau’s work is applicable in digital spheres and to the new technologies of information and cognition: “It is the fate of any important oeuvre to produce its own dissemination … its themes and key concepts being able to ultimately circulate in close ways in different fields” (Maigret 2000, 511). *The Practice of Everyday Life* is a polysemic text par excellence with the possibility of being interpreted in divergent traditions, from analytic philosophy to empiric sociology, through the behavioural analyses of readers, tele-spectators and digital users, as well as
through questions pertaining to cognition, interpretation and action in our complex and culturally hierarchised society.

De Certeau’s legacy is a methodology in ways of reading modernity in its plurality, in its turn towards consumption and *loisirs*, its derisory resistance in the face of panoptic forms. It serves this study that finds in its rich analytical mechanisms the theorising of digital users’ daily operations and practices, their roles as witty social actors, and their relation to the structures that seek to discipline them. De Certeau compiled an inventory of those daily practices of the consumers of goods and meanings: inhabiting, walking, reading, going to the marketplace, cooking, etc.

He invested in the realm where the “weak” and the “dominated” could become authors and producers, in the area between the production of images and their uses, which are new productions. His is the realm of symbolic consumption where neither rules nor totalitarian logic prevail. Every time individuals work out ruses they are re-working meaning outside the rules that control it, reminding us that literal and imposed meaning is not received meaning. Consumption as production in de Certeau is equivalent to digital prod-usage. Social media have concretised these operations in cyberspace and in screen culture where user activities are productions and where many can be viewed as tactics in de Certeau’s sense.

Sheringham’s book *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006) is a rich study of the multi-faceted paradigm. It has informed this study substantially as to how to transpose the concept to Facebook and its everyday economy. The most important characteristic of everydayness, Sheringham concludes, is not its repetition nor its particular content, for it cannot be solely reduced to its content, but rather it is its variation and sedimentation which make it the sphere of invention (361).

**Digital Everyday Life Prod-Usage**

The birth of a mobile culture and of an internet culture has altered the way we do things. They have allowed “the critique of the real by the possible” (Bakardjieva and Smith 2001, 81). The medium has seamlessly accommodated itself in the realm of the everyday after having been designed in its early stages for action in corporate and military decision-making. Digitised culture’s heterogeneous forces are situated as much in everyday fantasies as they are in more specialised fields. Social media is today the realm where these everyday fantasies are being expressed and are shaping our new everydayness.
The intractable matter of the everyday which de Certeau’s work foregrounded and conceptually mapped, today, finds itself mirrored in the activity digital users -- both televisually and textually -- produce on their keyboards and instantly transmit to other screens. His conceptually rich work, which juxtaposed the semantic and epistemological manoeuvring of enunciations and metaphors in intercepting monolithic meanings with the daily practices of people that secretly intend a similar goal, is clearly echoed through the digital forms of culinary posts, memes and photo-posing studied here. Prod-users practice their everyday lives today via these digital forms of expression and many others, where de Certeau’s notion of daily tactics is applicable as a meaning-finding research tool.

The following will offer a study of these forms in the light of de Certeau’s *tactiques traversières* or transverse tactics that he elaborates within a temporal vision of seizing the opportune moment to express oneself. On the conceptual level, it is a vantage point from which to destabilise the system and interrupt the habitual flow of normalcy with banal everyday acts and words, “trap-events” as de Certeau calls them (1984, 94); a reality the omnipresent digital medium made possible in real-time and at an incalculably large scale where users’ inventive tactics metastasise by the minute around endless issues in the form of likes, comments, posts, links, memes, photos, etc. “Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time -- to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation, to the rapidity of the movements that change the organisation of a space … to the possible intersections of durations and heterogeneous rhythms” (1984, 38).

The affordances of the everyday digital medium play a role of paramount importance in the way Facebook users intervene to produce digital tactics. Verhoeff’s explanation of the notion of convergence in new media gadgets may help illuminate how users can re-act on the spot: “convergence is a useful notion to account for the other side of history, namely the momentary synthesis of a particular moment, a synchronic slice of time where different issues, possibilities and desires come together” (van den Boomen et al. 2009, 195).

De Certeau sees tactics as relative, plural, heterogeneous, contingent and oblique. They are operations or ways of doing things that display “heterogeneous multiplicity and metaphorical interchangeability” (Sheringham 2006, 222). Multiplicity stems from the contingency of interventions in the shape of successive singular occasions rather than “overarching strategies grounded in doctrine” (222). De Certeau emphasises the plurality of everydayness and its *manières de faire* in his use of images of teeming and swarming, and words like “pullulate” and “proliferate” (222). The power and efficacy of tactics, according
to de Certeau, lie in their discontinuity taking the shape of dispersed micro-activities that yield transversal and metaphorising pullulations.

These concepts apply to social media prod-usage where the digitalised speeded medium has enabled further multiplication and pullulation of dispersed meaningful tactics creating a new everydayness in need of fathoming and situating within the simultaneous temporal maps of modernity. The shape of this multiplicity is quantitative and qualitative in terms of its multiplied metaphorical productivity and prod-usage. Time is thus the receptacle of the new infinity of cultural production with the tools of daily diffusion. It is the container of a prod-used everyday that is suffusing with digital material and above all suffusing with meaning as each new post streams in cyberspace.

Digital prod-usage is today an established form of the daily practice of life. Each practice or posting works within a “strategic” order and creates its “tactical” inventiveness from within. The medium’s capabilities have revolutionised how we do things and in particular the forms we express them in, which is enabling users to generate new meanings, and mainly to prod-use new ways of neutralising the habitual and creating new tactics that are surmounting epistemic boundaries. The mobility, speed, intersected creativity and metastasising forms in which the whole process is happening has created a new media literacy that reaches out to the invisible structures shaping our perceptions and locating homologies at various levels of the everyday and of human experience, making culture today signify in completely new ways that which is complex to map or disentangle.

De Certeau theorised the daily practice of walking as opposing the organised city; speaking as the practice opposing the “scriptural economy;” reading as opposing the ideology of the book as a source of truth (Sheringham 2006, 223). These notions apply in their entirety to Facebook in the way it is also writing an alternative text. Like de Certeau’s book itself, it is bringing the previously undiscerned everyday into the light, in the ways technology and prod-usage are moulding it. Facebook reverses a sentence like: “escaping the eye’s imaginary totalizations, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface” (de Certeau, 1984, 142). Facebook has in recent times, together with other social media, brought the everyday to the surface of screens and created what is comparable to the multiplied story composed of the “moving, intersecting writings” of walkers in the city (de Certeau 1984, 141).

The walkers in cyberspace are reading and writing in new ways, but unlike the real city where w(alk)ing)ritings have no author, reader or spectator (Sheringham 2006, 223), cyberspace has the multitude of prod-users reading and
writing simultaneously without the two practices being distinct one from the other. This digital activity, like de Certeau’s walking, which he sees of the same nature as utterances, engenders a metamorphosis of daily life practices and the emanating cultural meanings which we prod-use, circulate, and are digitally immersed in as we articulate the dayliness of things.

Speaking and reading are the forms of daily practices de Certeau analyses besides walking. The former he relocates in relation to scriptural systems. Orality, speech and the vernacular are part and parcel of everyday life. The latter is not the receptivity of inert consumers. Reading is a productive act like writing. De Certeau develops the Barthesian definition of reading as the transformer of texts. Both reading and text remain at a reciprocal distance of meaning where none can monopolise the other nor create a hierarchical impasse.

In telematic culture, these notions have become epistemically more tangible and encrusted in everyday culture. Everyday life is typed away in the form of a digital orality and visuality on content-fluid screens, and acts of reading and writing happen simultaneously and speedily in the midst of torrential semantic and tele-visual digital turn-over; time matters in its femtoseconds as users are active feeding the medium by transpos(t)ing on it their lives as they are happening to them.

The historicity of the everyday in the digital world, as it also is in de Certeau, is rooted in doing things with meaning, rooted in presentist contexts, not obscured or distanced by discourses about these doings. In his comprehensive analysis of the everyday, Sheringham discusses de Certeau in relation to Maffesoli. He describes Maffesoli’s everyday as an attenuation and an abolition of time, a haven from history (1984, 234).

This is not dissimilar from the time structured by social media where presentist cybernetic time materialises *par excellence*, in its simultaneity, speed, rhizomatic nets and fusions, multi-dimensionality and ephemerality. In the digital world, everyday users live the present on more than one level. Their digital ruses implode organised experience and knowledge from within creating in the process new channels that divert linear time into the multi-layered density of non-linear, mythic time.

Both Maffesoli and de Certeau have expressed the importance of everyday micro-stories that structure the present as a dense, polysemic and multi-dimensional ephemeral milieu that renews itself. This post-modern concept is perfectly emulated in digital production and in its weaving of an entirely new multi-layered, mythic temporality. The micro-stories of prod-usage navigate circuits of meaning, interfacing and separating in fragments. They are shreds of information exhausted at the moment of revelation to the world, constantly
confirming and confounding meaning at once. Meaning is also shortened in computerised leisure. Speed and instantaneity do not allow meaning to settle, and are cybernetically desired and designed accordingly.

The following is a review of a selection of culinary posts, memes and photos analysed in terms of the medium’s real-time workings, everyday culture’s digital erasure of boundaries between high and low realms, and cooking, memes and photo-pos(t)ing as daily practices-tactics generating new cultural meanings. Lastly, the construction of a presentist culture with transience and contingency at its core will be evaluated in light of the cybernetic paradigm that created it in the first place and which today reveals itself in the shape of social media like Facebook.

**Time in Selected Culinary Posts**

**1. Real-Time Media**

Real-time culinary posts are digital structures originating from multidimensional architectures of connected media. They are fine-tuned to do things of the everyday, away from former notions of causality and chronology. Someone films a short culinary video in Australia, posts it, and it is instantly seen in a remote corner of Asia or Africa on one of the various global platforms such as Facebook, with television and writing instantaneously available to all users alike. In a very short span of time networks and circuits of exchange take shape, forming and un-forming simultaneously, creating a plethora of meanings around the original recipe.

Every recipe that is posted onto Facebook has its time of posting mentioned beneath it with the day and hour it was posted on, then when a week is completed its date settles. What is posted as “just now” becomes “8 hrs ago” becomes “yesterday”, then it becomes “Wednesday”, then, at last, settles on the precise date of its posting: “October 9, 2017 at 12.56 pm” as in Nigella Lawson’s example studied here.

On the technical level, as one watches a video, the medium allows one to manipulate time by halting it or forwarding it with a simple touch of the playing line at the bottom of the video where a sliding finger can rewind or fast forward the digital recipe. Above the gliding finger, physically moving time, the screen-inside-the screen tells the seconds or minutes reached in playing time. The visibility of screened time and the ability to manage it formulates a previously unknown picture of the metaphysical category, more tangible and less imagined.

The link to the website where the recipe is found in written steps in a post like the tomato soup of “Recipe 30” contains a detailed description of the recipe’s
preparation and cooking times. The video also specifies in casual font over the playing image the needed time for simmering the tomatoes and baking the puff pastry. This feature seems to matter to the page’s users as evoked in their review of the page where they express their need for quick and made-easy dishes.

Users’ comments also register their date of posting in the number of weeks that have gone by since they were written. The real-time medium allows instantaneous interaction once a recipe is posted. This contemporary digital form of being in the instant world is utterly different from previous forms of existence inside notions of linear chronology, passage of time, tangible spatial distance, etc.

The medium allows users to post the present as it happens. They are also sculpting the present with the content they upload, posting comments, and reacting with likes or emoticons. They actively partake in prod-using time. Facebook, like other contemporary social media facilities, is a digital parallel to the lived everyday registering it in its details in the form of photos, comments, likes, memes, etc. With its unprecedented extensive prod-usage, the lived everyday has fused with its virtual other and the two are becoming less and less distinguishable, happening simultaneously and prod-using a lived time unknown before social media’s overtaking of our lives.

Real-time posting, seen in the totality in which it is embedded, forms a torrential data flow continuously overshadowing what has preceded it, forming consecutive waves of tangible “everydays,” in the shape of a digital continuum of basic needs and common interests, of freshly posted recipes, memes, photos, etc. This quantitative characteristic and ultra-varied qualitative feature of Facebook has created a debate around its cultural value (where many view it as junk culture) and methodologies needed to approach its content.

The real-time medium also portrays time in its different seasonal happenings and festivities. This feature is most apparent on culinary pages where recipes mimic the time of year when Christmas is celebrated or summer is around the corner. A page like Nigella’s provides recipes that contain ingredients when they are in season celebrating times of the year as in more traditional real-life cuisine. Culinary pages also celebrate specific culinary events like pizza day and pancake day in February.

Others, like “Tastemade”, which exemplify the highly viewed pages that are most trending on Facebook, post tens of recipes per day, release dishes connected to yearly festive occasions, and also recipes supporting causes like their “rainbow cake”. They epitomise Facebook pages that articulate a technophilic time and worldview, penetrating culture through the domestic sphere of the kitchen that was formerly deemed unworthy. Today, the culinary
sphere has been medium-revolutionised in terms of its everydayness and inventive, renewable content, both visually and temporally, articulating the new culture of speed and desired creativity that fills the hours and the days of onliners.

The “4 Easy Make Ahead Meals” video studied here epitomises speed in our contemporary fast-forwarded/ing culture. Such quadrupled screens fuel the everyday with its anticipatory, time-condensing content, dictating the future as the present is taking place, incubating one in the other, penetrating time’s limitation by digitally accommodating an ever-flooding creative content, the work of millions of networked prod-users. This digital time-image compression is so emblematic of our era. It configures the way we design our new world where media occupy the precedence carrying multiple compacted information diffused in speed.

“The rules that once sorted the universe into processes, concepts into judgements, are dissolving. The universe is disintegrating into quanta, judgements into bits of information […] linearity is decaying spontaneously” (Flusser 2011, 15). This particular video, today a trending digital culinary form, presents its four recipes in “quanta”, thus dissolving temporal and epistemic linearity as cybernetics imagined its categories and designed their normative mutation.

2. Cooking as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm

In the second volume of de Certeau’s The Practice of Daily Life (1998), his collaborator Luce Giard looks into cooking as an everyday practice that is the “locus of happiness, pleasure, and invention” (de Certeau et al. 1998, 214). Giard’s study situates gender at the heart of this daily practice and she insists on its origins being culture and not nature. She compares it to writing since both are everyday pleasures dependent on anonymity and ephemerality as activities women practice in private spaces. For Giard, the ordinary practice of cooking is a means of liberation, and not enslavement, for women, for its being the site of inventiveness thwarted in other dimensions of the social sphere.

Contemporary culture has come a long way in the signification and practice of cooking, breaking gender barriers, among many other conceptual boundaries melting down in times of fluidity and cultural porousness due to machines. It is today, more than ever before, the “locus of happiness, pleasure, and invention” according to Giard but at a much more globalised scale of techno-sophistication. It began with television cooking shows, and is today taking on new forms in the
digital world where it is one of the most sought after everyday areas of popular interest.

Culinary posts shape a significant part of Facebook feeds as users from different age groups show interest in following cooking pages. Facebook, and social media in general, have oriented cultural concerns towards everyday issues as in common need and basic interest pages such as culinary ones. The high-low cultural paradigm, which began its destructuration since the second half of last century in the notions of creative consumption and more popular-prone definitions of culture, still undergoes today further deconstruction with the suffusing, inventive work coming out of new media.

The example of culinary Facebook posts sheds light on the intricate site of interaction of culture with technology, medium with meaning, in modern times, blurring borders between what was considered high and what was labelled low. Today, de Certeau’s once invisible practices, have moved to the centre, streaming, sometimes even live, on our daily digital ‘feeds’ (pun here is pregnant with meaning). Practices that took place in the private sphere of the kitchen, today, can be attractively tutored, shared, commented on, critiqued, bettered through posting personal tips; formulating a new everyday sense of the flowing of time, the one experienced on screens, in the in-betweenness of other daily activities that never before have intersected, today occurring simultaneously and mutually enriching one another with meaning.

3. Culinary Micro-Stories as Everyday Tactics

Culinary Facebook videos, that today position an activity like cooking at the heart of everyday culture, formerly considered an unworthy and insignificant human activity, then gradually becoming a site where practices challenged systems and rules as in Giard following de Certeau, should be seen in the light of their overall revolutionising of cultural meanings. They are conceptualised in a way that weaves the medium’s capacities with users’ inventiveness, both culinary and technological, in times where digital technology is becoming in-built in life’s private spheres deleting their formerly sealed borders and bringing them into screen visibility and networked transparency, and, above all, forging new intersecting human realms of interest investing and releasing the hidden daily fantasies at their core.

Culinary videos simplify the multi-dimensional reality of cooking. They bring the medium’s original conception of disrupting the Cartesian and Euclidean worldviews into an untrodden everyday realm, the laborious activity of food-processing in the kitchen, and transfigure its temporal dimensions filtering out
its real length. The “Recipe 30” tomato soup video skips the tedious episodes of preparing the recipe like washing the tomatoes and peeling the onions and garlic.

The video alternates between real-life images at real-time pace and fast-forwarded sequences. The former evoke the joys of the kitchen, the beauty of the colourful ingredients and most of all beautify the whole experience. The latter skip the easier parts, like adding the tomatoes in the pan before roasting them, creating a special effects sense of overall time-compacting ease, a much sought need within modern-day multitasking and desiring to achieve more in less time. All along the video, the rhythmic whistling march accompanying the concocting of the soup reproduce the time of cooking as in music: warm, merry and burden-free.

The soup video, despite the sophisticated recipe it shows, simplifies a much longer task in the kitchen and, in the process, elaborates a contemporary cultural message bespeaking of new visions of time. Simplification is itself a ruse or tactic in de Certeau’s sense, digitally undoing an older worldview and constructing/cooking a new perceptibility, a new everydayness where the present is lived at multiple speeded levels, and where older forms are neutralised to be redesigned within their alternative potential allowed by new media.

The four-in-one “Tastemade UK” video is the one that most exemplifies new media production where time is compressed in what is known as time-lapse technique. It consists in compacting events speedily with preservation of their sequence creating the illusion of the possible, in other words, creating the simplification of reality cybernetics sought: “the critique of the real by the possible” as Bakardjieva and Smith described it (2001, 81). The 2-minute and 48 seconds video compresses four not-so-minimalist recipes. The cooking hands prepare the ingredients in a fast-forwarded fashion with again a quick-paced energetic jazzy beat to fine-tune the rapid action with the four resulting dishes. The video contains four time-lapse segments each relating the easy-rendered, cooking story of a separate succulent dish.

This type of video is today’s trending digital culinary form where time is manipulated to create the possibility of a made-easy culinary universe mixing pleasure with efficiency and deleting visions of tediousness and potential boredom connected with cooking. These digital forms exemplify Bakardjieva and Smith’s afore-mentioned notion of mobile gadgets allowing the penetration and alteration of the real via the possibilities allowed by machines of virtuality.

Nigella Lawson’s page, in comparison to former examples, seems to be without time since she doesn’t upload videos as her culinary posts and her dependence on still photography of home-made life-like dishes relates more to
the book tradition. If it is to be placed in a certain temporal framework it would fit in a certain linear vision of time and of writing since her words, heading each recipe, also refer to a classical, more traditional homely view of cooking.

Another Facebook page where time-as-tactic is constructed differently is “Tiny Kitchen” where videos present literal micro-stories. Real doable recipes are presented in the classical build-up form: adding, mixing and cooking ingredients in unspeeded time, yet in tiny kitchen containers and with minuscule tools, all happening in a tiny life-like kitchen with table, fridge and cooker. The smallness of the culinary per(form)ance relents time’s habitual rhythm and momentarily shrinks it away from its now normalised cybernetic speed. The Facebook page correlates with the “Tastemade” pages as a counter version of its characteristic speeded cooking, slowing down time exaggeratedly via the minute size of the utensils effecting a temporal digital lag of nostalgic re-turn to once-upon-a-time as in a child’s tale.

For example, as for an amateur video presented by a Palestinian contributor named Nadia, it is a tactical micro-story in every way thematically challenging the other culinary videos studied earlier. Time-wise it is a depiction of a real-life scene in the kitchen with minimal video editing. The video progresses at a normal pace with Nadia presenting the whole process in detail. A clock hangs on the kitchen wall in the background as Nadia passionately describes her culinary steps without rush. The reference to her Palestinian culture which she re-appropriates in her choice of the very typical musakkhan dish is what makes it a genuinely and unintentionally tactical video. Nadia refers to her family tradition of cooking musakkhan, to the savouriness of sumac, the Middle Eastern red spice, in preparing her rolls, to Syrian village bread, etc.

The everyday theme in Nadia’s video is very life-like in terms of setting, used utensils and her own casual, youthful presence and explanation in simple everyday language of the culinary steps to follow. The cultural message is subtly powerful in the video in the way that it depicts a normal kitchen with indirect Middle-Eastern details like Palestinian bleu-blanc pottery, Nadia’s silver ring with Arabic calligraphy visible to viewers as she cuts her onions. Palestinian culture is not shown in a folkloric apparel nor through regional music as would be expected. Everything in the video could be anybody’s, the allusions to a living Palestinian tradition infiltrate through normalcy and this is what makes it tactical and meaning prod-using in an authentic everyday-like sense in a globalised culture like the digital one.

Half-way through, Nadia dances in the kitchen very spontaneously, then returns to her chores. She uses the verb “fatfet” (Arabic for to piece) placing it in its rightful place in the English sentence creating what de Certeau explains as
linguistic tactics improvised to destabilise fixed meanings. Nadia’s video epitomises contemporary globalised digital culture, the content material of hundreds of videos on social media where cultures have naturally fused without leaving out the ethnic elements that personalise each digital creation.

**Time in Selected Memes**

1. **Real-Time Media**

Memes have originally been devised for the speed of their travelling as compact messages that are digitally open to visual and textual prod-used mutations accompanying the everyday in its interstitial parts and condensing today’s culture in the meanings of its presentist framework. The medium’s real-time technology operating in the networked realms of non-linearity and simultaneity exerted the need for such micro-structures telegraphically carrying messages of the everyday, narrating its multiple, denser, more mythic dimensions (Davison 2012, 120).

2. **Memes as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm**

The establishment of social media in everyday life is the technological application of the cybernetic paradigm in our daily practices with all that it entails of a post-war culture with an alternative vision of time, space and the body. De Certeau’s expression of the power inherent in minuscule daily ruses and in jokes as forms of creative play introduced in the rigidities of ordering systems, has today taken the form of memetic production in our digital prod-usage times. Memes are among the forms that are today confusing the boundaries between high and low, a trajectory that has been one of modernity’s projects and where the work of technology has borne its fruits and is today playing a major part in cutting across what were strictly closed boundaries and hierarchies at all levels of the epistemic spectrum.

The multiplicity and metaphoricity of contingent practices de Certeau so eloquently portrayed in his seminal work apply to memes in their being daily semantic wiles in cyberspace. They are active forces that have the capacity to elude systemic control by exploiting lingual niches and gaps, altering and disrupting the systems within which they semantically venture and visually mock. They then mutate exporting other textual and visual meanings to challenge other rules, from other dispersed vantage points. Their organic and micro-digital nature is able to effect much in terms of mobile and fluid meaning-making suiting the times and the technology that invented them.
3. Memes: Micro-Stories as Everyday Tactics

De Certeau has laboriously explained the work of linguistic everyday ruses like contingent utterances and jokes that effect fissures and fragments in the system’s epistemological and ideological frameworks to challenge normalised meanings. Memes are digital forms that perform exactly this. Facebook and social media prod-users create them as tactics that visually and textually expose and invert conformist ideas. They range from the most banal to the most serious and seek their originality in life’s absurdist and untold stories. They have become a universal language today, exchanged on the Web, and evolving in form (today certain memes show a moving picture with a caption instead of the still image).

The Arabic “assahbi” meme tackles the present-time generational gap in terms of the tech-revolution that divides people. It ingeniously juxtaposes the digital natives with those who knew not how the television presenter entered the apparatus! The meme pokes fun at a whole generation, its implicit derision is mostly directed at those disoriented in the new times of ultra speed and virtual existence where new significations of the world do not accommodate them, and they, in return, are unable to assimilate their new meanings. The children of today are grown-ups, and adults are children in their digital ignorance; in times where cause, effect and sequence have been deregulated and may epistemically exchange places.

The “successful woman” meme exemplifies a feminist interruptive tactic of the strategic order, or an anti-story of the everyday. It fits what de Certeau explained with exactitude, his notion of the work of consumption being distortive and not duped and facilely receptive of literalness, in a modernity saturated with imposed meanings. New media have helped the production of this type of daily sexual politics by the practitioners of daily living themselves. What de Certeau sought in minuscule oblique practices like walking, reading and cooking, today, take alternative shapes in digital prod-usage in the like of memetic posting and sharing that deeply alter and erode recurrent metaphors (Sheringham 2006, 214).

The “successful woman” meme, visually and textually, invests in the time-worn popular trope which originally settles on the sexist side of signification serving a certain vision of the world. It does that by repositioning roles to invert the biased concept and to cynically settle on coffee and a friendly dog as finale.
Emerging Configurations of Time

to the micro-story creating macro epistemic effect. Memes, despite their seeming simplicity and triviality as some insist, and because of their carefree, anti-discipline, comic guise, constantly remind us of the alternative cognitive potential of the digital world and its arrival at alternative meaning(s) from authentically manoeuvred routes.

The third meme named the “selfie” meme in this study is more of a visual tactic than a linguistic one. It has the allure of a Tibetan or Mongolese bored student’s class-room piece in the technological age critiquing old book form in education (old school educational systems), and fleeing with the imagination into a totally different register where (un)learning can be creative due to modern media tools; in other words, where consumption is reworked into conscious production or prod-usage via the possibilities inherent in new media. Both the form and the content of this particular meme are authentically creative and meaning prod-using.

This particular meme punctures myriad realities at once, inside its overlapping memetic micro-stories. It is set between two worlds: the old order and the new order, transfiguring one into the other; from class-room boredom to the ingenuity of a flat screen on a selfie stick, from a dull book page to an actual meme watched on real lit screens by hundreds. It is telling the story of burgeoning technophilic times happily colonising the old knowledge spaces, mobile technologies as the digi-mental wormholes on the new world.

The “red and white” pair of memes from girls’ collections is a variation on the feminist theme from a very private angle. These types of memes create their tactical inventiveness from the medium’s potential to visually express subversive or, in this case, silenced meanings recently unearthed at the hands of more outspoken generations who dare challenge taboos. The memes are first and foremost jokes on an uncomfortable state of affairs only girls and women are acquainted with and which a specific color combination formulates into an explicit revelatory story.

The last in this study’s selected list, the “sliding baby” meme, was especially chosen for its innovative video form. It represents Facebook memes of the everyday type that ridicule different aspects of living, running the whole gamut of the human experience in any field and for all ages.
They play games with everyday meanings in terms of their witty combination of image with wording. Despite their simplistic appearance, they appeal to digital users for their relevance to certain contexts and to specific states of mind. They are daily fun-thirsty, routine-breaching memes, in the midst of life’s humdrum; but at their core, a deeper meaning always resides, flirting with life’s satirical side and digging into a communal unearthed meaning.

This last meme’s message is a joke on education. It critiques the long-standing idea of education as career-enhancer and soul-lifter. It is here an education that has “successfully destroyed your soul”. The meme, both televisually and textually, effects a rupture from what is thought habitual and weaves an alternative story. Just after the word “successfully” creates the impression of what to expect when education and success pair, the anti-climactic verb “destroyed” settles in to release the potential charge of cynicism remodelling what has been normalised.

The heading sentence creates a disturbingly humorous effect by mentioning the destruction of the soul side by side with the human perseverance to still enjoy life despite hardships. A very common twenty-first century structure of feeling, in times of demanding educational effort and most of all the obsessive idea of success. Yet, in spite of this existential toiling after what might be illusive (both success and education), millennials (as well as pre-millennials) are adamant to stay happy, and one form to go around the woes of education, and work, and maybe even life as a whole, has become the production of such memes and their exchange to register determined states of mind. It is in playing such roles that memes are carriers of meaning crystallising millennial prod-user anxieties.

**Time in Photo-Pos(t)ing**

*1. Real-Time Photography*

Among the many definitions of digital images, the following words seem relevant to this study: digital images are “time-bound and contingent, they are at odds with the durability of the printed word and photographed image […] And like oral cultures, they seem to evade the preservation frameworks that we have put in place in our institutions of memory, built as they are around tangible media” (Van den Boomen et al. 2009, 128). Their immediacy and ephemerality construe the new typology of time that shapes our digitally non-linear, presentist lives and our dispersed but self-affirmative/ing modes of being in the world.
2. Photo-Pos(t)ing as an Everyday Digital Deconstruction of the High-Low Cultural Paradigm

“By moving the image from the permanence of the analogical universe to the ephemeral digital world, the digital camera demands and proposes a radical, non-realistic ontology for photography. … In allowing people to make, re-make, and un-make iconic representations of reality, the digital camera has produced a new everyday culture of photography” (Caron et al. 2007, 34). Digital photography is a distinctive sign of our times. It has accentuated the intensity of visual demand in everyday life. The image has become a medium to think the everyday. It has become a major unit or visual atom constructing the current mosaic-like architecture of our multi-structured everyday. Like all new technologies, digital images have immersed culture in new forms and new configurations surpassing the binary division of high and low, fusion being today the conceptualisation more suited to signify digital cultural forms.

3. Photo-Pos(t)ing: Everyday Micro-Stories as Tactics

Photo-posing and posting is a popular daily practice of the digital existence of millions of users. The visual aspect of it as user tactic is what interests us in this part of the study, its visual stimulation of the lived instant. It translates users’ self-confirmation in the post-modern construction of the world as image (Vattimo 1990, n. pag.) or in the society of spectacle (Debord 1970, n. pag.) today further pronounced within digitalisation and the prevalent produser-consumer cultural logic.

Photo-posing in users’ pictures and their posting them are tactical operations in de Certeau’s sense for they metaphorically un-write the coercive laws socially inscribed on bodies (one form of the strategies de Certeau described). Through placing the body in the zone of screen visibility and digitally foregrounding it by posing, symbolic laws and confining strategies are tactically confronted in the screened everyday. In other words, the body, which mass culture outlines, gazes back by posing via the transparency of screens, empowered and unleashing symbolic constraints by sharing images that float in heterarchic cyberspace.

Besides real-life selfies and group photos, other types of digitally structured pictures circulate on Facebook, those with filters and visual tricks. They are produced within the affordances of the medium that is playing a role in users’ re-invention of the everyday self, or conceptualising for users how the machine sees them. They are digital medium-installed ruses that have metaphoric tactical significations. They may represent what was said earlier on Maffesoli’s vision
of the everyday, on how it attenuates time and abolishes it, maybe even mocks its rigidity by technologically transforming the posing body.

These examples, made possible by the medium’s digital reconfigurations of reality, among a multitude of other significations, express a certain millennial zeitgeist, a desire to transform the self, to envision it outside the burdens of time, to experience a certain jouissance as spectacle. People pose for a photo, pose inside the screen frame, then exit the photographic virtual scene and return to real life. They pose for virtual happiness then revert to their real faces and normal body postures.

Conclusion
To conclude this study on the emerging configurations of time in Facebook prod-used culture, it is relevant to make a last note on the signification of the presentist culture we live in in the light of the social media forms studied here. The articulation of the everyday within the cyberisation of time and within prod-usage have concretised newer forms of ubiquity, immediacy, non-linearity and the elusiveness of time at the level of daily practices which has radically changed the way we do things and think them. Users’ digital tactics and ruses seem to proliferate around crystallising the presentist moment that technologically manages to escape ageing, death and history. The latter’s burdensome accumulation is causing ontological lassitude with the meanings phenomenological time has imposed all along. The individual no more defines her/himself by what s/he has accumulated, but by what s/he is in the present moment and what s/he hopes to become and how they wish to be seen by others.

Works Cited

63
Emerging Configurations of Time


The Interdisciplinarity of Post-colonialism and Environmentalism in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Abdel Rahman Munif's Cities of Salt

Doaa Sayed*

Introduction
The question of environment emerged during the middle years of the previous century as a result of the threats that have faced the earth endangering both its human and non-human beings. Climate change, global warming, deforestation, acid rain, toxic substances, and the radioactive aftermaths of wars are some of the disasters that face mankind and all living things presently. Environmentalism was (and is) about the environment in its broadest sense — about plants and animals, about the air, water, and soil, or more specifically, about the ideas, rules, and patterns that define the human interaction with these entities. From such a point of view, any activity that sought to reform existing modes of human interaction with the natural world is part of the history of environmentalism (Uekoetter 2011, 9).

The Environmental thought is dominated by two perspectives: the anthropocentric and biocentric. The anthropocentric perspective focuses on the dangerous effect of environmental degradation upon human activities and life while the biocentric one stresses the fact that nature has an intrinsic moral value that should be appreciated for its own sake. However, the supporters of both perspectives and humanists grouped around one main idea which is that we face a global crisis that needs both solutions and understanding. As historian Donald Worster explains:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (1993, 17)

* Associate Professor in the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Languages, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts, Egypt.
Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
To understand the various perspectives of environmentalism and its relationship with politics, economics, and literature, a quick glimpse of the history of environmentalism is helpful. The first response to the problems of environment began faintly with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution when very few voices were heard on the harmful effects of mining, forest clearance, and land drainage upon life. For example, in 1848, Henry Thoreau published his book *Walden* in which he mentions his experience of living in the woods near Walden Pond, Massachusetts. With the beginning of the twentieth century, the naturalist John Muir referred to the spiritual value of the wilderness and encouraged the US government to preserve some areas of wilderness, but such a demand was opposed by the economic interests of some timber companies and politicians, “[t]hus arose a division of beliefs that continues today. One claiming the only considerations are economic, the other arguing that there are other values to consider, such as spiritual value” (Reynolds 2011, 1).

In the mid-twentieth century, Aldo Leopold published his influential book *A Sand County Almanac* in which he called for protecting balance in nature and extending the humans’ ethical sense of responsibility towards it. The birth of the environmental movement began with Rachel Carson's book *The Silent Spring* in 1962, as she explained how insecticides and pesticides contaminated the environment. Carson's book was criticized by media and chemical industries; yet, investigations affirmed Carson's point was right and DDT was consequently banned. On a more official level, the first Earth Summit held by developed countries in 1972 in Stockholm to discuss the side effects of industrialization led later on to the establishment of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Program). But the summit exposed a rift between ‘the developed’ (First World) and the ‘developing’ (Third World) states. This took place when the developed world's exploitation of natural resources not only degraded the environment, but also perpetuated the unequal distribution of wealth. Such a social (and economic) divide remains in place today and has arguably even widened further (Reynolds 2013, 3).

In 1983, the term “sustainable development” was coined by the chairperson of the UN World Commission on Environment, Gro Harlem Brundtland, leading to the popularization of the term ‘sustainability.’ Moreover, in 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro stressed the importance of applying strict regulatory measures in order to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide in the pursuit towards combating Global Warming. Some nations agreed to sign up related decrees while others such as the USA and Saudi Arabia were concerned about the costs of such measures as their economies depend heavily on the oil trade. However, in 2002, during the fourth Earth Summit in Johannesburg, several developing countries articulated their
demands for considering their interests. Yet, the USA, Japan, and some oil companies, which did not support the promotion of renewable energy sources in order to retain and maximize their profits, turned a deaf ear to the commitments of this summit. Thus, the notable conflict between environmental sustainability and the greedy economic interests of the developed countries has led some writers to stress the inverse relationship between capitalism and environmental sustainability. For example, Jan Hancock has depicted “economic rationality” (2003, 161) as the main reason behind environmental destruction as it transforms natural assets into products for the purpose of accommodating the consumers’ lifestyle. Such an economic perspective represents the core of capitalism.

The conflict between capitalism and environmentalism has been shown in Rubin Patterson's statement that “the environment cannot sustain capitalism and capitalism certainly cannot sustain the environment” (2010, 74). The concept of ownership in the capitalist system adopts the belief that nature can become the property of human beings who come, according to the western ideals of the great chain of being, at the top of the hierarchical natural order while animals, plants, and minerals are at the bottom. Therefore, several environmentalists highlight the contradiction between capitalism and environmental social justice as the former motivates both elements of consumption and production to ensure its own proliferation rather than satisfying social needs or promoting environmental wellbeing, as Karen Bell suggests:

because the system requires constant growth, excessive natural resources are depleted and unsustainable levels of waste are created. Moreover, the drive for profit encourages cost cutting, putting pressure on corporations to choose the cheapest processes. Companies have to make short-term decisions based on what will help their business to survive, even if this harms society and the environment. This potentially means exploitation of people and the rest of nature in the form of low wages, casual work, unsustainable extraction, irresponsible handling of waste and periodic as well as localised crises that tend to be borne by the worst-off. (2015, 2)

Since world economic powers have often been defined by their prevailing sources of energy, the Dutch were among the first to utilize wind and water as renewable energy sources; however, this did not achieve significant commercial dominance given the emergence of coal afterwards, which then enabled Britain be a notable economic power, “until the rise of oil-powered industry and military forces gave the edge to the oil-favored United States” (Phillips 2006, xlvi). As energy is closely associated with the economic hegemony of world superpowers, pursuing energy, hence, becomes the main aim of capitalist countries. Pursuing energy, to a large
extent, necessitates destroying several elements of the surrounding environment. Capitalist systems that could realize the strong bond between wealth and energy have always exploited the natural sources of various other countries to compete in the free market.

It is affirmed that there is a relationship between the demands of capitalism and the colonial rule on one hand and considering the limited natural resources on the other. Grove refers to the effect of colonialism upon the environment by discussing the growing awareness of “the destructive impact of European economic activity on the peoples and environments of the newly 'discovered' and colonized lands” (1995, 3). As land confers wealth and strategic advantages, the struggle between colonizers and colonized nations has been mainly revolving around land. The colonizers' goals focus upon the exploitation of the resources of the colonized lands, and subjugating natives is one of the mechanisms used to reach and possess the natural resources of these colonies. That exploitation corresponds with Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of world-systems which underlines the necessity of transporting raw material from periphery countries (countries of the so called “Third World” which have been colonized), to core countries (countries of the “First World” which have been colonizing that Third World). He states “some countries were economically stronger than others (the core) and were therefore able to trade on terms that allowed surplus-value to flow from the weaker countries (the periphery) to the core” (2004, 12). Thus, increasing the wealth of the industrial capitalist communities depends on “the commodification of nature” (Murphy 2009, 10) and the exploitation of the environment. As colonial and imperial powers have been utilizing the natural resources of their colonies or Third World countries, their actions have come to threaten the global ecosystem. Such threats have been represented by destroying hectares of forests, transporting animals, seeds, and human beings from one continent or country to the other, drilling for oil, and finally burning fossil fuels leading then to global warming.

The environmental injustices that Western and imperial countries have practiced against their exploited colonies have been represented by many incidents, but the most flagrant one has been the scheme pronounced by the former president of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, to “export rich nation garbage, toxic waste, and heavily polluting industries to Africa” (quoted. in Nixon 2011, 2). That decision mirrors the deeply rooted concepts and psyche of the colonizing and imperial Western countries that treat nations of the so called “Third World” as “dispensable citizens” (Nixon 2011, 17). The attitude articulated by Summers corresponds with the racist tendencies that arise from the self-privileging view of such Western countries. It also echoes the term “environmental racism” which has been defined
by the American environmental philosopher Deane Curtin as “the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other” (2005, 135).

Such an interconnection between capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and environmental issues paves the way for creating another connection between post-colonialism and environmentalism. Although Nixon suggests that environmental and postcolonial studies have shown “an often-activist dimension that connects their priorities to movements for a social change” (2011, 233), he states that “four main schisms appeared between the dominant concerns of postcolonialists and ecocritics” (2011, 236) due to the assumption “that the subjects and methodologies of the two fields were divergent” (2011, 234). Yet, one may safely suggest that the connections may surpass the differences of perspectives in the two fields. These “schisms” are evident on several levels: firstly, the post-colonialists' tendency to adopt hybridity and a cross-cultural premise in contrast to the eco-critics' discourses of purity and wilderness; secondly, the postcolonial writings of displacement which are different from the environmental literary studies' main concern of place; thirdly, the nationalist perspective of eco-criticism that opposes the cosmopolitan and transnational framework of post-colonialism; finally, post-colonialism's primary concern to review history that opposes the major interest of environmental literature and criticism in exploring the timeless experiences of nature.

Yet, I argue that while some postcolonial literary writings mainly focus on the issues of colonialism, cross-culturalism, displacement, and history, the environmental questions also emerge amid the historical conflict between the colonizer and the colonized over place. It is difficult to separate the historical moment of the arrival of colonizers from the environmental devastation that began to take place in many colonies. The postcolonial literary writings may reveal how natives have had their concept of purity and wilderness that has been disturbed by colonialism, their perspectives for the value of place which has been exploited by the Western capitalistic colonizers, and their national perception of environmentalism that is inseparable from nativism and is threatened by imperialism. According to the notable Indian historian, Ramachandra Guha, there is a “need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance” (quoted in Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 2). Thus, a critical reading for the value of environment in some postcolonial literary writings is needed.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Abdel Rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984) are two novels discussing the effect of colonialism on human and non-human beings. A postcolonial environmental critique is appropriate for analyzing these two texts by showing the relationship between natives and environment after
and before the arrival of colonizers, the approach of natives and colonizers to environment, and the capitalistic system that lay behind colonialism and environmental devastation. *Things Fall Apart* describes in detail the pre-colonial life of the Nigerian Igbo and the arrival of Europeans during the late nineteenth century while *Cities of Salt* tackles the life of Arab Bedouins when oil was discovered by Americans in a Gulf country in the beginning of the twentieth century. Focusing upon setting in both novels shows the relationship between colonialism and environmental devastation.

**The Pre-Colonial Setting**

The setting, represented by time and place, has a great significance in the postcolonial literary texts to historicize the incidents that accompany the arrival of colonizers and their effect upon the place as well as its inhabitants. Not only does the place exhibit the relationship between natives and land, but it also underlines another connection between natives and their environment. The postcolonial writer Fanon argues, “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread, and above all, dignity” (1961, 34). Besides, the founder of eco-criticism, Glotfelty suggests: “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment” (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, xviii) which raises a question about the role that “the physical setting” (1996, xix) plays in the plot of some novels. Fanon's statement about the value of land for the colonized people and, consequently, for postcolonial criticism parallels Glotfelty's explanation for the essentiality of the physical setting for the ecocritical reading of any literary plot and echoes Ann B. Dobie's point about discussing the representation of nature by “taking an earth-centered approach to literary study by looking at the role nature plays” (Dobie 2012, 243). Therefore, land in its physical form is a cornerstone for a postcolonial environmental approach to the settings of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*.

*Things Fall Apart* narrates the story of its tragic hero Okonkwo who rejects the new values of the European colonizers, and its setting is mainly concerned with the Igbo community and its culture which displays how environment is involved in their daily activities. In the fictional Nigerian village of Umuofia, the Igbo's culture gives a great importance to the environment. They celebrate the earth they live on by devoting a week of peace in which no one may do any unethical deed and the Igbo should live peacefully together to obtain the blessings of land before they start a new season of cultivation:
You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You committed a great evil. (Achebe 1959, 21)

The above words said by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess Ani, refer to that intimate relationship between man and earth. The earth is very much appreciated and honored by the natives who realized its effective existence in their lives, so they assigned a “week of peace” and an imaginary goddess “Ani” to glorify it. Ezeani reprimanded Okonkwo because he failed to suppress his anger and beat his wife forgetting the rules of the “week of peace.” Okonkwo who knows the laws and norms of the Igbo submitted himself to the penalty of the priest of the earth goddess. By living peacefully with each other and giving a week of rest for their lands, the Igbo adopt the perspective that peaceful co-existence among human beings is inseparable from their serene abode within the surrounding environment. The Igbo’s values are derived from their relationship with their environment. The deities of the Igbo represent the association between natives and their divine environment. There are many gods such as the Oracle of Hills and Caves that issues orders, Amadiora, the god of thunder, Ifejioku the god of yams, and Anyanwu god of the sun.

Moreover, the Igbo's folklore and norms mirror the involvement of nature in their daily activities and language. They believe in “the big and ancient silk-cotton tree which was sacred. Spirits of good children lived in that tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days young women who desired children came to sit under its shade” (Achebe 1959, 29). Their medicine comes from the “grasses and leaves, roots and barks of medicinal trees and shrubs” (Achebe 1959, 48). Their proverbs are driven from nature, for example, Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching (Achebe 1959, 16). Even children songs celebrate nature as well: “the rain is falling, the sun is shining, alone Nnadi is cooking and eating” (Achebe 1959, 23). The characters of the folktales are birds and animals like the tale of the tortoise and birds which is narrated by Ekwefi, Okonkwo’s second wife, to her daughter Ezinma teaching morality and warning against blind confidence. Thus, nature and environment have formed their consciousness which has grown throughout history, increasingly connecting them with place. Deloughrey and Handley affirm that the “postcolonial ecology of Things fall Apart is evident in the way that language develops in a long historical relationship to a particular environment and culture” (2011, 7).
In Munif’s *Cities of Salt*, Wadi al-Uyoun is a fictional oasis in an unnamed gulf country where green palm trees are filling the place in the heart of the harsh desert, “as if it had burst from within the earth or fallen from the sky” (Munif 1989, 1). The Bedouins consider Wadi al-Uyoun “as a salvation from death” (Munif 1989, 2) in the treacherous desert because it supplies them with water and shadowy place for the restfulness of caravans and animals. They appreciate the place as its wells endow them with life. The omens of good years appear in the abundant water that fill the three reservoirs of the wadi. Al-Hathal clan that chose to settle down in Wadi al-Uyoun had never expressed their sorrow or annoyance at living at the mercy of nature, for “nature and places also had their unknowable laws” (Munif 1989, 10). Thus, under these conditions where the supremacy of nature and place is undeniable and the same natural resources are shared by everyone, the inhabitants of the wadi have had some unique characteristics. For instance, they are shown as being a non-materialistically-minded people, for “they viewed money and possessions with haughtiness and sometimes outright scorn; no matter how life dealt with them it could never crush them, and these feelings sometimes made them rough and boorish. Nonetheless, if they trusted or loved anyone they would give him all they had, expecting nothing in return and with no bitterness” (Munif 1989, 8). The materialistic competitive tendencies that create the Machiavellian selfish individuals did not exist. Also, conforming to such physical environment has formed their distinctive physical attributes: considerable tallness, solid backs, and symmetrical stature. “To see them you might think of them as horses run and trained to the point of overleanness, but still strong, sturdy and beautiful” (Munif 1989, 9).

As environment is involved in the cultural and daily activities of the clan, they mark the important occasions of their life history with the environmental incidents that happened simultaneously as in Mugbel's birth year: “He might have been born in the year of the locusts or the year of the floods, or before or after, but he was certainly born before that frightful year of the storm, because then the wadi, the caravan road and the people had all been reduced to a state of utter poverty and devastation” (Munif 1989, 21). Environment is also shown in their language and proverbs “with luck … a hen can lay eggs on a tent peg” (Munif 1989, 17). Besides, the young men who aspire to be independent should prove their maturity and ability to shoulder responsibility, first, by demonstrating their competence in dealing with nature. Miteb al-Hathal commands his son Fawaz, “If you are a big strong man now, then go and water the animals and come back safely” (Munif 1989, 23). Al-Hathal's rejection of his son's suggestion of leaving the wadi to travel and explore different places because “this place is better than others” (Munif 1989, 22), shows the natives' commitment to their place.
The protagonists of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt* are committed to their land which is considered an essential part of their personalities. They both have been part of the environmental place they lived in. According to Sparshott, there are several possible kinds of relationships between man and environment: I-Thou, subject-object, user and used, and so forth. But those who discuss environment should primarily have in mind “the relation of self to setting” (1972, 12); thus, the major characters that represent the natives of both novels stress this point of being part of the place. Okonkwo proves himself to be a successful farmer by surviving unexpected changeable weather conditions that spoilt his harvest. “The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains” (Achebe 1959, 17). Finally, he could have his barn of yam as a sure sign that he is a self-made and unbeaten man. Miteb al-Hathal lectures his son about cultivating trees in Wadi al-Uyoun to ensure their clan’s survival and continuity:

That tree, the fourth on the left, is just your age, boy. You grow every day, and it grows with you. Tomorrow you'll plant a tree for your son, and he'll plant a tree for his son, and Wadi al-Uyoun will get greener everyday. People will keep coming to drink the water and hope never to die, and when they sit in the shade of the tree they'll say, ‘May God show mercy to whoever planted the trees and the green plants.’ (Munif 1989, 49)

Okonkwo’s and al-Hathal’s life history and identity are formed by their abilities to survive the harsh environmental conditions while showing commitment to their land. The commitment to land that Okonkwo and al-Hathal have is motivating them to prove their ability as human beings to survive and continue. The establishment of self grows amid the context of place. Self, consciousness, nationalism, and cultural and national identities develop along with eco-consciousness and environmental sustainability.

By introducing place as a prominent factor in the narratives of both novels, Nixon’s claim about the rigid classified interests of postcolonial writings in displacement and ecological writings in place and “discourses of purity” (2011, 236) could be refuted. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, the place represented by physical environment for the natives of both novels gives a greater perspective to the concept of purity. The purity of the bio-environmental place where natives live is inseparable from the purity of national identity that is not contaminated by foreign
ideas or concepts. Besides, both texts show the great interconnectedness between people, culture, history and earth. The cultural history of the Nigerian villagers of Umuofia and the Arab Bedouins of Wadi al-Uyoun has been intertwined with their environment and shown in their concepts, daily activities, physical attributes, language, and folklore. One may suggest that a concept of place nationalism has been introduced by Munif and Achebe by discussing that interwoven relation between natives and their environmental place earlier in these two novels and linking place to the history of community to indicate how environment forms an essential part of the natives' national identity, values, and communal ancestry. A new approach of environmental/eco-critical nationalism in which characters’ national identities are promoted by nature has been formed. That approach which both writers have adopted in their novels parallels the point of Buell, Heise, and Thornber about the concept of place which “has always been of central interest to literature-environment studies” (2011, 420) and also reflects Robert Kern's call for “a movement from the human to the environmental, or at least from the exclusively human to the biocentric or ecocentric” (2003, 267). In both texts, the coexistence between humans and nature is underlined showing a distinguished unity between natives and their ideal biosphere before the arrival of colonizers.

Moreover, the place works out the narratives of Things Fall Apart and Cities of Salt. The environmental place poses no threats to its inhabitants who could cope with its requirements until the arrival of colonizers disrupts that harmonious relationship between nature and natives. Okonkwo, the protagonist of Things Fall Apart, is banished to his mother's land because of his accidental crime against the “earth goddess,” while Miteb al-Hathal the protagonist of Cities of Salt leaves Wadi al-Uyoun after the arrival of Americans. Neither Miteb nor Okonkwo could cope with the new conditions brought to the place by colonizers. The rising action that reveals the conflict between protagonists and colonizers is mainly based on the bond between both protagonists and their places which has been broken by colonialism. Thus, place, which is necessary for any eco-critical approach, plays a vital role to portray the struggle against colonialism, which is also essential for a postcolonial reading.

The Post-Colonial Setting
The setting continues to echo the changes which took place with the arrival of European colonizers in Things Fall Apart and American drillers in Cities of Salt. Not only is the environmental place marred by the Western intruders, but the cultural traditions of natives in both narratives are also affected by colonialism and imperialism. The parallelism between the destruction of nature and the corruption
of the national values of natives is affirmed in both texts. After introducing the bond between the natives’ communal history and the environment in both novels, the narrators initiate the gradual arrival of colonizers. Readers know about the arrival of white men in a few words by some characters who mention such news as trivial rumors being circulated by natives; for example, Obierika in Things Fall Apart observes: “It is like the story of white men who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk” (Achebe 1959, 55), and Fawaz in Cities of Salt says, “Ibn Rashid has foreign guests” (Munif 1989, 25). It is noted that both writers establish the relationship between natives and the environment first and then refer to the presence of white foreigners gradually: first, as a piece of information that comes within lines, and later, as certain news and facts, devoting many pages and chapters to describe the impact of these foreigners upon the environment and its community. That technique also underlines the fact that natives did not expect the deceptive strategy of colonization.

With the arrival of colonizing foreigners to the settings of the two novels, the destructive effect of colonialism and imperialism upon environment and natives emerges. In Things Fall Apart Obierika tells how the white strangers have killed the natives of Abame clan and polluted the lake, “Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the oracle has warned” (Achebe 1959, 103). A similar reference is mentioned in Cities of Salt by Hadib who declares how those foreigners will “dig into the earth and turn it all inside out” (Munif 1989, 39), and Miteb al-Hathal who suspects the foreigners’ motives to help Bedouins to find water “They’re after something. The water is just an excuse… They’re looking for Jinn, or devils -- who knows? But be assured of this, people of the wadi -- if they find what they’re after, none of us will be left alive” (Munif 1989, 43). In both narratives, the relationship between natives’ life and the continuation of bioenvironmental life is stressed. The pure uncontaminated nature is vital to the natives’ survival; therefore, there is a direct reference to the killing of Nigerians and the death of fish in lakes in Things Fall Apart, and digging into the soil of the wadi and the Bedouins’ existence in Cities of Salt.

By underlining that connection between environmental contamination and nations’ survival, the two texts explore one of the most crucial issues of environmental justice that deals with “the disproportionate incidents of environmental contamination in communities of poor and/or communities of colour, to secure for those affected the right to live unthreatened by the risks posed by environmental degradation and contamination, and to afford equal access to natural resources that sustain life and culture” (Adamson et al. 2002, 4). Focusing upon environmental degradation brought by colonialism is one of the devices that Achebe
and Munif have applied to attract the readers’ attention to the disastrous effect of colonialism upon environment. That attitude of colonizers and imperialists against nature and natives shows the inherited European ideology of hegemonic centrism which adopts institutionalized speciesism to rationalize the exploitation of animals, earth, and human beings: “European justification for invasion and colonisation proceeded from this basis, understanding non-European lands and the people and animals that inhabited them as ‘spaces’, ‘unused, underused or empty’” (Plumwood 2003, 53). In short, for colonizers both natives and nature are considered as sources that should be used to serve the luxurious lifestyle of colonizers.

The destruction of the land and environment has been accompanied by demolishing and altering the natives’ values. In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Nwoye’s mind was greatly puzzled by the missionary’s speech about Christianity. The white colonizers introduced a new faith for the natives, building a church by clearing a part of the forest. By removing the forest, which represents the natural pure place, and building a church, which represents the new faith, some new values imported by colonialism have also been cultivated. A new government is also formed and corruption emerges. The native Igbos who used to settle their disputes by the rules of the clan, began to bring their cases to court and bribe the white man’s officials to reach the verdict that they desire. Obierika says: “The white man’s court has decided that it (the piece of land in dispute) should belong to Nnama’s family, who had given much money to the white man’s messengers and interpreters” (Achebe 1959, 129). Introducing new values and concepts has paved the way for the colonizers to divide and rule. Obierika adds, “he (the white man) has put a knife on the things that hold us together and we have fallen apart” (Achebe 1959, 130).

Similarly, in Munif’s *Cities of Salt*, the Arabs of Harran are shocked when they witness for the first time in their life some American women on the deck of a large ship dancing and embracing men while “each body was uncovered except for a small piece of colored cloth” (Munif 1989, 214). The Arabs of Harran have been puzzled by the dazzling display of American women and men on that American ship near their coasts, so one of the Arabs declares “I’m afraid we’ve lost our world and our faith” (Munif 1989, 220). The decay of natural community and morality represents the loss that the Arab Bedouins suffer with the arrival of Americans to their land. The contrast between the conservative orthodox Muslim community of the Arab Harran and the secular American community embodied by that ship shows the drastic change that many Arab and Bedouin communities have experienced with the emergence of petro-imperialism.

Western industrialization has been the medium that colonizers and imperialists have used to perpetuate their superior powerful position over their colonies. “Much
of the research which explores the relationship between technology, colonialism and environment draws attention to the way in which technology allowed colonial powers to modify social and physical spaces around the world” (Adas 1998, 11). The technological and industrial progress of Western countries has defined their policies in dealing with Asian and African societies. Such policies have been characterized by disdain for non-western accomplishments. The Western industrialization, which encouraged colonization and enabled colonizers to achieve their goals, has negatively affected the environment as well as natives. While colonizers profit from industrialization, colonized nations pay for it when they face various environmental problems.

Place has always been of great importance to post-colonial theory, but the more tangible and global issue of environmentalism is an important and growing aspect of this concept. The destruction of the environment has been one of the most damaging aspects of Western industrialization. The fact that the scramble for modernization has enticed developing countries into the destruction of their own environments, now under the disapproving gaze of a hypocritical West, is further evidence of the continuing importance of a post-colonial analysis of global crises. Post-colonial societies have taken up the ‘civilizing’ benefits of modernity, only to find themselves the ‘barbaric’ instigators of environmental damage. In such ways the dynamic of imperial moral power is maintained globally (Ashcroft et al. 2004, 213).

In Things Fall Apart, the reference to the industrial supremacy of European colonizers is shown in the villagers’ mention of an “iron horse,” which the white man was riding when he arrived earlier to the Abame clan. The villagers tied that iron horse to their sacred tree because “it looked as if it would run to call the man’s friends” (Achebe 1959, 103). The ignorance of the natives about the bike which the European colonizer was riding shows how Western industrialization puzzles the natives who failed to grasp the product of modernization. Another white man initiates the natives into the world of modernization and says, “I shall bring many iron horses when we have settled down among them. Some of them will even ride the iron horses themselves” (Achebe 1959, 108). Thus, the colonizers who have settled down first by destroying the forest to build their church promised the native Nigerians to experience the advantageous world of modernization by riding bikes (colonial Nigeria later became a primary source of mining oil that was explored and exported by the British government).

Likewise, in Cities of Salt, the American imperialists bring many machines and tools to drill for oil into the Arab land while the Arab Bedouins wonder about such a huge equipment. The narrator informs: “they opened up their crates and unloaded large pieces of black iron, and before long a sound like rolling thunder surged out
of this machine, frightening men, animals and birds” (Munif 1989, 68). The horror that human and non-human beings show, while the machine works, refers to the destructive impact of imperialism upon environment. To experience the same gains that industrialization has brought, natives should adopt the same attitudes and behaviours of their colonizers against nature and environment. In other words, they should enter that demonic vicious circle that threatens their bio-environmental life. So, one can safely say that the Western industrialization which enabled many Western countries to dominate some other developing countries led directly or indirectly to many environmental problems. Hajem, one of the natives, comments: “If those machines don’t kill us today, they’ll kill us tomorrow” (Munif 1989, 201). Machines are used to drill for oil in a process that is disruptive to the environment including human and non-human beings. There are many preliminary researches that have reported an association between living close to oil and gas wells and “adverse health effects” (Konkel 2017, 1). Hajem could predict the effect of those machines on the lives of the natives.

Furthermore, Western industrialization has endowed the colonizing countries with the boon of advancement which led to capitalism and imperialism. Capitalism, according to Lenin, “grew into a world system only on the back of colonial oppression and financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of advanced countries” (Lenin 1947, 646). Lenin could develop and merge the concepts of global capitalism and colonialism into a general theory of imperialism which mainly depends on financial perspectives rather than industrial projects and changes its mode “from free trade to a monopoly of huge cartels” (Lenin 1947, 669); capitalism that aims to geographically expand needs to reorganize space and penetrate the globe: “In other words, the economic dynamics of capital is etched onto the political, cultural, material and ecological fabric of our world” (Mukherjee 2010, 13). To maximize their profits, the imperialistic and colonizing countries have changed the landscape of colonies. According to Harvey, capitalism produces a geographical landscape “appropriate to its dynamic of accumulation at a particular moment of its history, only to have to destroy and rebuild the geographical landscape to accommodate accumulation at a later date” (2000, 59).

In Things Fall Apart, the white men built a court to judge cases and a prison to punish the Igbos who offended the white man’s law. Those native prisoners were beaten every day and “made to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white commissioners and the court messengers… They were grieved by the indignity and mourned for their neglected farms” (Achebe 1959, 128). The natives and their environment have been abused by
the white colonizers. It is clear that the white colonizers have changed the colony’s landscape of the Nigerians by forcing prisoners to cut wood and neglect their own farms to serve the capitalistic goals of colonialism. In this case, the geographical landscape and local environment have been altered to enable the white colonizers to settle down and accumulate capital.

The relationship between imperialism and capitalism on one hand and environmental degradation on the other is further stressed in *Cities of Salt*, as the narrator informs readers that men of the American company chose Harran to be the port and headquarters of the company: “Within Less than A Month Two Cities Began to rise: Arab Harran and American Harran. The bewildered and frightened workers, who had in the beginning inspired American contempt and laughter built the two cities” (Munif 1989, 206). The imperialist Americans who have extracted the Arab resources and cheap labour to build their city and settle down on the Arab land have manipulated the Arab workers to build the American Harran for the accommodation of Americans. The premises of capitalism have also been manifested in the Arab Harran throughout the class distinctions between the imperial Americans who own the means of production and the working-class Arabs who received inhumane treatment at the hands of Americans and their supporters of the Arab elites. That class distinction has been portrayed in the changes, which have been brought by Americans to the environmental setting of the Arab Harran:

The shift ended, and all the men drifted home to the two sectors like streams coursing down a slope, one broad and one small, the Americans to their camp and the Arabs to theirs, the Americans to their swimming pool, where their racket could be heard in the nearby barracks behind the barbed wire. When silence fell, the workers guessed that the Americans had gone into their air-conditioned rooms whose thick curtains shut everything out: sunlight, dust, flies and Arabs. (Munif 1989, 390)

The barbed wire that is created by the imperial Americans has been separating two different settings and worlds. Firstly, the privileged wide location where weather is handled by air conditions to improve the comfort of American occupants is the hegemonic world that changes environment and weather conditions to facilitate the task of accumulating wealth for the capitalistic imperial power. Secondly, the underprivileged world of the Arab workers is smaller, dirtier, and less comfortable; however, those Arab workers form an essential element of the natural place like sunlight and dust which are despised by Americans. The Arab workers who are exploited by the capitalistic American system left their tents to live in barracks: “The barracks that originally housed fifteen men was later to hold twenty or twenty-five.
The men who had rejoiced at the move were badly disappointed, for the atmosphere of the tents, pleasant and agreeable late at night and at dawn, did not exist in these tin cans that became suffocating ovens reeking of heat, sweat and sleep” (Munif 1989, 293). Those barracks which have been made for the working-class Arab deprived them of the natural environment they used to live in and enjoy. Not only does the wide gap between the world of American compound and Arab barracks refer to the new social structure of classes, but it also reveals how capitalism and imperialism have exploited both environment and natives. The ecological environment that enabled the native Arab Bedouins to live in harmony within their natural atmosphere has been altered by the American imperialists. Imperialism grew out of capitalism and changed the original natural characteristics of the setting to become more appropriate for Americans and inappropriate for natives.

Therefore, the post-colonial setting refers to the changes that have undermined the natives’ existence and their experiences with the surrounding environment. The experience that the natives had with their natural environment has been altered with the arrival of colonialism and emergence of imperialism. The drastic transformation which natives have undergone is inseparable from the devastating alteration that environment has suffered. The natives’ values, ethics, and lifestyle have been spoiled by colonialism and imperialism. The natives of both texts acquired new attitudes such as bribery, delinquency, and corruption. Capitalism that motivated Europeans and Americans to reach the utmost profit, has ruined the natural habitat and ethics of natives who began to grasp the tenets of class distinctions, becoming more stimulated to belong to the higher social classes. Cross-culturalism, which is a major concept of post-colonialism, has been embodied in the new values of capitalism which affected both the inhabitants and the habitat. In other words, a relationship has been established between cross-culturalism and environmentalism. Cross-culturalism has been based on a one direction movement of the values of the hegemonic capitalist colonialism to the inferior colonized recipient. Finally, the concept of displacement is embodied in the departure of the protagonists of Things Fall Apart and Cities of Salt away from their clans after they became shocked with the new values that replaced their original ones. Al-Hathal becomes a ghostly figure in the narrative and Okonkwo commits suicide by the end of the novel. Natives in general have been placed in a deformed environmental location created by colonialism and imperialism. The perspective of displacement became wider to include the displacement of bioenvironmental ethics to be replaced by new capitalistic attitudes, which affected the natives and environment.
Conclusion

It is clear that the environmental setting is an essential critical category to approach post-colonial environmental literary texts. Natural environment represented by physical setting participates in the plots. The characters’ development and actions are affected by the changes in the physical environment before and after the arrival of colonizers. The precolonial setting reflects the interaction between nature and communal culture and values of natives. The settings of both novels show a deep connection between natives and environment by showing the relationship between self and setting and the communal history and setting. As it penetrates the daily life of natives and their collective minds and consciousness, nature becomes dynamic and intertwines with culture, deities, folklore, and history. The peaceful co-existence between natives and environment has created non-materialistic values and an ideal bio-environmental pattern of living. There are no boundaries between natives and their environment or the ‘us – them’ dichotomy that emerges with the arrival of colonizers and American imperialists to the setting. The purity of the bio-environmental place is relevant to authentic nativism and a new concept of eco-nationalism has emerged to show that intersection of environmentalism and nationalism and prove that postcolonial criticism and eco-criticism could have some convergent views as both are dealing with the value of place.

The environmental physical setting has been altered with the gradual arrival of colonizers. It is clear that the postcolonial environmental questions have begun with European colonialism and continued with American imperialism. Colonization and Imperialism has negatively affected both environment and natives. Western industrialization, the main tool of colonialism and imperialism, has spoiled the bio-environmental life of natives. Western racism has been directed against natives and their environment to achieve the highest possible benefits for the capitalistic colonial/imperial system. Capitalism, which has changed the geographical landscape of the colonies to serve the aim of accumulating wealth for colonizers, has led to the devastation of the environment as well as the corruption and decay of the religious values and ethics of the natives. The non-materialistic values have been replaced by competitive essence of materialistic capitalism. Thus, the concept of displacement could include the alteration of bio-environmental ethics of natives to be replaced by capitalistic attitudes.

The study has shown the interconnection of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and the environment where environmental issues and injustices are arising from the Western implementation of such notions. Moreover, capitalism is considered the driving force behind colonialism/imperialism and consequently environmental devastation. The growth of capitalism in the West and the colonization of several
other countries had gone hand in hand leading to many hazardous consequences that threaten our earth.

Works Cited


The Reification of Revolutionary Consciousness:  
A Cultural Critique of Egypt’s January 25 Revolution

*Karam AbuSehly*

Introduction

Egypt’s January 25 revolution started as formless. It preserved a non-representational and non-conceptual relation to what it was. It had no leader to give it shape; it was rhizomic and non-hierarchical in structure. Accordingly, it has stayed for almost two years as a zone of indeterminacy. These features made it structurally sublime and non-reified. At its beginning, the revolution exceeded all concepts and defied all categorizations, leading, in fact, to a problem of naming. This characteristic sublimity is in tune with the Kantian sense of exceeding the concept. As such, the revolution was both mathematically and dynamically sublime, that is, overwhelming in both size and magnitude, on the one hand, and is characterized by might that is “superior to great hindrances,” on the other (Kant 2007, 90). The sublimity of the revolution was also abundantly clear in its uniqueness. Emad El-Din Shahin mentions some features of uniqueness: the largest number of protesters in history, the peaceful nature of the revolution, the classless nature of the revolution, the absence of leadership, organization and the extraordinary aura of tolerance and pluralism (2012, 47-9). As such, the revolution was embraced with the utmost optimism as one that was going to de-structure the long-standing reified political, social, and cultural life in Egypt.

Despite plenty of studies addressing one aspect or another of the revolution, a critique dealing with the disabling effect of reification is still lacking. The very few studies tackling the topic were either celebrating the dereificatory effect of the revolution or handling reification only marginally. For instance, Hardt and Negri (2011) discussed the revolution through their notion of multitude, being a force that shattered the political stereotypes seeing Muslims as incapable of democracy. William Spanos described the unnamable “event” of Tahrir Square, highlighting its lack of telos and valorizing its “unrepresentable singularity” that defied Western media representations and the “spatializing/reifying – structuralizing – logic of Western imperialism” (2012, 95). Žižek (2012) wrote about the fall of binary logic as manifested in the feeling of oneness between

* Associate Professor of Critical Theory at Beni-Suef University, Egypt.

*Cairo Studies in English* (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
Muslims and Copts. As all descriptions of the revolution became only approximation, Dabashi (2012) argued for a need for new metaphors and a rethinking of the word revolution itself. On the other hand, Hirst (2012) studied the problematic influence of technological determinism, with reification as its inner logic, within the context of news and journalism covering the Arab Spring in general. He argued that commodification of information allowed for a reified worldview to dominate and contended that this process was at work in media coverage of the Arab Spring. Rasha Mohamed (2012) argued for the relevance of Marxism, namely the neo-Gramscian stream, for understanding the civil unrest in the Middle East, providing a very short section for the discussion of commodity fetishism in relation to the Gulf States’ capitalist economy, but nothing on the Egyptian case.

The current study, therefore, provides a critical-theory-based approach to the revolutionary consciousness, using reification as its tool of analysis. The aim of this study is to investigate cultural, social, and revolutionary practices, where the disabling effect of reification is at work and to seek to understand how reification played a major role in the ways people constructed meanings about the revolution. The scope of analysis covers the period starting from January 25, 2011 to June 30, 2012, a period in which the disabling effect of reification was highly effective in turning sublimity into profanity, as manifested in the overwhelming presence of advertisements, commercial products, Friday demonstrations and its categorical demands, street art, and identitarian thinking based on binary oppositions. I hope to show how reification is highly interpretative of the proposition that the revolution was missed at the very moment it was to be realized.

**Reification: An Outline**

Reification etymologically comes “[f]rom the Latin res (thing) and facere (to make),” and it “literally means to make things” (Payne and Barbera 2010, 601). The analytical weight of reification in cultural and social theories is first provided by Marx and is later developed by a variety of Marxist approaches to culture and society, namely the Frankfurt School for critical theory. Marx, however, did not coin the term; he rather investigated social relations in capitalist societies in terms of commodity fetishism. In his *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Marx differentiates between two types of values attached to the commodity. A commodity, Marx argues, has both *use value* and *exchange value*. The use value is related to the usefulness of a commodity and is “conditioned by the physical properties of the commodity [and is] only realized in use or consumption;” whereas the exchange value “appears first of all as the
quantitative relation … [which] changes constantly with time and place” (1976, 126). For Marx, as Alan How (2003, 64) explains, the greater focus is given to the exchange value, that is, to the price of the commodity on the market, which is determined by the capitalist economic relations rather than the wider economic process based mainly on class exploitation. Being highly relative, the exchange value stands for an abstraction of the commodity; that is, it is totally separated from both its use value and the human labor producing it. For Marx, “exchange value is the only form in which the value of a commodity can manifest itself or be expressed” (1976, 128). All human relations behind the production of the commodity is embodied in a thing freely floating on the market. This cutting off of causality, or the causal relation between the producing hands and the thing produced, is taken by Marx as commodity fetishism which “considers the exchangeability of commodities an internal, natural property of the commodities themselves,” as Isaak Rubin explains (2008, 6).

It was Georg Lukács, however, who termed this process reification in his *History and Class-Consciousness*, first published in 1923. Writing about the consciousness of the proletariat, Lukács made of Marx’s commodity fetishism his starting point of analysis, proceeding from it to his definition of reification, which later becomes the canonical definition in the field of social and cultural theory. The basis of the commodity structure, according to Lukács, is that “a relation between people takes on the character of a thing” (1971, 83). Lukács believes that the phenomena of reification cannot be separated from their economic bases. There are material objective causes for the reification of consciousness related mainly to the fact that “the [capitalist] process of transformation must embrace every manifestation of the life of society if the preconditions for the complete self-realization of capitalist production are to be fulfilled” (95). This aligns Lukács, as Grady (1996, 53) argues, with Hegel’s notion of historical teleology based on the dialectical reconciliation of opposites, or reification and dereification. For Lukács, the antithesis of reification is a revolution by the proletariat.

Lukács criticizes capitalist economy for instilling a calculative and rationalistic attitude in the unconscious of the people towards being-in-the-world. In other words, man lives cognitively rather than empathetically. This is because “for the first time in history,” as Lukács argues, “the whole of society is subjected, or tends to be subjected, to a unified economic process, and that the fate of every member of society is determined by unified laws” (1971, 51). When this process is inevitable, it is internalized as something natural. The people’s dominant way of thinking, therefore, becomes thing-like, where everything turns...
into an object of knowing. It is not only the relation between men that takes the character of a thing, but objects around us lose their objectivity as they are viewed through commodity consciousness.

Like Lukács, Theodor Adorno, bases his treatment of the notion of reification on Marx’s distinction between use value and exchange value. Yet, unlike him, he does not believe that the proletariat can challenge the reification fostered by capitalism. His treatment of reification is original to his thought expressed in his *Negative Dialectics*, as Gillian Rose (1978, 43) remarks. Adorno views reification in terms of his distinction between two modes of thinking: *identity thinking* and *non-identity thinking*, with reification residing in the former. In *identity thinking*, heterogeneity is reduced to sameness, or identity; an object is not what it is but what we think it is. This is what Adorno finds to be a reifying habit of thought. As it is totalizing, reductive, and coercive. This removal of the heterogeneous is an identitarian act seeking similarity and correspondence to the concept of the object.

This reifying identitarian thinking is forgetfulness. As Adorno explains, “all reification is a forgetting: objects become purely thing-like the moment they are retained for us without the continued presence of their other aspects: when something of them has been forgotten” (Adorno and Benjamin 1999, 231). In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno also argues that “[t]he circle of identification—which in the end always identifies itself alone—was drawn by a thinking that tolerates nothing outside it; its imprisonment is its own handiwork” (2004, 172). Adorno accordingly rejects the reduction of labor to commodity exchange, as this is an act of identification being unjust to the laborer. For the particular labor-time loses its particularity in the universal abstract presence of the commodity. For Adorno, reification stands in opposition to dialectical thought, as it puts an end to the tension between opposites. For this reason, Adorno proposes *non-identity thinking*, a mode of thinking standing for the irreducibility of our experience of objects into concepts. As Simon Jarvis explains, “[n]on-identity . . . makes dialectical experience possible . . . . It is made possible by that which it cannot yet exhaustively think, the nonidentical” (1998, 173). For Adorno, reification is also strongly connected to culture industry, which he holds as a synonym for mass deception, where an ending sameness is created and where empty individuality is advertised, all for the sake of profit. Adorno argues that “[t]he entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms” (2001, 99). The dangerous thing about culture, under culture industry, is that it, perhaps more than anything else, conceals and legitimates inequalities.
In a more recent development, Axel Honneth views reification in terms of his theory of recognition. He defines reification as forgetfulness of recognition and argues that “[w]hen our relation to other persons is at issue, ‘reification’ means that we have lost sight of our antecedent recognition of these same persons” (2008, 63-64). For Honneth, we do not approach the world and others cognitively or contemplatively, as Lukács contends, but ‘recognitively,’ or through empathetic and existential engagement. This general attitude led Honneth to attack Lukács’ big claim that capitalism is the exclusive source of the reification of consciousness. In opposition to Lukács’ claim that people in the age of capitalism are detached from whatever they do, Honneth poses a counterclaim, moving towards the realm of the psyche, away from the external material causes of reification, arguing that “in human social behavior, recognition and empathetic engagement necessarily enjoy a simultaneously genetic and categorical priority over cognition and a detached understanding of social facts” (52). Honneth does not conceive of reification as “an epistemic category mistake nor as a transgression against moral principles” (52). He rather believes that reification is no more than a habit or a form of behavior arguing that if reification “cannot be traced to an ascribable instance of liability or guilt,” it cannot be a violation of moral principles (53).

Reification, therefore, has been taken into various directions. Some have taken it to be a sort of hegemony over consciousness by external material forces, mainly of the capitalist market, and some argue that it is a forgetfulness of an intrinsic tendency of empathetic engagement. Still some others affirm that it is an act of thinking through identification. Bearing this theoretical package in mind, reification will be explored only eclectically and pluralistically so that reifying the notion itself can be avoided. That is, the analysis conducted below will view reification, in the light of the theoretical package above, as the way consciousness is determined, internally or externally, in a way that misconceives the reality of either the self, the other, or the world in whole or in part. In doing so, I hope to show how reification, among other factors beyond the scope of this article, gave rise to the political in its strangest moment in the January 25 revolution: a moment of “revolver” (the Latin root of the word ‘revolution’ indicating a rolling back), in which the old regime runs for presidency in the person of Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak’s prime minister, against the long-reified society of the Muslim Brotherhood.
Aspects of Reification in the January 25 Revolution

Reification has become manifest in different ways since the ouster of Mubarak in February 12, 2011 till the coming into office of Mohamed Morsi as president, in June 30, 2012. After achieving ‘victory’ by toppling Mubarak in eighteen days, the commodity consciousness started to function through processing the revolution into a profit-yielding thing. On the one hand, the revolution is turned into a commodity that markets other commodities. As a marketing tool, the revolution, reified as commodity, has to overwhelm the people’s consciousness in order for it to yield more profit. It has been processed from a lived experience to a product in the factories of culture industry. On the other hand, as a commodity always pretends to be better than other commodities, otherness disappears, giving way to the prevalence of identitarian thinking.

This reifying process is expressed in various ways: commodity fetishism that creeps into the unconscious through advertisements, categorical demands (or small-group protests), establishing Satellite channels named after events related to the revolution, the re-emergence of dualistic and identitarian thinking, street art, and converting quality to quantity. Therefore, the capitalist notion of profit becomes the underlying logic of an apparently anti-capitalist revolution. The revolution enters culture industry and is presented as a product. This capitalist mentality, that presents the revolution as a thing-like facticity, is voiced and strengthened through the pattern of repetitiveness.

The Revolution as Commodity

The revolution, conceived as an event or carnival, is behind the emergence of many commodities that capture the moment to keep it for individual memories, as a souvenir. The reifying power of the commodity comes when its exchange value gains dominance over its use value, making exchange value, as Lukács argues, humans’ ‘second nature,’ by the very naturality of which “does the commodity become crucial for the subjugation of men’s consciousness” (1971, 86). This objectification of the revolution into things is also driven by what Horkheimer and Adorno call culture industry, which is “the process of identifying, cataloging, and classifying which imports culture into the realm of administration” (2002, 104). The total administration of the revolution through the commodities of culture industry has created a great deal of mediation in forms of commodities. The emerging culture of refusal is assimilated into sameness and mass conformity, disguised as individuality.

This is clearly manifest in the T-shirts that bear the sign of being-there. “I was there on Tahrir Square 2011” (“Ägypten T-shirt” 2011) is a sentence written on a T-shirt stressing both individual existence along with the fetishism of a place.
This reduction of the lived experience, of a signified or praxis, into a signifier to be owned, can be described, in the words of Alan How interpreting Adorno, as a reaction to “the loss of an individual’s sense of personal significance in this impersonal world” (2003, 68). This act stresses the existential dimension of thereness, that is, a kind of situatedness of one’s own making. Written in English, the slogan confirms visibility on a world scale, a celebration of the full presence of that which has for long been in the void. It also fixes/freezes the revolutionary flux on a commodity in order to be able to sell. This commodification spreads a sense of completeness while the revolution itself is far from it. In addition, giving much importance to the ‘image’ during the revolution has disguised the priorities of the ‘real,’ that is, the revolution itself. As Frederic Jameson writes: “If we follow [the] argument about the omnipresence and the omnipotence of the image in consumer capitalism today, then if anything the priorities of the real become reversed, and everything is mediated by culture” (1979, 139). Jameson means that everything is mediated by its representation, mainly, in this case, through the image.

The problem with this mediation is that it becomes a thing in itself, almost achieving for itself a relative autonomy unrelated to the revolution. Banners and signs carried by protesters have, in a large part, indulged in an implicit competition over which is the funniest, cleverest, or most expressive. Reifying the revolution in the visual has led to fetishistic images that represent the revolution in terms of commodities that convert the new experience into a thing. This puts between the revolution and the new world/experience it creates a fake world of consumption spreading the feeling of sale mania, where everyone wants to own something, as a souvenir. Therefore, the primal truth of the revolution is disguised. To be overly mediated, the revolution has been taken into the media. This is described by Maxa Zoller as an “aestheticization of the revolution in popular commercial culture” (2014, 149). This aestheticization, Zoller argues, has turned the revolution “from an event into an image, from a process into a product” (149). This imaging, in turn, has stripped the intrinsic values of the revolution after giving it a functional presence in talk shows (especially on ONtv) and street art (mainly graffiti), although the latter is meant to resist and therefore takes people away from their petrified modes of social existence.

To take the graffiti of the martyrs as an example, street art could not escape the commodification and the totality of culture industry. Although the revolution started as formless, that is, sublime, graffiti turned this sublimity into icons. Hundreds of martyrs have fallen since the January 25, 2011. Yet, it was the killing of the young Copt, Mina Danyal (in the Maspero incidents in October
that provided the first icon. The second icon came with the killing of the Azharite Sheikh Emad Effat (in Mohamed Mahmoud Street in December 2011). These two icons, along with the martyr, Khaled Said (tortured to death by the police in Alexandria only six months before the revolution, and who was widely considered the spark of the revolution), have become the major icons of martyrdom, whose graffiti spread far and wide, creating a reification of martyrdom structure. As representing iconic martyrs, these graffiti quickly found their way to other forms of cultural artifacts: medallions, billows, necklaces, and scarfs, among other things. Street art itself underwent a process of commercialization. As Mona Abaza explains,

graffiti has been used and abused by various actors. It has been commercialised and commodified, precisely through the growing interference and agendas of international funds, organizations, cultural centres, curators and the so-called ‘gatekeepers’ of the art world as well as the media coverage which offer programs and propose spaces through funds for celebrating street art, music and artistic expression. (2013)

The overwhelming presence of the martyrs, in the form of images and graffiti, turned from deploying and galvanizing the living for action into a thing-in-itself. They become part of culture industry; and “more culture leads to more reification,” as Ross Abbinnett puts it (2006, 23).

In a related context, advertisements, a most prominent feature of the reification of the revolutionary consciousness, made much use of the overflow of patriotism and post-uprising optimism. The revolution’s incomprehensibility and formlessness had a good deal of uncertainty as far as marketing is concerned. Faced with an unknown future, the marketers’ profitable decision was to embrace the revolution. The “Quilt of the Revolution” (2011) is a TV advertisement that marketed a quilt containing the colors of the Egyptian flag. In the advertisement, a woman, dressed in the same colors of the flag, appears in a bedroom trying to wake her husband up. The husband says that he is striking under the quilt, setting an example of how the sublime presence of the revolution becomes profane. The use value of strikes is converted to exchange-value. Another advertisement, marketing a beer brand, tells the viewers to “be manly because Egypt needs strong men” (Sherbini 2011). This highly signification-breeding advertisement hits in many directions none of them revolutionary. The patriarchal aura is even against the great presence of women in the revolution. Beer is presented pharmaconically, that is, indeterminately. Will it raise the revolutionary consciousness, or, as a sign of consumption with symptomatic
drunkenness, lead to its eclipse? Against this manliness-based manipulation, the motherland is celebrated by a mobile company marketing itself through a famous patriotic song, “Egypt is my Mother.” The same company extends its motherly/national guise to an advertisement expressing the world’s fascination with the Egyptian revolution by fixing billboards on the streets of Cairo with quotes by world leaders in praise of the people of Egypt. Profit and the fear of losing commercial benefits are behind all this commodification. This same telecommunication company has yielded to Mubarak’s regime demanding the cutting off of service at the beginning of the revolution, in an attempt to decrease the numbers of protesters. As Matt Bradley observes in his “Revolution Sells in Egypt,” after thousands of protesters ousted Mubarak in three weeks, “the enthusiasm for revolution has been redirected and repackaged for television ads, billboards and jingles selling products including hair gel, soft drinks and candy” (2011).

**Categorical Demands**

The revolution is viewed by many as the goose that lays golden eggs. Categorical demands, or small-group protests, spread everywhere asking for improvements of salaries. That is, they were mainly driven by economic rather than political reasons. The long-repressed working class has rebelled against its reified status as producers alienated from their own labor. University professors, teachers, public sector officials, doctors, bus and train drivers, postmen, and engineers, along with other social groups, have also joined categorical protests for the same economic reasons. These groups started to organize strikes and sit-ins nationwide in order to force the government to comply with their demands. These protests have their own indeterminate character. On the one hand, these categorical demands-based protests, are criticized as a threat to national security, at a time of crisis. “Critics of strikes,” as Hesham Sallam explains, “regularly invoke the expression ‘the wheel of production must turn’ as a means of telling protesters to go back to work” (2011, 21-22). These protests are viewed as chaotic and opportunist in nature. On the other hand, their demands are defended as being a natural outcome of the income injustice in the country.

Nonetheless, as the whirlwind of reification must turn, engulfing almost all aspects of social activities, these categorical demands turn the revolution into an opportunity to gain something tangible for individual entities. That is, the notion of instant profit is also present here. Some even made it explicit that these profit/justice-seeking protests are driven by the counter-revolution force in order to show the revolution as mere act of exploitation of a time of instability and
fluidity. “In March,” as Sallam writes, “Justice Minister Muhammad al-Gindi said that labor demonstrations are not spontaneous but a manifestation of an organized ‘counter-revolution’ staged by remnants of the old regime” (2011, 21-22). Although this is a dehistoricization of the demands expressed in the protests, the repetitive pattern in which they appeared was reifying and has led to a further reduction of the revolution as profit, mainly when these rights are not formed into a grand narrative of justice, that is, creating a dialectic of universal and categorical demands; they rather appeared as fragmented protests with personal goals. The outcome is a reifying gaze upon these demands, a gaze using the revolution of absurdity and lack of a sense of the ‘greater good.’

**Satellite Mediation**

Satellite channels have proliferated after the toppling down of Mubarak. Many of them bear names signifying relatedness to the revolution. Most of them, through tens of talk shows, tried to present themselves as the spokeschannel of the revolution. Among these channels, for instance, are: Al-Tahrir (named after Tahrir Square), *Misr 25* (Egypt 25, referring to January 25 revolution), and *Misr Al-Hurra* (The Free Egypt). Most of the owners of the channels were businessmen in Mubarak’s regime. What these celebratory channels spread is that the revolution is over and that it is time now for telling the audience the narrative(s) of the revolution. The Tahrir Channel, for instance, adopted the slogan “*al-sha‘b yurīd tahrīr al-‘oqūl,*” roughly translated as “the people demand the liberation of minds.” This slogan postulates that the old dictatorial hardware of the state has been changed and now people are to change their cultural superstructure in order for them to be up to the revolutionary post-Mubarak era! In addition, the same channel reifies the Square by spreading the false consciousness related to its centrality, that is, Tahrir Square as the logos of the revolution. This, in fact, is in discord with its slogan calling for new consciousness. As Mamoun Fandy points out, the Arab revolutions have started, geographically, at the margin rather than the center. He makes it clear that

the Arab revolt actually emerged in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, 210 km southwest of the capital, when a policewoman slapped the face of a young man pushing a vegetable cart. The local people saw this as a slap to their own faces. When the young man set himself on fire in protest, their shame and humiliation went deeper. … In Egypt, too, the strongest protests and the backbone of the Egyptian revolution were in outlying towns such as Suez and Alexandria, even if Cairo and Tahrir Square dominated television screens (2011, 222).
The *Tahrir* Channel, among others, furthered the reifying process by reducing, in an identitarian way, the all into the one, the irreducible object of the revolution into the reductive conceptions of the subject. Such satellite mediation decentered revolutionary subjectivity itself. That is, there was a whole world of culture industry standing between the people and the revolution. This mediation created images (which highlighted the imagined over the real), re-activated binary thinking, and more importantly enframed the revolutionary reality in order to help control its progress.

**Identitarian Thinking**

Another crucial reifying aspect is the re-emergence of dualities, based on identitarian mode of thinking. This started with the fixation of the binary opposition pronounced by Mubarak himself in his often-quoted phrase, “either me or chaos,” included in a speech in February 1, 2011. Each economic crisis, each outbreak of violence, and each irresponsible act of freedom was a fixating element in this duality. Another more important act of binary opposition was embodied in the civil/religious state debate. The reified manifestation of this binarism is the act of choosing the members of the Second Constitution Committee according to civil and religious orientations. Although the Arab Revolution in general “has been instigated by the multitude of identity-less identities – those who don’t count,” as Spanos (2012, 103) puts it, the institutionalization of the revolution has revealed the latent reification in the binary logic that started to prevail. The reified perception of the Egyptian affair in terms of religious/civil duality was, to a great extent, responsible for the loss of the Egyptian cause related to the eventually crystalized essence of the revolution: the aspiration for a non-military regime in Egypt.

The fixation of this duality has led to a political blindness preventing an appropriate response as to what track the revolution must take. This reification of the religious/civil duality has become a hidden source of controlling consciousness. As it replicates the alienation inherent in the solid duality of self/other and subject/object, creating a process of positive dialectic trying to compromise both of them in a synthesis of closure that eventually achieves the telos of world history. As Timothy Bewes argues, “[t]he progressive alienation, and self-alienation, of men and women is identical to the process of reification, a product not only of modernity but of dialectical thought *per se*” (2002, 70). This reified duality does not only thingify what is meant by religious and what is meant by civil, it also controls the very reaction of people towards the two concepts that have already undergone a great deal of mystification.
Such reifying religious/civil state binarism did lead to the forgetfulness of the ‘state’ as middle term. Forgetfulness of the ‘state’ in the interest of an identitarian conflict marginalized the revolution itself. This binary opposition has been rekindled by the media backed by Mubarak’s regime; such media has installed in people’s minds the idea that ‘civil’ is the opposite of ‘religious.’ Although the first eighteen days of the revolution set an example of the unity of the Egyptians, where Christian protesters used to “form a protective cordon around their Muslim countrymen so they could pray in safety...” only to be followed by Muslims protecting Christians on their Sunday Mass (Kennedy 2011), dualist identitarian thinking was restored when talk about gains came to the fore. Along with this dualist identitarian thinking came a reified view of the other, fostered by actions on the ground and heated debates on TV talk shows. This reification of the revolutionary consciousness has eventually culminated in a revolution very much grounded in its etymological root of revolver, to roll back. If Tahrir Square as “event” is a bringing out of absence, or void, as Badiou (2012, 84) argues, the restoration of the reifying dualism has foregrounded the need for sending the void back to where it was kept.

**Calculative and Instrumental Reason**

The concrete revolutionary act of demonstrating has been phrased in numbers and conceptualized in signifiers. The multitude that once ousted Mubarak in eighteen days has become a thing and has been given an ontological status, in a reifying fashion that can affect a change, the same status given to the SCAF (The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), that “guarded and protected” the revolution. The multitude has been processually expressed and fixated in what is exclusively coined by the Egyptian revolution as “millioniyya,” translated interchangeably, in media and studies, as million-man rally, million-man march, or million-man demonstration. Since January 25, 2011, there has been calls, almost each Friday, for a millioniyya for a different reason. The repetitive pattern has turned the tumultuous presence of the people in the then-reified Tahrir Square into a concept changing with every millioniyya, that is not necessarily and actually consisting of a million-man march. Part of the dereifying sublimity of the famous eighteen days was in its all-inclusiveness, incalculability, and unlimitedness. All this has been reduced to a millioniyaa, with a pinpointing name.

On February 18, 2011, one week after the toppling of Mubarak, there was the millioniyya of Victory and Continuation, celebrating the achievement. In February 25, 2011, another millionyyia (the Friday of Salvation) was arranged to get rid of the government headed by Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak’s prime
Reification of Revolutionary Consciousness

minister. The millioniyya of National Unity was arranged on March 11, 2011, expressing a continuation of the slogan “Muslims and Copts are one hand.” The pattern went on every Friday, and the names given to each millioniyya were always spectacular: Refusal (March 11, 2011), Saving the Revolution (April 1, 2011), The Second Revolution of Anger (May 27, 2011), The Wheel of Production and the Renaissance of Egypt (June 4, 2011), Loyalty to the Martyrs (July 1, 2011), Last Warning (July 15, 2011), Correcting the Path (September 9, 2011), Restoring the Revolution (September 30, 2011), and “Thank You, Now Go Back to Your Barracks” (October 7, 2011), to give but a few examples in 2011. In the first half of 2012, there were millioniyya marches that embodied political polarization and antagonism between parties. For instance, the millioniyya of Completing the Revolution (January 25, 2012) has witnessed a disagreement concerning whether to complete the revolution or celebrate it. On April 6, 2012, a millioniyya was arranged for the support of the Islamist, Hazem Salah Abu Ismael, against charges of forging his mother’s nationality, which will jeopardize his candidacy for presidency. This particular millioniyya is the clearest example of how the multitude got reified in the interest of a single person with so many followers.

Apart from the Hollywood aura around the names, the war of millioniyya marches has taken a form of demonstration of power, especially in 2012. The reified concept of millioniyya deluded the people as for the number and, therefore, the quality of demands. If reification converts the concrete into abstract, it also “converts quality into quantity” (Berger and Pullberg 1965, 208). This is very much obvious in the millioniyya arranged on December 2, 2011, under the slogan of Rehabilitation. This millioniyya was held intentionally in two different places. The first was held in Tahrir Square and was dedicated to commemorating the martyrs of Mohamed Mahmoud Street (those who were killed at the gate of the Ministry of Interior); the second in Al-Abbasiyya Square, supporting the SCAF and the newly-appointed prime minister Kamal Al-Ganzouri.

Reified in itself, the millioniyya concept also reified the concept of the people. In almost every millioniyya, a spokesperson stands and speaks on behalf of the people, in an identitarian way. Hence, in the December 2, 2011 millioniyya, for example, there were certain individuals who spoke on behalf of the people in both locations. This makes one wonder about what the ‘people’ means. Based on quantity rather than quality, the millioniyya marches started to reify precepts in concepts and use them emptily. The ‘people’ is sometimes viewed as supporting the SCAF and sometimes as demonstrating against it. Each side
views the people reductively in an identitarian way of thinking. This has even happened early enough, after Mubarak stepped down. The people is reified by the “activists who, after the eighteen days had ended, said they would just call the ‘twenty-five million’ back to Tahrir if the politicians did anything they didn’t like” (Seikaly et al. 2015). The quantitative view of the people, supported by the notion of *millioniyya*, is a reification of it. Besides, both the *millioniyya* and the *people* stand for the notion of enframing, to use Martin Heidegger’s terminology. The very aim of this enframing is to keep things as a standing-reserve (Heidegger 1977, 28). Ultimately, the primal truth of the revolution as a revealing and an opening is concealed.

**Repetitive Patterns in the Revolution**

It is worth noting that the reification of the January 25 revolutionary consciousness was wrapped in a repetitive pattern. The repetition of the sudden economic crises and the repeated occurrences of insecurity as represented in bank robberies and banditry, has led to reified reactions towards the revolution, reactions that viewed it as the root of all evil. Of reification and repetitiveness, Axel Honneth writes that reification “signifies a habit of thought, a habitually ossified perspective, which, when taken up by the subject, leads not only to the loss of its capacity for empathetic engagement but also to the world’s loss of its qualitatively disclosed character” (2008, 109). This repetitiveness has led to camouflaging people’s recognition of the revolution; that is, the real was perceived in a reified way. As Honneth argues, “[w]e must consequently conceive of the process of reification as precisely that occurrence through which the genuine, involved human perspective is neutralized to such a degree that it ultimately transforms into objectifying thought” (2008, 125). This very issue found embodiment in a well-known phrase called the “Couch Party.” The phrase refers to a divide that was there since the start, referring to a group regarded as a party. This divide “had sprung between the Egyptians in the square and those outside . . . who prefer to sit at home on their couches watching government television” (Cambanis 2015, 60). This party had no empathetic engagement with the multitude revolting against injustice. The Egyptians in the squares and other spaces of the revolution have tried to construct a world that is all-inclusive. Such a world sounded, in the famous eighteen days, like one without closure, a world-construction in motion. The reality of a world like this “must be constructed and re-constructed over and over again. That is, the world must be continuously realized, in the double sense of this word, as actualization and as recognition” (Berger and Pullberg 1965, 201).
The revolution was presented as a thing-like facticity that controls the consciousness of the people all along the way through its demise. The Egyptians have made the revolution; they must shape and control it. What happened in the first year is that the revolutionary order started to be set as something over and against the idea of the revolution itself. It started to face the revolutionaries as an external facticity not of their own making. The revolution seemed to take its deterministic course that was embodied in the presidential election and the coming into office of the ex-President Mohamed Morsi in June 30, 2012, a paradigmatic moment that explains a lot of the alienation of the revolutionaries in the years that followed. As Alain Badiou describes it, a moment like this represents “a trap set by the old historical oppressor” (2012, 55).

**Conclusion**

The reduction of the revolution to the quantitative logic of capitalist market is nihilistic. This nihilism is responsible for the devaluation process directed against the January 25 revolution, as a unique event in Egyptian history. If the sublime eruption of the January 25 revolution, along with the Arab Spring, was to herald a new epoch in world history, an epoch that inaugurated a third millennium with a cry for freedom and the rights of the repressed, a cry of the unidentified multitude, reification has been a crucial element in revealing how capitalism has penetrated the unconscious of the people. In such an epoch, the marginalized were to achieve self-presencing. Yet, processes of reification as absencing have worked against the self-presencing of the proletariat and the repressed.

Awareness of the aspects of reification can help raise an understanding of how we construct meanings about revolutions and movements of social change. This awareness also helps the multitude not to be used by competing forces as tools, in the name of either patriotic or religious ethos. Revolutions reach their realization when they do not reach a moment of closure and when there is a kind of artful tension between the ruling class, on the one hand, and the multitude, on the other, in a way that does not allow the integration of the multitude into capitalism, neither for patriotic nor religious reasons, as its own favorite instruments.
Works Cited


The Production of Heterotopic Spaces Between Theory and Practice: Tahrir Square in Light of Michel Foucault’s and Henri Lefebvre’s Theories

Naglaa Saad M. Hassan*

Introduction
The last few decades have witnessed an unprecedented breakthrough in the multidisciplinary study of space. Thanks to French philosophers Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Henri Lefebvre, Jacques Derrida among others, there emerged what is known as “the spatial turn” whereby spatiality had replaced temporality as a center of research. The rich outcomes of such studies have shattered the stereotypes instilled by historicists who, as Santa Arias reminds us, view space “as a given entity, inert and naturalized” (Arias 2010, 30). The rich French theory which re-institutionalized space and allowed for a multi-angled re-vision of the subject in relation to space has facilitated the investigation of the relationship between space, power, and resistance and has yielded its fruits in interpreting literary works and social phenomena. It is in this light that the germ of this study¹ sprouted. Examining Foucault’s and Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the utopic and heterotopic as a theoretical framework, this study attempts to show how their concepts, albeit dissimilar, help interpret the relationship between space and subject in the recent Egyptian context.

This paper is not the first to read Tahrir as a heterotopic space² (see Beckett et al. 2016, Abenante 2014, Ghannam 2016, Ardizzoni 2017). In their article “Foucault, Social Movements and Heterotopic Horizons: Rupturing the Order of Things,” AE Beckett, P. Bagguley, and T. Campbell include Tahrir square in their wide investigation of the applicability of Foucault’s vision -- which they try to bring close to that of Gilles Deleuze -- on Social Movements Studies (SMS). Tahrir square protests are cited en passant as an example of what they call “contained heterotopia” – one out of five categories they classify for SMS. Similarly, Michela Ardizzoni, in her work Matrix Activism: Global Practices of Resistance, which focuses on the role of media in recent activist movements, presents her perception of Tahrir being a heterotopic place as an afterthought in the book’s epilogue.

* Assistant Professor, Department of English, Fayoum University, Egypt.
Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
Paola Abenante’s article “Tahrir as Heterotopia: Spaces and Aesthetics of Egyptian Revolution” gives greater space to the heterotopic nature of Tahrir space during January 2011 Revolution. Her work, however, focuses solely on the role of artistic creations in casting upon Tahrir such heterotopic nature arguing that “heterotopia comes out most clearly in the practice of working class amateur artists” (Abenante 2014, 24). Farha Ghannam’s article, on the other hand, promises to come close to the study at hand particularly in bringing both Foucault and Lefebvre’s concepts to the sphere of the revolution. The main argument of her study, however, is to use “heterotopic spaces” rather than heterotopia to reflect the changeability of heterotopia, an idea which is already implicit in Foucault’s theory.

Though claiming that her study is to make a dialogue between Foucault and Lefebvre, Ghannam does not give a full coverage of either Foucault or Lefebvre and surprisingly depends entirely on David Harvey’s reading of Lefebvre -- being subjective itself and, hence, subject to controversy -- in deriving the definition of heterotopia in his theory. Accordingly, Ghannam’s article, despite raising interesting points, fails to underline the idea of otherness integral to Lefebvre’s perception of heterotopia and discards the straight link tying it to utopia and the fact that both terms are mutually informative and interdependent, elements which, I believe, are essential in giving an accurate reading of Lefebvre’s concepts. The study at hand, therefore, undertakes a nuanced comparative analysis of heterotopia and utopia in both works of Foucault and Lefebvre, as well as offering a detailed analysis of Foucauldian heterotopic aspects of Tahrir and in reading Tahrir as a Lefebvrian’s utopia.

This article is informed by a literary theory background -- rather than anthropology or sociology -- and is hence bent on fully investigating the theoretical concepts with a critical comparative lens before lending them to applicability upon Tahrir square. To achieve its objectives, therefore, the study is to start with a survey of heterotopia and utopia in Foucault and Lefebvre’s works, with the aim of finding similarities and differences between both figures before establishing the heterotopic/utopic as a conceptual framework for the reading of Tahrir.

**Heterotopia in Foucault’s Discourse**

Although “heterotopia” has its origins in medicine with the word referring to the presence of some tissue in an abnormal place in the human body, the word was brought to the realm of literary theory at the hands of Foucault and Lefebvre in their attempt to present new directions in the conceptualization of space. Foucault’s introduction of heterotopia was in his lecture “Of Other Space,”

103
wherein he re-envisioned and re-positioned space in the twentieth century which, according to him, and contrary to the nineteenth century in which history predominates cultural discourse, is the age of space: “We are in the epoch of simultaneity … the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” (1984, 2). Foucault asserts that in the postmodern era, space is characterized by heterogeneity, which manifests itself in the existence of “sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (1984, 3). From this point, he proceeds to his focal argument whereby he contends that “among these irreducible sites dominant in this age, there exists two types, which though linked with all other sites contradict all of them: utopias and heterotopias” (1984, 3). Endorsing the common definition of utopias as “sites with no real place … sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society” (1984, 3), Foucault proposes that heterotopias are “real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted” (1984, 3; italics mine).

Foucault proposes that the existence of heterotopia is governed by six principles. In the first three principles, he underlines its universality (existing in all cultures), its “power of juxtaposing in a single real place, different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other” (1984, 6); hence the garden, the cinema, the museum and the theater and the adaptability of its function according to the culture and the society in which it is born. In his later analyses, he highlights the system of opening and closure that “isolates …[heterotopias] and makes them penetrable” (1984, 7), then the relationship between heterotopias and other sites or what he calls “the space that remains;” and finally the tight linkage connecting them to slices of time. Elaborating on the fifth principle, Foucault argues that heterotopias “take place between two extreme poles” (1984, 8): heterotopias of illusion which “create a space of illusion that reveals how all of real space is more illusory” and others of compensation (such as the English-founded Puritan colonies in America), through which “real space, as perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged as ours is disordered, ill-conceived, and in a sketchy state” (1984, 8). Expanding on the final principle, Foucault further supports the superimposition of space over time stressing that heterotopias function through “a pure symmetry of heterochronisms” whereby men “find themselves in a sort of total breach of their traditional time” (1984, 8). A concrete example of this principle is the symmetry which “begins with that
strange heterochronism that is, for a human being, the loss of life and of that quasi-eternity in which, however, he does not cease to dissolve and be erased” (1984, 8).

As far as this study is concerned, the significance of heterotopia in Foucault’s discourse can be observed at two different levels. First, the concept of “sites” that are not irreducible to and not superimposable upon one another defies the idea of rigidity and fixity long associated with space; it casts unto space particular elasticity and vividness. Second, by insisting that -- contrary to utopias -- heterotopias are designed into the very institution of society, Foucault underlines the social factor in the constitution of space, an element which brings his vision close to that of Henri Lefebvre. The idea that the physical place can determine its function according to socio-cultural and sometimes political mechanisms has allowed for the inclusion of various places including squares -- the central subject of this study -- as examples of heterotopic spaces.

The Heterotopic and Utopic in Henri Lefebvre’s Spatial Discourse

Henri Lefebvre’s vision of heterotopic and utopic spaces is unleashed within his broader project of what he calls “space production.” In the same Foucauldian vein and towards the selfsame effect of deconstructing the time/space hierarchy and the totalitarian perspective of space, Lefebvre sets out to propose that space is produced rather than given. Tracing the historical development of the concept of space, Lefebvre, in his much acclaimed book The Production of Space, ends up with the conclusion that Cartisan, Kantisan, and mathematical thought have all led to the status of space as a “mental thing” or “mental place” which all leaked into modern epistemology wherein exists a proliferation of terms all uniting against the exclusion of man, i.e. of “the social,” in spatial terminology (1992, 8-9). Lefebvre, therefore, proposes a new science of space in which the various dimensions he historically traces are systematically grouped: “we are concerned with the logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias” (1992, 12). His project aims at reconciling the mental and the social with the aim of adding more fecundity to a concept that has long been torn among different intellectuals, philosophers, and scientists. Notably, in mapping out the different contours of space, Lefebvre discloses his position on heterotopia; he also refers to utopia as a significant spatial product, an idea which shows how, for him, the symbolic space is as significant as the real physical one.

Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the heterotopic/utopic can be traced in more than one place in his oeuvre. First, in his attempt to underline how the
relationship between space and people is determined by inclusion and exclusion, Lefebvre, shows how “subdivisions of space are dramatically defined in terms of the opposition between beneficent and maleficent,” how there are “places that are prohibited (holy or damned heterotopias) for various reasons, and others that are open of access, or to which access is encouraged” (1992, 294). In this way, Lefebvre’s heterotopias are informed not only by the opposition but also by function, facts which bring them close to Foucault’s conceptualization. However, the idea that heterotopias can be prohibited and inaccessible posits them against those of Foucault who underlines accessibility as one of the key principles of heterotopic sites.

At another point in his book, Lefebvre sets heterotopia against utopia in a way that further distances his stance from that of Foucault. He argues that one of the grids that may be developed to “help decipher complex spaces” (1992, 366) distinguish between the types of oppositions and contrasts in space: “isotopies, or analogous spaces; heterotopias, or mutually repellent spaces; and utopias, or spaces occupied by the symbolic and the imaginary — by ‘idealities’ such as nature absolute knowledge or power absolute” (1992, 366). For Lefebvre, therefore, “the most effectively appropriated spaces” which are “occupied by symbols” are utopian in nature. Hence, whereas the garden to Foucault is an example of heterotopia, to Lefebvre “[g]ardens and parks, which symbolize an absolute nature” are examples of utopia. The same applies to “religious buildings, which symbolize power and wisdom — and hence the Absolute pure and simple” (1992, 366). Accordingly, whereas Foucault considers cemeteries and museums heterotopic sites, Lefebvre sees that “monuments embody a sense of transcendence, or a sense of being elsewhere. They have been utopic. Through their height and depth, along a dimension that was alien to urban trajectories, they proclaimed duty, power, knowledge, joy, hope” (2003, 22).

While Foucault believes that utopias are “by their very essence fundamentally unreal,” (2003, 3) and hence seeks a palpable alternative (heterotopia), Lefebvre believes that heterotopia occupies a dialectical relationship with utopia, which can exist at the symbolic and realistic level. In one of his lectures, Lefebvre uses the two terms of “utopia” and “heterotopia” in relation to the 1968 student demonstrations in France. He maintains that for underprivileged students and inhabitants of Nanterre, Paris was a utopia aspired imaginatively and realized realistically through the events of 1968. The Latin Quartet, a symbol of the Utopian Center, was realistically and symbolically opposed to the heterotopic periphery of Nanterre. Whereas Paris was conceived as a utopic center, Nanterre was a heterotopic space, a “space of the other, simultaneously excluded and
interwoven” (2003, 128). For Lefebvre, therefore, the student movement from Nanterre to Paris, was a move from the periphery to the center, from a second class heterotopic “othered” space into the utopic center of welfare and knowledge. Hence, whereas heterotopia in this sense is informed by otherness and inferiority to an all dominating center, it is still fraught with productive possibilities of change. As David Harvey rightly contends, Lefebvre’s heterotopia, which he also perceives as “radically different from that of Foucault” (2013, xvii), delineates “liminal social spaces of possibility where something different is not only possible but fundamental for the defining of revolutionary trajectories” (2013, xvii). The demonstrations which shifted from Nanterre to Paris revealed a social, political as well as epistemological quest. It was an attempt to deconstruct the self/other binaries -- to dismantle the segregational policies which worked, through the manipulation of space, at the level of education and urban planning.

The concept of heterotopia as a peripheral other informed by opposition is also referred to, albeit en passant, when Lefebvre discloses his concept of urban society in his book The Urban Revolution. In his attempt to illustrate his concept of “urban society” which he proposes to substitute for the divisive concepts of city and village, Lefebvre shows how during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, “the image of the city came into being” (2013, 12), how it had gradually developed from being a peripheral “heterotopic other” to a magnetizing center:

Compared with the countryside, the town retained its heterotopic character, marked by its ramparts as well as the transition to suburban areas… At a given moment, these various relationships were reversed, the situation changed. The moment when this shift occurred, this reversal of heterotopy should be marked along our axis. From this moment on, the city would no longer appear as an urban island in a rural ocean, it would no longer seem a paradox, a monster, a hell or a heaven that contrast sharply with village or country life in a natural environment. (2003, 11)

Clearly, therefore, for Lefebvre, a heterotopic site -- regardless of its own value (hell or heaven) or size (the city or the countryside) -- is the one which exists on a peripheral position in relation to a dominating center. Hence, the countryside, at one moment in human history, assumed the role of the “center” in people’s spatial consciousness. When the city, thanks to industrial and capitalist expansionist enterprises, succeeded in invading people’s consciousness and snatching them away from rural life, the situation of
heterotopy was reversed. The countryside has become a heterotopic other subject to respective symbolic associations. It can be a heaven or a hell: for people who are keen on pure, simplistic and unsophisticated life, the village becomes a heterotopic heaven while for others who seek modernized speedy life, the countryside can be a heterotopic hell. This, one can argue, informs the massive emigration from village to town on the one hand and the nostalgic escape into the countryside on the other hand. Lefebvre elaborates on the concept of otherness informing the changing heterotopic nature of the city and countryside when he associates “heterotopy” with “anomie” or with the tendency of “anomic groups to construct heterotopic spaces, which are eventually redeemed by the dominant praxis” (2003, 129). He shows how after “the invasion of the country-side by the urban fabric,” some outlying areas remained strongly heterotopic. Crisscrossed by long, poorly equipped thoroughfares, ambiguous spaces, they harbored populations from different origins: car drivers and mercenaries, traders, semi-nomads forced to settle outside the city limits, often suspect and sacrificed in time of war. “After a time, the city began to merge with these outlying areas, to assume them by annexing them to its more active neighborhoods…. It was not until the rise of the bourgeois that his trend reversed. Popular elements were expelled from the center to still rural peripheral heterotopias which have since changed into suburbs, habitats receptacles, typified by a highly visible form of isotopy” (2003, 129, italics mine). Lefebvre’s illustration shows how his concept of heterotopia is flexible and pliable enough to allow for the inclusion of different sites across different temporal and spatial lines. Notably, Lefebvre’s position is informed by his broad spatial scheme of space production. Indeed, his concepts of utopic and heterotopic spaces carry constructive and transformative possibilities given that they can exist at both the realistic and symbolic levels, which can account for the various transformations of a certain place and the way the subject situates himself in, and orients himself with, such a place, a fact which will be crystal clear in the analysis of the spatial entity of Tahrir square during the Egyptian revolution.

Foucauldian and Lefebvrian heterotopic/utopic spaces in Practice: Tahrir Square during the Egyptian Revolution

a) The January Revolution: An Overview

Before embarking on applying Foucauldian and Lefebvrian concepts of the heterotopic/utopic on Tahrir Square during the January Revolution, it is important to shed light on the revolution mechanisms. On January 25th, 2011,
protests erupted taking the form of simultaneous demonstrations which, though spread across almost every city, were particularly concentrated in Tahrir Square in Cairo. Despite the various attempts exerted by the government to disperse the demonstrators -- who were mostly from the youth -- and take hold of the Square, thousands of people from different Cairene suburbs and even from other governorates of the country flooded to the Square demanding social and political reformations. The main slogan of the protesters was “bread, liberty, and social justice.” The anti-regime demonstrations, therefore, were launched with the aim of attaining social and political welfare and were particularly intensified on January 28th with the government adopting different tactics -- ranging from clampdowns embodied in imposed curfews, control of telecommunications, police clashes, even some pliant reformatory mechanisms including the dismissal of the government (on January 28), the appointment of a vice president (on January 29) and the televised declaration of the president that he would not run for another round of elections (February 1). Dissatisfied and keen on toppling the regime, the protestors continued to remain in the square waiting for the president to step down, a demand which was realized on February 11th, 2011 after eighteen days of waiting in Tahrir. The success of the Egyptian revolution hinged, therefore, on the manipulation of time and space. The act of waiting went hand in hand with the occupation of space, of Tahrir Square, whose very choice was intentional and strategic.

That Tahrir Square occupies a central position in the spatial map of the country long before the January Revolution cannot be underestimated. Established in the nineteenth century under Khedive Isma’il, the Square had witnessed the protests of people earlier in the well-known 1919 Egyptian Revolution and was therefore known as “Tahrir (Arabic for “Liberation”) Square,” a name which was originally registered in 1952. Ever since, the square had been the center of social and political aggregations. As Ahmad Shokr puts it, “the bustling city center …. has long been a favorite site for popular gatherings. Egyptians have poured into Tahrir to celebrate soccer victories, to mourn the passing of national icons and to protest injustice” (2012, 41). Although the Square had witnessed various protests and celebratory gatherings in recent decades -- including the so called “Bread Riots” in 1977 -- wherein thousands of Egyptians gathered in Tahrir to protest against the potential rise of bread prices -- as well as the protests during March 2003 opposing the war in Iraq, it was in January 2011 that such significance was crystallized. The strategic importance of the square in people’s perception is enhanced by the presence of multiple governmental bodies including various ministries, the parliament, and the Shura council, not to mention the Tahrir “Mogamma” (an all-in-one
centralized administrative building which is considered the icon of governmental bureaucracy). The urban entity of the Square, therefore, has been laden with political and social overtones that were much in line with the political and social demands of the protesters.

**b) Tahrir as a Lefebvrian Utopic Center**

In light of the above illustration of the utopic and heterotopic in Lefebvre’s discourse, it is clear that Tahrir Square, sustained by the act of an eighteen-day waiting and the physical spatial occupation undertaken by the people, transformed into a Lefebvrian utopia. Situated at the heart of the capital, the Square had shed off its everyday urban connotations, transforming into a Lefebvrian utopic space which is as “half fictional, half real” (Johnson 2016, n. pag.). It was both fictional, in light of the temporariness of the situation, and real, based on the physical occupation of space. Tahrir Square, the place where people of different social, political, and religious backgrounds gathered with the selfsame goals — (bread, liberty, and social equality), was a Lefebvrian utopia laden with multiple symbols primary among which are equality, unity, and determination.

Tahrir was the place wherein barriers of class, religion, and ideologies were shattered. In an unprecedented move, women were gathering along with men, kids along with old-aged, liberals along with Islamists, the rich along with the poor. Hence, instead of comfortable houses, people opted for tents as a common place of shelter. What emerged in Tahrir was a unified identity informed by “Egyptianness:” instead of multiple conflicting identities there was a common identity characterized by activism and idealization. To this effect, Sowers writes how people, recalling their days in Tahrir, “describe living in a utopia where they felt freed from their own circumscribed identities as well as fear from the regime” (2012, 5). “We were all equals, brothers and sisters,” said one of the protestors, “we ate, laughed, fought and cried together, we protected each other with our lives without having ever met before …. I never felt so alive” (Kamel 2012, 38). This idea of a unified Egyptian identity was instrumental in making Tahrir a Lefebvrian utopia symbolic of equality and unity.

The utopic nature of the occupied square is sustained by the fact that the eighteen-day protests were distinguished by spontaneity and leaderlessness. Without having an explicit center, thousands of protesters flooded spontaneously to the Square calling for change and keen on realizing it. The fact that such demonstrations were crowned by the resignation of the president shows how Lefebvrian utopic Tahrir was an outstanding symbol of determination. Not only
were citizens able to get hold of public space and withhold the various confrontations undertaken by the police and the regime supporters, but they were also determined not to leave unless their demands were answered.

The Square also materializes as a Lefebvrian utopia at another significant level. As demonstrated above, there are two types of utopias in Lefebvre’s theory: those which represent power absolute and others which embody nature absolute. As was the case with the French demonstrations in 1968, Egyptian people moved from the periphery to the center. For the underprivileged classes flooding from different suburbs of the huge city (and even from other governorates), and shouting for “bread, liberty and social justice,” the Square, like Paris in 1968, was a symbol of a Lefebvrian utopian center representing power absolute, an idea particularly emphasized by the fact that the Square, as demonstrated above, is surrounded by significant governmental bodies. Given that Lefebvre’s concept of heterotopy is informed by otherness -- with the margins existing in heterotopic non-privileged position to the center -- this reading is further accentuated. Lefebvre had made it clear that heterotopic spaces are primarily excluded from the political city and that those who inhabit these spaces are also excluded from politics and denied any voice (2003, 17); he defines the heterotopia itself as “the other space and the space of the other” (2003, 172).

In the Egyptian context, the demonstrators had flooded from the heterotopic margin – whether other governorates or Cairene suburbs -- to the utopic center representing power absolute. Through the act of waiting, the demonstrators had not only tightened their grip over a for long-inaccessible utopic center but also forced their voice upon the political regime. They managed to move their subjectivities, at both a symbolic and realistic level, from a marginal position to a hegemonic one. This applies to the people belonging to lower socioeconomic strata as well as for the economically privileged others who, though possessing financial means, were either politically bracketed and marginalized or simply lacking the freedom to voice their demands and openly oppose the hegemonic regime. The flexibility of Lefebvre’s concept allowed such a space, however small and limited, to assume a utopian identity, while at the same breath, transforming the whole country with all its aspects of “anomie” and otherness into a heterotopic place. It was through such Lefebvrian heterotopic peripheries – physical and symbolic – that both the revolution and Tahrir as utopia were born, but this is again due to the fact that heterotopic others are laden with multiple possibilities of revolutionary change.
c) Tahrir Square as a Foucauldian Heterotopia

Moving to Foucault’s spatial conceptualization and linking it to Tahrir square, it is important to point out that the Square during the Revolution conforms to the generic framework of the heterotopic in Foucault’s mind. As mentioned above, heterotopia for Foucault was the realistic realizable alternative to the imaginary non-existing symbolic utopia. The extraordinary swiftness with which such idealistic heterotopic space was established in Tahrir and the success that crowned the protests are in line with Foucault’s belief that “heterotopias … desiccate speech… dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences” (1970, xix). At a more profound level, the Square, bolstered up by the act of waiting, conforms to most of the principles set by Foucault.

The first principle that lends itself easily for applicability is the idea of opening and closure. Although it is quite challenging for the Square, given its fluid and open nature, to conform to such a rigid criterion, it -- thanks to the determined protestors who were keen on defending the Square against the violent attacks launched by pro-regime supporters, police forces and thugs -- was re-structured to emerge as a bordered space possessing a strictly controlled system of opening and closure. The process of accessing the heterotopic Tahrir was regulated through checkpoints established at the multiple entries of the square. People had to show their identification cards, had their handbags and belongings searched by male and female volunteer ushers before being allowed to enter the seemingly fluid non-bordered square. Such procedures, which were meant to secure the revolution and bring it to its ultimate end, were received by compliance and respect from the protestors regardless of their educational and social standards. As such, the heterotopic space of Tahrir was recognized as an epitome of security and safety. Yet as Ghannam rightly contends, the system of opening and closure was not only about security; “it also marked the boundaries between the here and there, the present and future, the real and the imagined. Enclosure helped create a sense of unity and a shared destiny and facilitated the actualization of a counter arrangement that critiqued existing systems of power, and that offered an alternative vision of the future” (n. pag.).

The following readily applicable principle is the existence of multiple sites within one heterotopic space, which betrays itself clearly in the various logistic facilities and “incompatible sites” established to meet the needs of the protesters. Hence, the space of the Square encompassed the collective spaces of tents, food-selling trucks, supermarkets, public toilets, makeshift clinics, the kids entertaining area, the recreational and broadcasting truck-stage, the arts performance studio, galleries (exemplified by the multiple paintings and graffiti
displayed by artists) and worship spaces for both Muslims and Christians; as Joseph Dana observes, Tahrir felt “like a slice of everything the city has to offer on any given day” (2016, n. pag.). In fact, as the protestors continued to wait, the Square had gradually turned into a city within a city.

The subsequent readily applicable principle is that of function. As stated above, in Foucault’s theory, the function of heterotopia is imposed by the needs of the society in which it emerges and that function can change across temporal lines. The emergence of Tahrir as a heterotopic space was propelled by some societal and political needs, which can be epitomized through the quest for Foucauldian power -- the imposition of people’s will upon the state. Similar to the state which exercises its power through its manipulation of physical space, sometimes -- as Foucault points out -- prisons, concentration camps, or even clinics, people, on the other hand, exercised their power by physically seizing and manipulating the open space of the Square in a way that had ascribed new functions to its space. Notably, upon the fulfillment of such needs, the square assumed its normal function with the protestors, in an internationally acclaimed gesture, joining hands in cleaning up and beautifying the site. The swiftness with which the Square assumed its heterotopic function and later resumed its normal urban identity points, if in an indirect way, to the elasticity with which space can be manipulated and the substantial role played by people in the establishment of heterotopic spaces.

The following principle is the linkage between heterotopias and “slices of time.” For Foucault, as stated above, heterotopias fully function “when traditional time is broken” (1984, 6) -- a major feature of the act of waiting peculiar to the eighteen-day revolution. Anthony Barnum reminds us that some heterotopic places such as camps, places of protests, or setups have starting points in time but they lack an absolutely defined end-point (2018, n. pag.). The role of waiting in such temporary heterotopias, therefore, cannot be underestimated. In fact, waiting distorts the normal temporal cycle of everyday life routines. As Harold Schweizer rightly contends, while waiting, we “enter a temporality different from that time in which … we daily strive to accomplish our tasks … [and] awaken to the repressed rhythms of duration and thus also to the deeper dimensions of our being” (2005, 777-78). By breaching normal time through the act of waiting in Tahrir square, one can argue, people entered into a realm of temporality free from the constraints of normal everyday life routine, a temporality that helped them realize the power of their being -- their agency as citizens capable of defying the political system, on the one hand, and changing the nature of urban space, on the other. The idea of people’s awareness of their own agency is particularly clear in the slogan “al shaa’b yoreed” (people
Heterotopic Spaces

demand), which was iconic of the revolution. People’s realization of their own power and agency was clear in the subsequent Tahrir demonstrations through which people and political activists imposed their demands on the SCAF and ultimately in the 2013 Revolution through which people imposed their will in ousting president Morsi and his Muslim brotherhood government.

In his final principle, Foucault shows how heterotopic spaces enjoy a specific relationship with “the space that remains” and hence emerging as either a space of illusion or one of compensation. In this respect, heterotopias appear to introduce a version of perfection unattainable in the real space. A cumulative look at Tahrir Square indicates, in light of the foregoing analysis, that it was a heterotopia of illusion that nakedly disclosed some grave shortcomings in the social and political structure of the state. The fact that the Square succeeded in breaking the rigid barriers of class, religion, and ideologies points sharply to those very divisions that tend to tear up the societal and political textures of the country. The equality worked on at the level of gender roles sharply highlights the stereotypes governing the distribution of such roles in society. The elusive communion achieved among people with different political orientations, particularly liberals and Islamists, underlines the radical rupture between the two parties, such rupture which started to resurface when Islamists later moved to power.

**Conclusion**

The previous analysis shows how the two French philosophers Foucault and Lefebvre introduced two different views of the utopic and heterotopic and how such views provide rich tools in analyzing the spatial transformation of Tahrir Square during the mass protests in January 2011. Through Foucauldian lens, Tahrir transformed from a potential public place to an actual tangible social heterotopic space conforming to Foucault’s epistemological principles. By physically seizing the Square and manipulating the art of waiting, Egyptians succeeded in writing a new chapter in the book of heterotopia of urban common spaces. Through Foucauldian lens, Tahrir emerged as a heterotopia of illusion reflecting the social, economic, and political conflicts pervading the country. Similarly, through Lefebvrian dynamics, Tahrir Square -- with its various governmental architectural bodies -- emerged as a utopic center representing power absolute within the protestors’ minds. During the Revolution, Tahrir emerged as a utopia symbolizing the multi-layered equality in a way that pointed most sharply to the multiple forms of inequality plaguing the whole country, which was then occupying a heterotopic symbolic position. Through
Foucauldian lens, Tahrir emerged as a heterotopia through which people broke away with normal time and came to a consciousness of their potential agency and power, a fact embodied in the success of toppling two regimes. Similarly, from a Lefebvrian standpoint, Tahrir was a utopia symbolizing people’s determination; it represented another form of power absolute. It emerged as an appropriated utopic space whose very meaning was produced by the protestors. It was a place where the symbolic space united with the socially-produced one - - represented by the very activities performed by people during their protests to produce such Lefebvrian utopic image.

Whether a Foucauldian heterotopia or a Lefebvrian utopia, Tahrir carved its name in history and established itself as an iconic symbol of people’s determination, agency, and power. In fact, Tahrir was a source of inspiration for a long list of protests that swept the world in subsequent years including the well-known Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States (September 2011), and the “Take the Square” protests in Spain (May 2011) With Tahrir’s Revolution taking the lead; such movements further enhance the views of Foucault and Lefebvre on the elasticity of space and the role of the subject in casting new meanings -- heterotopic or utopic -- to the supposedly fixed space.

Endnotes
1 This paper is based on a workshop entitled “Heterotopia Between Theory and Practice” which was conducted at the symposium “Imaginaries of the Future: Historicizing the Present” held at NewCastle University, UK, 28-30 June 2015. The project had therefore preceded most of the publications reading Tahrir as heterotopia. Below is a URL of the conference program.
2 The term utopia was used generically in relation to Tahrir square in various newspaper articles. Tahrir was also read as a utopian and dystopian place in May Telmissany’s article’s “Utopian and Dystopian functions of Tahrir Square.” In no study, however, was Tahrir read as a Lefebvrian utopia.
3 Foucault’s theory of heterotopia crowns his earlier intensive, albeit unobtrusive, entanglement with the question of space traceable in his explorations of the history of asylums, prisons and psychiatric clinics and also in his well-established dialectic of power/knowledge which entailed the localization of powers “in their historical and geographical specificity” (Foucault 2007 “Meshes,” 156) given that “discipline is … above all an analysis of space” (156). Elsewhere, Foucault shows how “space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialect” (1980, 70). In a further move, Foucault, keen on
shaking such epistemological hierarchy, also deconstructs the taken-for-granted relationship between literature and time and foregrounded the role of space in literary production in his article “The Language of Space” (2007). After showing how writing “whether or not addressing itself to the past, …. was caught in the fundamental curve of the Homeric return…. To write was to return to the origin, to re-capture oneself in the primal moment” (2007 “Language,” 163), he illustrates that in the twentieth century, particularly after the works of Nietzsche and Joyce, “such kinships” were undone and that language is “or perhaps became a thing of space” (2007 “Language,” 163), In unequivocal terms he points out that “it is in space that… language unfurls, slips on itself, determines itself choices, draws its figures and translations. It is within space that it transports itself, that its very being “metaphorizes itself” (2007 “Language,” 163).

4 The word “anomie” is often defined as the state of normlessness. According to Alex Law, anomie refers to “the unhappy asocial condition generated by an absence of moral regulation ….” Individuals become isolated and separated from the norms and rules that govern the social life of an integrated community” (2011, 14-15). The term was first used by French sociologist Emile Durkheim in his book The Division of Labour in Society (1893) and was later re-visited by Henri Lefebvre.

5 In their article “They don’t Represent Us! The Global Resonance of the Real Democracy Movement from the Indignados to Occupy,” Jérôme E. Roos and Leonidas Oikonomakis cite one of the protestors in Spain saying “Of course Egypt inspired us! The Egyptians showed us that it was possible to have a revolution without leaders. That it was possible to overthrow a regime through a non-violent occupation of a square. Of course that inspired us” (n. pag.). They also cite the Canadian magazine Adbusters writing during the protests of Occupy Wall Street that “America now needs its own Tahrir” (n. pag.)

Works Cited


Introduction

In the 1960s, literary journalism emerged as a new hybrid genre that combines the best practices of both factual journalism and fictional literature. It represents a body of work that “reads like a novel or short story except that it is true or makes a truth claim to phenomenal experience” (Hartsock 2000, 1). Literary journalism has various labels that are used interchangeably. The “terminological inconsistencies” inherent in this hybrid genre have led critics to employ various concepts to label this genre such as “nonfiction novel”, “faction”, “historiographic metafiction”, or “historical narrative” (Flis 2010, 1-2). Other labels of the genre include “literary nonfiction,” “new journalism,” “literary journalism,” “literary reportage,” “factual narrative,” “literature of fact,” and “the true-life story.” The plenty of the concepts for this genre makes “finding a uniform and a fixed definition … a virtually impossible task” (Flis 2010, 6). This terminological cornucopia is due to the “epistemological fluidity” of its boundaries (Hartsock 1999, 446). The emerging genre dates back to the publication of In Cold Blood (1965) by Truman Capote of and The Armies of the Night (1968) by Norman Mailer. In the year of its publication, Mailer’s The Armies has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction. Since then, it has been the focus of critical investigation as a major work of American literary journalism.

The emergence of literary journalism witnessed a large debate concerning its historical beginnings. Some critics, such as Doug Underwood who, in his book Journalism and the Novel (2011), traces the early seeds of the genre in the works of Daniel Defoe and William Hazlitt as the precursors of literary non-fiction. In the same vein, Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, Mark Twain, John Hersey, and many others lend themselves to the genre of literary journalism. Literary non-fiction depends more on facts rather than on fiction. However, there is a consensus among the critics that “literary journalism” has become a genre-

* Lecturer in the Department of English, Fayoum University, Egypt.
Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
concept characterizing the distinctive form of American literature of the 1960s (Underwood 2011, 9). The genre originated in the United States where it “has developed in a truly versatile and abundant way” (Flis 2010, 2). The emerging genre has added a new color and taste to the journalistic discourse in which journalistic material is presented in a literary narrative form. Such a new genre of literary writing has focused on the formalistic narrative strategies of foregrounding and backgroun

ding according to which the writer’s subjectivity, ideas, and perceptions are foregrounded while factual and historical journalistic news are backgrounded. These strategies create a sense of amalgamation between the fictional and the factual narratives of literature and traditional journalism. The hybrid quality of the works of literary journalists locates them in the halfway between the distinct discourses of both genres where they “have lost an opportunity to gain special insight into the limits and potential of different narrative forms” (Fishkin 1985, 3).

Norman Mailer (1923-2007) is considered the co-founder of the hybrid genre of literary journalism with Truman Capot during the 1960s. He has created a discursive narrative that problematizes the generic boundaries of journalistic and novelistic discourses. Moreover, he recognizes the value and power of literary journalism in both its literary dimensions and political associations. The genre allows him to acknowledge the tension occurring within contemporary literature and journalism without having to abandon either form. Furthermore, Mailer utilizes literary journalism to find a contact zone through which he can incorporate the values of these distinct genres while avoiding their flaws. He keeps an eye on the real world by inducing his work with journalistic information. Meanwhile, he subverts the simplistic objective/subjective binary of news reporting through novelistic narrative. In short, Mailer finds in the emerging genre an outlet to keep himself connected to the rapid changes of the sixties. The main characteristics of his texts are their modern topics and experimentations with form that provoke new literary genres. Such new genres have got rid of the mediocrity of the traditional genres caused by the “used-upness of certain forms, or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities” (Barth 1984, 64). Mailer’s novels, thus, depict the status of American fiction “at the end of one age and on the threshold of another” (Coover 1973, 61–62) by reflecting the interplay and the overlapping of both journalistic modes of factual presentation and the novelistic fictional forms.

Mailer has positioned himself as a prolific and controversial writer who resists categorization within any dogmatic form. Not only was he a novelist, journalist, critic, and essayist, but he was also a director, screenwriter, actor, poet
Wael Mustafa

and politician. He experimented with every sort of narrative form, including what he invented himself. Many critics, such as Robert Lucid (1971) and Michael Lennon (1982), regard Mailer as one of the greatest voices of his generation. Mailer delves deeply into political issues and meanwhile pursues his new interest approaching the area between fact and fiction. In an interview with Richard Stern and Robert Lucid, Mailer identifies himself as one who “started as one kind of writer” and has been “evolving into another” (Lennon 1982, 1). This evolution induces Mailer to combine journalistic and novelistic discourses into a new discursive genre that paves the way for more aesthetic value. Furthermore, Mailer gives priority to the articulation of the dialogic interactions that occur among the text, the author, and the reader. In this respect, Robert Lucid points out, “Mailer enunciates, more clearly and consciously than had any of the public writers in the tradition before him what the real relationship is between the public writer and his audience” (1971, 6).

This paper is an attempt to approach the various tropes of literary journalism examining how they creatively shape the factual material into novelistic form. To show the theoretical manifestation of literary journalism in practice, the paper provides a critical reading of Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night* (1968) as a literary journalistic text *par excellence*. Such a reading can elucidate how the emerging genre effectively occupies a third space between the well-established genres of fiction and non-fiction. The researcher proposes three tropes of literary journalism: *the intertextual, the self-reflexive, and the autobiographical* and critically discusses Mailer’s *Armies* as both explicit and implicit applications of the new genre.

**Multiple Discourses of Literary Journalism**

The literary journalistic narrative is a discursive genre that “conveys the hybrid nature of the texts and thus their paradoxical, threshold, problematic nature” (Anderson 1989, ix). It is characterized by its foregrounding of the poetic and referential aspects. According to Barbara Lounsberry, this genre paradoxically represents a fertile ground for literary criticism though it remains greatly unexplored by contemporary critics (1990, xi). The cornucopia of theoretical and critical vectors on literary journalism tends to investigate the reasons behind the emergence of this discursive genre. The rupture that occurred in the 1960s within literary realism and traditional journalism because of the dominance of television and other social and political forces results in the perpetuation of this genre. Within the American context, television, as a powerful social medium, has concurred with the absurd reality in the literary scene. Thus, the classical sense of reality has been degenerated by the radical
shifts in all cultural, social, political, economic, and informational spheres. Such a sense of reality has dismantled the worldview and the people’s perception of it. In this respect, the novelist, Philip Roth, stated that “credible” reality was absent in the fiction of the 1960s as absurdity replaced the common, ordinary perception of life. Realistic fiction witnesses the absence of modern reality due to its resistance to the realistic treatment in such a type of fiction. For Roth, the American actuality is “a kind of embarrassment to one’s own meager imagination” as it “is continually outdoing our talents” (1961, 224).

The impossibility of understanding, the indescribability, and the incredibility of American reality suit the “altered nature of reality” in the mid-twentieth-century. This explains the turn towards “the mythicizing objectification of the world by the media through which we get much of our ‘news.’ The ‘reality’ the mass media cover —objects of their attention—has become indistinguishable from the way they cover it” (Frus 1994, 164). Phyllis Frus points out that mass media had utterly transformed the way that American society saw itself. The new paradigm creates a sense of menace for both traditional journalists and novelists as it blurs the distinctive characteristics of both genres. In this regard, Edward Epstein assumes that journalistic narrative can allure its audience only through adopting fictional imagery in which characters are cast “in the form of the fictive story, with narrative closure” (2000, 263). Therefore, visual media emerges as a “menace” to print journalism in such a context of shifting paradigms. To resolve this devastating situation, the journalists managed to find a new role in the journalistic narrative through which they used tropes of fiction to tell news stories. This marked the emergence of literary journalism in the 1960s.

Literary journalists attempt to overcome the crisis of reality through the depiction of a complex and multi-faceted world, in which the central events of the story become even more obscure. They use journalistic narrative as a trope to explore reality that conventional realistic mimesis has failed to depict adequately. According to David Lodge, “There is no point in carefully creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems illusory” (1971, 33). Literary journalists do not adopt the escapist formula of Romanticism with its tendency for a retreat from the world of reality. Rather, they attempt to delve into reality and to explore the world as if it were art. They not only construct but also attempt to understand reality out of the fragmented ambiguity of journalistic facts. In brief, literary journalism, manipulating literary techniques, attempts to break with the singularity of historical narrative in favor of a far more complicated reality. Literary journalists strive to uncover the more universal and artistic truths about the world in which we live.
The technique of mixing a fictional narrative with a journalistic discourse is anew as it first appeared in the early eighteenth and nineteenth century novels such as *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722) by Daniel Defoe and *The Flight* (1822) by William Hazlitt. However, despite the early use of this technique, the modern version differs from the old one as the historical circumstances and intentions of these literary journalists were unique to this era, as was the proliferation of writers, new and old, who quickly adopted the style for their own reasons. In the “Introduction” to *The New Journalism* (1975), Tom Wolfe states that literary journalism, as a discursive literary genre, emerged as a response to the crisis of realistic representation in the contemporary literary scene. Wolfe asserts that the intersection of novel and journalism is largely due to the abandonment of realism by authors and the need to bridge the gap between fact and fiction. For Wolfe, the novel had been “an American dream” in the forties, fifties, and the early sixties of the twentieth century. It “was no mere literary form. It was a psychological phenomenon. It was a cortical fever” (1975, 19). Moreover, Wolfe sees the crisis of the 1960s novel had occurred when “the richest terrain of the novel” had been abandoned in favor of mythologies and fabulism (1975, 43). Therefore, it was an opportunity for both journalists and novelists to come closer and to play a shared role in establishing the hybrid genre of literary journalism that “reaffirms the primacy of that form as a mode of exploring and interpreting experience” (Lodge 1971, 12). Rather than seeing the novel as a fading genre of literature, literary journalists saw the novel as having a promising role in interpreting human world experience. They found in the novel the generic functions that could allow for the breadth and scope to deal with such a complex subject as the modern world.

Mailer’s *The Armies* is written in an overtly self-conscious manner as Mailer assumes the roles of both the author and the central character. It models itself on the tradition of the more experimental fiction of the time. In this novel, Mailer does not abandon reality like fabulists but rather he extends the literary range to make reality relevant and meaningful in this multi-faceted and complex world. In this novel, Mailer attacks traditional reporting that rarely gets at the truth of a situation such as the march on the Pentagon. Kathy Smith points out that Mailer, throughout the text, uses literary journalistic narrative strategies to “question the authority of the newspaper text and to discover the limits of the reporter's narrative practices” (1994, 179). For Mailer, these limits exist because reporters do not simply list facts, but retell stories and thereby insert, consciously or not, their own bias and subjective view into their reports. Mailer explains that the journalistic historical discourse “is so incoherent, inaccurate, contradictory, malicious, even based on error that no accurate history is conceivable” (1968,
284). Thus, journalistic dictum of objectivity is simply a myth or a lie that Mailer earnestly seeks to uncover and undermine by “giving way to a more active, mediated, journalist-centred form of reporting” (Hallin 1992, 18). Hartsock states that “a rift occurred between literature and journalism … as a result of the objectification of news to which narrative literary journalism would prove the reaction” (Hartsock 2000, 17).

*The Armies* has often come under critical scrutiny as a literary journalistic text that amalgamates fictional narrative with factual discourse concerning the Peace March to the Pentagon in October 1967 against the war in Vietnam. Phillip Bufithis states that in the *Armies* “the events are shaping the book instead of novels shaping the events” (1978, 87). Mailer’s text shows the literary talents of its author as a journalist, who has an inner desire, not to tell the news objectively, but to narrate, interpret, and reflect upon such news subjectively. The text is divided into two books as indicated in the subtitle. The first book, entitled “The History as a Novel: The Steps of the Pentagon,” tells the story of the March and Mailer’s active participation in it (historical fact) from the highly subjective perspective of the author (narrative technique). Moreover, Mailer, adding a dramatic touch to the book, inaugurates the first book *in medias res* as he indicates that his participation in the activities of the March comes after a phone call invitation. Another dramatic touch is added to the *dénouement* of the first Book. Mailer, the author, prefers the open ending of his narrative by closing the first book with his protagonist, Mailer the character, being released after his arrest during the March. This helps the readers to contemplate on the unanswered questions of the text concerning what happened during the arrest and the release of the protagonist. It also paves the way for the text to have a sequel, the second Book, entitled “The Novel as History: The Battle of the Pentagon”.

In the second book, as its title indicates, the author adopts a highly objective and omniscient point of view to give a realistic account of “the Battle of the Pentagon” that occurred after the arrest of the protagonist between the demonstrators and the police. Therefore, the framework of the text indicates that it provides a two-fold perspective in dealing with the political issue of the war in Vietnam. The first book presents a subjective view from within the march. As fiction, it unravels the protagonist’s personal experience and his engagement in the event of the March. In the second book, Mailer, the author, establishes himself as the journalist or the historian who objectively and omnisciently accounts for the March as an outsider. Uniquely, then, *The Armies* interweaves the separate discourses of fiction, journalism, and history into a distinctive hybrid genre that launches “an explicit attack on the objectivity and
impersonality of the conventional media” (Hollowell 1977, 92). The discursive narrative of *The Armies* subverts the hierarchies of the traditional genres. It creates a hybrid matrix of discourses in dialogue with each other with no one discourse claiming the ultimate truth or superiority over another.

**Three Tropes of Literary Journalism**

Literary journalists have a sense of literary aspirations that enable them to overcome and to challenge the hurdles of objectivity. According to John Hollowell, the emerging genre of literary journalism foregrounds the subjective over the objective in an attempt to report “stories hidden beneath the surface facts” (1977, 23). Moreover, literary journalists not only write the news stories from their own point of view but also become the story by involving themselves into it. By so doing, they manage to depict a vivid picture of life that standard objective reporting cannot achieve. Ironically, this subjective journalism “strives for a higher kind of ‘objectivity’” (Hollowell 1977, 22). Such an objectivity is achieved through the treatment of the subject of the stories. The use of the subjective style in treating ‘objective’ subjects results in a far deeper and more meaningful story than could ever be told through the conventions of traditional journalism that fails to “offer the individual a meaningful relation to” the story (Hellmann 1981, 5).

Another feature of literary journalism is its ability to demystify the shifted reality of the age. Literary journalists allow themselves to be involved in the story being told. By being involved in the story, literary journalists manage to get their ordinary reader suddenly familiarized with the alien and shocking tone of their stories. Through all the craziness and absurdity, literary journalism allows humanity to come through. Literary journalism, furthermore, utilizes novelistic techniques such as the portrayal of dramatic scenes, dialogue, recording narrative/descriptive details, and point of view in writing news stories. Thus, it serves “two strains of rhetorical intention: on the one hand, to provide a factual account, on the other, to tell a story” (Hartsock 2000, 80). This adds a visual scope to literary journalism and enables it not only to recount events to the readers or audience but also to bring them there. The literary journalist, by using novelistic techniques, attempts “to convey information and to provide background not usually possible in most newspaper and magazine reporting” (Hollowell 1977, 25).

Motivated in part by their inner desire to be novelists as well as journalists, literary journalists attempt to achieve the Horatian pragmatic formula of literary writing, that is, to *dulce et utile* – “amuse and inform” – to justify their literary journalistic writings. In other words, literary journalism should aim to provide
the readers with pleasure, which they usually entertain as a matter of style, and with utility, which they usually get as a matter of information and facts. In this respect, moreover, pleasure is almost seen either as independent of, but consistent with, journalistic instruction, or as subordinate to it. This may shatter the illusions and the fears of the conventional journalistic community who fear that the information might become secondary to the entertaining elements of the story. Bored with traditional news reporting, readers find the appropriate alternative in literary journalistic texts that simultaneously move, delight, and inform them. Such texts give them “the feeling of being inside the character’s mind and experiencing the emotional reality of the scene” (Wolfe 1975, 53). Therefore, literary journalism blurs the boundaries between literary narrative and journalistic discourse or between the literary form of the novel and journalistic report. It establishes itself as a powerful force in forming cultures and societies.

The novelists, as well as the journalists, at the time, found that the new social reality could not be represented through old flawed conventions. There was a need for a new mode and medium of representation of reality in order to mediate the gap between reality and art. Literary Journalistic narrative, thus, is a hybrid anti-canonical discourse that aims at transforming news or historical stories into literature through an act of what Bakhtin (1981) has called “novelization”, that is, the generic effect of novel on other genres. Leonora Flis discusses this novelizing effect stating, “the novel can indeed include, ingest, and devour other genres and still retain its status of a novel” (2010, 65). This novelizing effect is due to the dialogic nature of the novelistic genre that makes other “monologic” genres “more free and flexible” (Bakhtin 1981, 7). It results in “incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language” in any monologic genre to make it “dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody” (Bakhtin 1981, 7). Through this novelizing effect, “the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality” (Bakhtin 1981, 7). Literary journalism utilizes this novelizing effect by its tendency towards subjectivizing journalism as well as journalizing or objectivizing the novel (Flis 2010, 27). Thus, it explores the very nature of how reality is constructed in an attempt to simultaneously document and interpret a historical situation.

In a literary journalistic text, the objective truth of traditional journalism and history intersects with the subjective truth of art and literature. In this respect, Don DeLillo, in an interview in 2007, distinguishes between journalism and
fiction. He states that “journalism is the first draft of history” whereas “fiction is the final draft” as “a writer can work his way into the impact of history on interior lives” (Binelli 2007). Therefore, the great significance of literary journalism lies in its ability to orchestrate unobtrusively the objective historical discourse with the subjective and speculative narrative of literature. Hence, it is through this critical lens that the present paper can map out the three tropes of literary journalism, proposed by the researcher, and their manifestation in Mailer’s The Armies.

a) The Intertextual

Literary journalists significantly share an intensified awareness of intertextuality. There is a common consensus among them that a meaningful world can always be projected not through a process of mythos-making but rather through the operation of various versions of the same story in a certain text or the interaction of the text itself with other texts within it. Intertextuality has particularly permeated the theoretical framework of literary journalism. Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin and Roland Barthes are among the major critics who seek to give a thorough definition of the term, “intertextuality.” According to Kristeva, “Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another”; it is through intertextuality that the “poetic language is read as at least double” (1980, 66). It is obvious that this definition aptly recapitulates the main characteristics of intertextuality. First, any text relates in a way or another to other texts constituting a mosaic. Second, any text enthralls other texts within itself in a process that results in a metamorphosis of the text into another new form. Third, such a textual metamorphosis creates a sense of doubling and infinitude that denies originality. Every text is an intertext in another text. Therefore, intertextuality is “the most important tool” through which, the intertext endows itself with “creativity and productivity” undermining any sense of authorial control over the narrative (Pfister 1991, 212). In brief, intertextuality assumes that a text may thrive on other prior texts in a flux of play to endow itself with new meanings and significance.

Intertextuality creates a condition in which every text is replete with a mutiny of simulacra of stories or inter-texts deprived of any privilege of origin or essence. Barthes explains how intertextuality creates a labyrinthine discourse with a textual infinitude that signifies the “impossibility of living outside the infinite text” (1973, 36). Similarly, McHale draws an analogy between the labyrinthine narrative of intertextuality and “Chinese-box worlds” to show the process of blurring and subverting the fact/fiction binaries. Both intertexts and Chinese-box structures tend to create mutiny of textual worlds through a series...
of “recursive structures” and a *mise-en-abyme* or a labyrinthine discourse within the text itself. Such self-conscious labyrinths or abysses of the text “have the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological ‘horizon’ of the fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world-construction” (McHale 1987, 112). This means that the “recursive structures” are designed meta-narratively to force readers to be lost in the labyrinths of the text’s narrative worlds and construction. Therefore, intertextuality presupposes “recursive structures” through which issues of representation and narrativity are questioned producing infinite gaps between texts and their construction and the worlds they represent it.

The intertextual trope in literary journalism intersects with Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism according to which novel is considered the most dialogic genre with its rejection of the monolithic discourses of other genres that are “encased in a firm and stable monologic framework” which does not “rip apart the presented world” (1984, 17). In literary journalistic theory, such a dialogic discourse is privileged over the monologic discourse of traditional journalism. This dialogic discourse manifests itself in inter-texts or competing stories within a certain text that subvert any idea of originality, hierarchy, or a prior discourse. In a traditional journalistic context, the language of the reporter or the journalist functions in an authoritative zone where it “is not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal” (Bakhtin 1981, 342). So, the rejection of the monolithic journalistic text for a dialogic novelistic one is an evidence of a literary journalistic rejection of the traditional journalistic text whose function is simply to tell “an ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’ picture of the world” (Underwood 2013, 7). Rather, the literary journalistic text is a product and reflection of history as it will always carry the “survivals of the past” (Bakhtin 1981, 66). Moreover, literary journalistic texts are consciously intertextual, as they exist “in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions” (Bakhtin 1981, 294). As a novel, a literary journalistic text reveals its dialogic and intertextual nature. It has a structure in which stories and texts interact dialogically creating various intersecting frames of narrative. In brief, intertextuality moves beyond the individual textual constructs of storytelling to comprise the dialogic flux of texts playing together to constitute inter-texts. Therefore, intertextuality is a defining feature of literary journalism that distinguishes it from historical and journalistic discourses. The latter are monologic discourses that “report everything from an impersonal viewpoint;” on the contrary, the former are intertextual and dialogic discourses.
that create “a typology of discourses” in which competing texts and stories are in a constant dialogue with each other (Carrard 1995, 109).

Literary journalistic discourse is “perhaps the most intertextual of all texts, referring to other texts” in terms of transforming prior historical stories and restructuring conventional literary and journalistic genres and discourses in an attempt to generate a new one, that is, literary journalism (Mills 1997, 65-66). Thus, the journalistic discourse cannot be but dialogic and intertextual as literary journalists manipulate it to compete with other versions of the story. It creates a variety of interrelated discourses; each of which questions and sometimes dismantles the authority of the others (Waugh 1984, 6). Literary journalists, thus, are actively engaged in interpreting and scrutinizing the discursive practices of intertextuality in order to generate their distinctive but hybrid discourse. This hybrid discourse can be conceptualized using Edward Said’s notion of the “contrapuntal”. As the adjective “contrapuntal” implies, the literary journalist discourse exhibits a counterpoint among diverse stories that “play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one” (Said 1993, 51). The competing stories enter into an interplay that results in a new alternative narrative colored with the individual’s perception of reality. The contrapuntal discourse of literary journalism is intertextual in two senses. First, any one story adopted by the narrator or the author might work independently and seem aptly complete to itself without any type of support from other competing stories. Second, the story adopted by the narrator can be combined with other independent stories. In this way, the intertextual or contrapuntal discourse of literary journalism deploys various stories that are entangled with one another as none of them “can exist without the others; they illuminate and explain one another as they explore a single theme” (Kundera 1988, 76).

Mailer’s *The Armies* is an intertextual literary journalistic text which narrates the story of the anti-war March to the Pentagon in 1967 from the perspective of Mailer as a participant and eyewitness. In *The Armies*, Mailer attempts to put all the intertexts and their worlds in an interplay subverting any priori narrative based on political agendas. Therefore, the story of the March has many divergent intertexts each of which, “in [its] own separate way” represents a voice or a counterpoint to the main story; according to Mailer, “The Old Left,” has its own intertext of the story of the March that reads it as a “brickwork-logic-of-the-next-step” (1968, 102).

The Old Left has to adapt this version of the story to get political benefits. The Old Left “would always find a new step – the Left never left itself unemployed” (Mailer 1968, 102). “The New Left”, with “its political esthetic from Cuba”, provides another intertextual layer of the story. This layer has a
revolutionary spirit that “existed in the nerves and cells of the people who created it and lived with it, rather than in the sanctity of the original idea” (Mailer 1968, 104). A third intertextual layer is that of the Negroes or “The Black Militants,” who read the event as “a White War” of the “White Left” and announce “their reluctance to use their bodies in a White War” (Mailer 1968, 120). The White House officials interweave a fourth intertextual layer of the main story of the march. They read their involvement in the story of the March as a story of standing “in sharp contrast to the irresponsible acts of violence and lawlessness by many of the demonstrators” (Mailer 1968, 316).

All intertextual layers can be misinterpretations of the story of the March which is “so odd and unprecedented” with “its monumental disproportions” (Mailer 1968, 68). In accordance with the intertextual trope of literary journalism, no intertext can claim dominance, authority, or privilege over other intertexts in this discursive play on a real event. This discursive play urges Mailer, the narrator, to provide his own intertext of the story from the point of view of “an eyewitness who is a participant but not a vested partisan... ambiguous in his own proportions”—“a comic hero” (Mailer 1968, 67). Mailer, the author-narrator, chooses for his own intertext, a character named Norman Mailer as the protagonist and “the narrative vehicle for the March on the Pentagon” (Mailer 1968, 68). Mailer’s intertextual layer differs from other interrelated intertexts because of its being ideologically and politically free of interest. All the intertexts of the event are historically dependent since the raw material of the story is the historical fact of the October 1967 March on the Pentagon. While the other intertexts are invested politically, the author/narrator’s intertext alone is induced esthetically with its focus on the intrinsic construction of the intertextual narrative.

In The Armies, the contrapuntal dimension of intertextuality that characterizes literary journalism proves the idea that the literary journalist has the potentiality of refutation of competing stories. By looking at a literary journalistic text contrapuntally, intertwined histories and perspectives are taken into account. Such a contrapuntal analysis, developed by Edward Said, can interpret and explore literary journalistic texts, considering both perspectives of the journalist and the artist. This approach is not only helpful but also necessary in making important connections in a non-fiction novel. The contrapuntal discourse, according to Said, shows an “awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts” (Said 1993, 51). It takes in various accounts of socio-
political issues by tackling simultaneously the factual historical perspective of journalism and the literary fabulations of it.

At the outset, Mailer interweaves the narrative of *The Armies* explicitly in a way that both the point and the counterpoint to a *Time* magazine story about the March are orchestrated skillfully. The story of the *Time* gives a picture of Mailer as an “unscheduled scatological solo” protagonist (Mailer 1968, 13). The *Time* endows its version of the story with a thorough depiction of Mailer and the scenes of the Pentagon March. Mailer is depicted as a poseur and phony protagonist of the Pentagon March; his major preoccupation in life is “[s]lurping liquor from a coffee mug” and “[m]umbling and spewing obscenities” (Mailer 1968, 13). The argument of the *Time* gives evidence that “by the time the action shifted to the Pentagon, Mailer was perky enough to get himself arrested by two Marshals” (Mailer 1968, 14).

Mailer, then, offers his counter-argument to the *Time*’s version of the story. In the very outset, he refutes the story of the *Time* by declaring, “Now we may leave *Time* in order to find out what happened” (Mailer 1968, 14). His version of the story stands as a critical refutation that is based on the re-presentation, re-description, and re-enactment of the incidents and scenes mentioned in the *Time*’s story. Thus, his story presents a much greater complexity of the scene because all circumstances are imbied of the thoughts of the reporter-protagonist. For example, on the eve of the March, Mailer appears onstage at the Ambassador Theater in Washington to give a pro-demonstration speech. He is a bit drunk, holding a mug of bourbon he had brought from a party hosted by “an attractive liberal couple” (Mailer 1968, 24). Little is obtained from the sensory details of the theater or the multitude that awaits it; instead, the focus is on its uneasy pathways in which each action is interrupted by an intense inner monologue.

Thus, on the way to the theater, sensory details (fresh air, bourbon) quickly become inward meaning: “The fresh air illumined the bourbon, gave it a cerebrative edge; words entered his brain with the agreeable authority of fresh minted coins” (Mailer 1968, 40). The author impregnates the scene with the character’s mood. Mailer, the character, motivates the next action, in which he goes behind a urinal “Flush with his incandescence, happy in all the anticipation of liberty which this Götterdämmerung of a urination was soon to provide”; he “did not know, but he had already and unwitting to himself metamorphosed into the Beast” (Mailer 1968, 42). Mailer refers, here, to the impact generated by his rowdy presentation at the event at the Ambassador Theater. It is obvious that Mailer, in his story, seeks to subvert the story reported by “the young man from *Time* magazine” at the very outset of the text. Through intertextuality, Mailer
manages to displace the position of the journalist by reducing it to a character in his story. He, thus, deprives the journalist of any notion of reliability or impartiality.

Through intertextuality, Mailer seeks to distance himself from both the formula of the realistic novel and that of essentially referential journalistic impartiality. The two intertexts intertwine historically in an attempt to perpetuate what Barthes called the “referential illusion,” that is, the exclusion of the subject for the sake of the object. In other words, both intertexts presuppose the idea of a cohesive world to be discovered under neutral intermediation of an anticipating subject, simply an observer. In opting for an open, fragmentary, and frankly subjective character, Mailer depends on a metafictional strategy, together with parody mockery, and hilarious mood, to mock the Time reporter and the alleged impartiality and reliability of his journalistic narrative. In short, the metafictional form in Armies seeks a warning about the unresolvable character of reality and its possible narrative transformations.

The norms that govern journalistic discourse – mainly information, actuality, objectivity or neutral style – creates a “reality effect” (Barthes 1989, 139). Thus, the will of meaning precedes the idea of “fact”, or “real”, which “is never anything but an unformulated signified, sheltered behind the apparent omnipotence of the referent” (Barthes 1989, 139). In The Armies, Mailer interweaves two versions of the same story with different perspectives to highlight the schism between the novelistic discourse with its focus on experience and the journalistic discourse with its emphasis on information. In other words, the fundamental tenet of the novelistic discourse is the fidelity to the individual experience; in contrast, the journalistic discourse seeks to “let know” in an attempt to achieve the “referential illusion” or referential function of such a discourse.

In brief, literary journalism adopts an intertextual trope or paradigm to render a new narrative form that deliberately comprises factional threads interwoven in a fictional form. Such an intertextual formula renders a narrative in which the author conveys his own perspective and experience of the world but in a dialogic play with other contrapuntal perspectives and experiences. Mailer’s The Armies skillfully embodies this intertextual trope by presenting Mailer as both a character and an author. Mailer attempts not only to narrate the story of the anti-war march from his own point of view but also to show how his narrative is in a continuous flux and in a contrapuntal dialogue with other perspectives of the same incident. By so doing, Mailer succeeds in casting a spell of doubts on the claims of objectivity endorsed by traditional journalism.
b) The Narcissistic

The second interrelated trope of literary journalism is its tendency towards narcissism. This trope is based on the narrative theories of Mieke Bal (1991) and Linda Hutcheon (1980; 1988). Literary journalistic texts entail a self-reflective mode of writing and reading in an attempt to replace the old author-text relationship with that of text-reader. They subsume the reader into the text. Thus, “literary journalism offers more of an opportunity for reader engagement precisely because its purpose is to narrow the distance between subjectivity and the object, not divorce them” (Hartsock 2000, 132). In most of these texts, the journalist/author is involved in the composition as a writer and as a character involved in the events and incidents of the text. Therefore, the readers have a paradoxical role in the narrative construction, for just as they are forced to recognize the artifice of art in what they are reading, they are still compelled to participate as participants in the process of narrative construction. Thus, narcissistic narrative uses metafictional strategies to lay bare the reader’s narcissism and to offer “a critical perspective on the world and its changeability” (Bal 1991, 257). Hutcheon labels this kind of writing as narcissistic. Literary journalism has a two-fold functional formula. It is both reflexion and reflection.

Reflexion is a text-oriented process whereas reflection is a context-oriented process. In the former, a literary journalistic text aims at throwing back “or mirroring itself and other texts as a narrative strategy of subverting and dismantling any explicit relation between the text itself and the world which it represents. This sense of the concept draws the attention to “mirror structures (doublings, analogies, frames, mise en abyme)” of the text (Onega and Landa 1996, 31). The other function entails that a literary journalistic text invites the reader to reconsider, contemplate, and evaluate the textual construction and the world represented in the literary text. Thus, a literary journalistic narrative endows its readers with a functional role in constructing the meaning of the text. It is a type of a narcissistic narrative that “make[s] this act a self-conscious one”; the reader is integrated into the narrative and is involved “in a creative, interpretive process from which he will learn how the book is read” (Hutcheon 1980, 139). Narcissism, thus, is a playful meta-fictional game in which the main players are the text, the world, and the reader.

The literary journalistic narcissistic trope focuses on the turn towards metanarrative. According to Hutcheon, metafictional narrative refuses the univocal meanings of realistic narrative and modernistic tradition in favor of a multiplicity of meanings, textual self-consciousness, and historiographic self-reflexiveneness. Such a narrative is “contextual and self-reflexive, ever aware of its status as discourse, as a human construct” (Hutcheon 1980, 53). Metafictional
narrative, thus, is characterized by the fusion of literary self-creation and critical thinking about literature itself.

According to Waugh, metafictional narrative seeks “simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction” (1984, 6). It paradoxically functions on two levels: the reader and the text. On the level of readers, it requires them to participate, to be involved intellectually, imaginatively and effectively in its own re-creation. On a textual level, it is all narcissistically self-reflective and explicitly self-conscious. Therefore, it “enacts or performs what it wishes to say about narrative while itself being a narrative” (Currie 1998, 52). Based on Hutcheon’s contention, literary journalistic discourse lends itself into meta-nonfiction or meta-faction. Like metafiction, the narcissistic meta-nonfictional narrative includes many allusions or indirect references to other literary or non-literary texts that make it comprehensively in touch with reality. A literary journalistic text is self-reflexive or “meta-factual” (Zavarzadeh 1976, 123), or “meta-nonfiction” (Lehman 1997, 179). Thus, meta-factual or meta-nonfictional literary journalistic narrative can provide insights into the ontological status of non-fiction, as well as, to the complex nature of writing such a narrative.

It is obvious, thus, that the formal and thematic self-consciousness of meta-nonfiction is paradigmatic of literary journalism, where self-reference and the process of infinite mirroring are frequent. Meta-nonfiction tends mainly to play with the possibilities of meaning and form, demonstrating an intense self-consciousness in relation to artistic production and the role to be played by the reader who, invited to enter both the literary space and the space evoked by the journalistic narrative, thus participates in its production. The literary journalistic narrative, with its narcissistic meta-non-fictional strategies, aims to explore the impossibility of imposing a single meaning or a single interpretation on any news story. In literary journalistic narrative, the narcissistic trope is used in relation to the text itself to refer to its introvert, introspective, and self-conscious nature, not to the author/reporter. In such a narrative, the link between the outside world and textuality has been refashioned on the level of the imaginary process of telling history, not in the product itself -- the storytelling. Therefore, “the story of the writing of the text” becomes the main focus of such a narrative (Anderson 1987, 35).

*The Armies* is narcissistically structured in two parts where “the long, personal, novelistic first part of the book is a necessary prelude to the brief, impersonal (more or less), historical second part” (Weber 1974, 19). The narcissistic narrative in *The Armies* “is not just stated in the book but enacted in
its very narrative fabric and point of view” (Zavarzadeh 1976, 175). In the same vein, Hutcheon points out that The Armies operates narcissistically in two modes: the diegetic and the linguistic. In the diegetic mode, The Armies provides its readers with a parodied, backgrounded, self-reflexive narrative through which they can be self-conscious of their active role in the continuous creation and recreation of the “fictive universe complete with character and action” (Hutcheon 1980, 28). The narrative world of The Armies provides readers with multiple and diverse meanings to the incident of the anti-war March towards the Pentagon. Multiplicity emerges out of the various perspectives of the same story told by the reporter of The Time and retold by Mailer, the narrator. In the process of the Time reporter’s telling and the narrator’s retelling of the scenes of the March, readers become aware of their involvement in the process of creating the fictional universe of the text. The Reporter of The Time and Mailer, the narrator, alternatively exchange roles as a reporter/narrator and as a reader of the same story.

However, in the linguistic mode, The Armies constitutes itself as a quintessential narcissistic text with its “building blocks,” that is, “the very language whose referents serve to construct that imaginative world” (Hutcheon 1980, 29). On the linguistic sphere, Mailer, in The Armies, skillfully reconciles the generic opposites by deliberately subtitling the text: “history as a novel” and “the novel as history”. The text shows its linguistic narcissism by explicitly referring to the referents of two contradicting genres history (factual narrative) and the novel (fictional narrative) as a unity inside the text itself. Another narcissistic feature of The Armies is its ability to interweave the narrative and the linguistic modes of narcissism in a way that the author-narrator always invites the reader into the textual self-consciousness and the narrative self-reflexivity of the text. In The Armies, the narrator explicitly lays bare the narcissistic nature of the text by declaring, “The first book is a history in the guise or dress or manifest of a novel, and the second is a real or true novel – no less! – presented in the style of history” (Mailer 1968, 283-84).

The narcissistic nature of the text, thus, is indicated clearly in two ways. First, the author/narrator holds the mirror up to the text itself to show the dialectical relationship or the fictional game in which the binaries or the “comfortable opposites” of history and the novel are somewhat blurred. In this respect, Thomas Vernon Reed points out that this reconciliation of the generic opposites that “are fused and confused self-consciously” gives birth to “nonfiction novel”, a new hybrid genre that “questions the existence of novel and history as discrete writing forms, and that, in turn, questions the epistemological bases of these forms” (1992, 98). Second, Mailer, as the author/narrator of the narrative, holds
up a mirror to the readers through textual self-consciousness imploring them to read “the work in the way it wants to be read” (Dällenbach 1989, 100).

The narcissistic trope in The Armies is apparent in its form and content. It enables the author to engage himself into the narrative itself to reiterate the textual self-consciousness and self-reflexivity of the narrative by frequently drawing the attention to the writing process of the narrative. By so doing, the author asserts historically his own presence and participation in both the historical moment and the narrative. Thus, the narcissistic trope in The Armies “strengthens and points to the direct level of historical engagement and reference of the text” (Hutcheon 1988, 117). The meta-factual and narcissistic elements appear everywhere in the text. After holding the mirror twice before, up to the text and the reader, the author/narrator holds it again up to the character of Mailer himself.

Therefore, in the last chapter of the first part, the author/narrator confuses and blurs the boundaries between Mailer as an author/narrator and as a character. Mailer discovers that “his dimensions as a character were simple: blessed had been the novelist, for his protagonist was a simple of a hero and a marvel of a fool, with more than average gifts of objectivity” (Mailer 1968, 241). It is obvious that the narcissistic trope of The Armies asserts its own textual and fictive strategies. By merging the real with the fictive, Mailer, narcissistically, shows “a fiction masquerading as a fact, and the fictive, which asserts its own principles of narration and perception” (Bradbury 1993, 202); the text is linguistically in a constant engagement with its own textuality and the processes of its own writing. Meanwhile, it encourages its readers to participate in the narrative in which the author/narrator explicitly addresses them to be actively involved. Therefore, Mailer manages, using diegetic and textual narcissism, to create a literary journalistic text which “will be at once a symbolic act [a novel] and a real act [a history]” (Mailer 1968, 60).

In brief, the narcissistic trope of The Armies, as a literary journalistic text, functions on various levels of novelization. First, it foregrounds the crisis of representation of reality through reflection and reflexion of the text’s own structure. Second, it calls the text’s own representational practices into question. Third, it makes use of meta-factual strategies to explore a text in the flux of its own making and becoming. Fourth, it asserts the death of the author as a creator of the narrative but meanwhile, it grants him another life in the narrative world of the text in which he becomes a visible figure. Fifth, it calls for the reader to participate actively in the narrative and to be self-conscious of his active involvement in the ideological and formal constructions of the narrative. Sixth,
the textual play with form and content foregrounds the idea of the text as an artifice with explicit references to its own nature and blurs the long-held boundaries between fact and fiction.

c) The Autobiographical

A theory of literary journalism has to go beyond the surface news stories and to conduct an in-depth exploration of real lives through the unique combination of history, novel, and autobiography. It delves deeply into further issues than a standard news story could, and endows the stories with a form that appropriated tools and techniques previously confined to fiction. By so doing, literary journalism challenges the traditional journalistic convention with its emphasis on rejecting style in order for a story to be considered realistic. The literary journalists, on the contrary, adopt a literary style with fictional elements merged with a journalist’s eye. Therefore, it is an alternate way of conveying stories: no less authentic than traditional forms. Paradoxically, Philippe Lejeune argues that the intrusion of the self can represent a higher sense of authenticity. His notion of autobiography indicates that when authors attach their own names to characters in their stories, they unconsciously agree that the story is verifiable—after all, they have an off-page identity to protect; thus, “the author’s presence in the text is reduced to just this name. But the place assigned to the name is highly significant: by social convention, it is connected with accepting responsibility by a real person” (Lejeune 1989, 200).

The autobiographical trope enables the author to function as an on-page character and as a real-life human being. According to Lejeune, the author “is not just a person, he is a person who writes and publishes. With one foot in the text, and one outside, he is the point of contact between the two,” (1989, 200). In order to maintain a sense of verisimilitude, a cohesive identity emerges between the self in the story and the author’s own self. Thus, the autobiographical intent of the text “is the affirmation in the text of this identity, referring in the last resort to the name of the author on the cover” (Lejeune 1989, 200). Hence, a writer, who appears in his/her own text, automatically becomes in contact with the reader—that the facts, events, and personalities in his/her text do occur as recorded, and that these elements can be proven off the page—where the author’s name on a cover serves as a promise. The literary journalistic autobiographical trope is “a discourse of identity, delivered bit by bit in the stories we tell about ourselves day in and day out” (Eakin 2008, 2). In such a repeated narrative, “the extended self as the protagonist of self-narration enjoys so central a place in our lives that we are conditioned to accept it as identity’s signature,” (Eakin 2001,
Literary Journalistic Tropes

121). Thus, such a narrative is infused with self-identity in a way that reflects a shifting desire in producing autobiographical literary texts.

The autobiographical trope skillfully creates a compromise between the preference of the literary journalist and the intrinsically subjective features of the genre. One of the tenets of literary journalism is to represent “a response to and rejection of traditional journalistic objectivity” (Stull 1993, 3). In order to achieve this principle, literary journalists have fused the objective with the fictional by endowing the historical event with subjective autobiographical inclinations. Therefore, the autobiographical trope of literary journalistic narrative establishes itself as a textual metaphor that brings forth the imaginative intersubjective experience side by side with the objective historical event of reference as sources for meaning making of the narrative. Nevertheless, literary journalists, usually, omit the explicit projection of the authorial subjectivity using a fictional point of view to ensure a sense of historical objectivity. They overcome the borderlines between public events and their intersubjective experiences by approaching “public fact through a frank, obtrusive, liberated assertion of their private consciousness” (Hellmann 1986, 52). In other words, literary journalists indulge themselves in an intersubjective experience of narrating public historical facts from an individual perspective that problematizes the binaries of public/private, objective/subjective, historical/personal, and consequently journalistic/literary.

The autobiographical trope can be traced in The Armies as the narrative opens a window of intersection between a highly intersubjective experience and reporting a historical event. Through the formal division of the book into two parts, Mailer seeks to establish an inquiry about the status of genres traditionally polarized as fiction and history, literature and journalism, novel and history. In this sense, the first part of the text, by using fictional techniques, appears to be a novel about the March. Meanwhile, it also reflects a kind of autobiographical approach that reflects “the author’s memory scrupulous to facts” (Mailer 1968, 281). According to Mailer, such an approach would be history, a true story. The second part of the text is “dutiful to all newspaper accounts, eyewitness reports, and historic inductions available;” such a narrative is “even obedient to a general style of historical writing” (Mailer 1968, 281). However, this part is “disclosed at some sort of condensation of a collective novel” though it pretends to be a history as designated in its introduction (Mailer 1968, 281).

The autobiographical trope works when the author, implicitly, is himself or herself a protagonist. In The Armies, Mailer is indeed a protagonist - not of the march, but of his own history. In this respect, the authorial self of Mailer
explicitly states that “[t]o write an intimate history of an event which places its focus on a central figure who is not central to the event, is to inspire immediate questions about the competence of the historian” (Mailer 1968, 67). Mailer continues to argue that, “to place the real principals, the foundres or designers of the March” in the center of the narrative “could prove misleading” because “their position in these affairs, precisely because it was central, can resolve nothing of the ambiguity” (1968, 67). Here, Mailer makes use of what Wolfe calls the “third-person autobiographical form” in which the first person disguises in the third person to create a Barthesian reality effect of the subjective narrative (Wolfe 1975, 189). This fictional trick helps to create sympathy for the character constructed fictionally. It distances the fictional character from the authorial figure. Mailer as a character assumes the function of “an eyewitness who is a participant but not a vested partisan,” and that is “ambiguous in his own proportions, a comic hero” whose category is difficult to establish (Mailer 1968, 67).

Designing the narrative in the style of a “mock-heroic” epic, the author/narrator invites readers to reflect critically on the status of the autobiographical self of Mailer himself as a protagonist: “is he finally comic, a ludicrous figure with mock-heroic associations; or is he not unheroic, and therefore embedded somewhat tragically in the comic? Or is he both at once, and all at once?” (Mailer 1968, 67). Thus, the author/narrator self-consciously shows his commitment to his own intersubjective experience as the only possible way to establish a meaningful narrative about the events witnessed and meanwhile, he urges the reader to take part in determining the meaning of the narrative.

Mailer highlights this narrative feature to emphasize its own presence in the reports of “an enormously personalized journalism where the character of the narrator was one of the elements not only in telling the story but in the way the reader would assess the experience” (Lennon 1982, 145-146). The freedom granted for the reader does not prevent the autobiographical self of the narrator/author from expressing his own perspective of the protagonist as a mock-heroic hero and as a figure dedicated to writing his personal history of the March on the Pentagon. Earlier in the text, he suggests to “make [his] comic hero the narrative vehicle for the March on the Pentagon” (Mailer 1968, 68). Mailer, here, continues to explain why he adopts the subjective point of view; according to him, “what was wrong with all journalism is that the reporter tended to be objective, and that was one of the great lies of all time” (Mailer 1968, 195).

The autobiographical trope of the literary journalistic narrative manifests itself in the act of doubling in *The Armies*. Mailer frequently uses this act of doubling in the text. Thus, the narrative is doubled as a novel and as a history;
the author’s own self is doubled as a narrator and as a character; even the story of the event undergoes this act of doubling from the perspective of the *Time* reporter and that of the narrator. Such a doubling of the autobiographical act traces the inward and outward movement of the self into history in a way that “all experience except that limited to a meaningless surface inquiry, all knowledge which goes beyond mere gathering of data is inherently fictional” (Hellmann 1981, 42). Furthermore, the act of doubling of the self, the genre, the personae, the plot, and even the reading process grants Mailer the freedom to play with the epistemological and aesthetic concerns of his own narrative. Thus, the implicit autobiographical traces in the narrative “attempt to move closer to the reality of an event by examining the lens through which that event is viewed” (Kraus 2003, 292). By narrating “the personal history” and communicating his own intersubjective experience of the historical event of the March, Mailer seeks to subvert the sense of objectivity and to foreground his subjective point of view. By so doing, Mailer skillfully interweaves all autobiographical, historical, journalistic, and novelistic elements into a hybrid narrative that blurs “the line between the objective and subjective in nonfiction” (Jelinek 1986, 179). Mailer’s attempt in this text is to fuse the personal and the historical. Overall, the autobiographical trope, along with other tropes, creates a self-conscious and self-reflexive narrative whose meaning is always indeterminate. The autobiographical act of doublings enables Mailer to appropriate historical facts for writing an intersubjective experience of the event as a “personal history”. It also encourages readers from within or outside the narrative to reflect upon and determine the indeterminate significance of the events.

**Factual and Fictional Intersections**

This paper has explored three tropes proposed by the researcher to constitute the poetics and the politics of literary journalism. It illuminates through theoretical analysis how these tropes are at work in Norman Mailer’s literary journalistic text, *The Armies of the Night*. The three tropes discussed in this paper are the *intertextual*, the *narcissistic*, and the *autobiographical*. These tropes indicate that literary journalism emerges as an attempt to question, challenge, and defy objectivity. The intertextual trope is a mode of writing in which the fictional and factual discourses intersect. It examines how literary journalists go beyond the rigid boundaries of distinctive genres using the labyrinthine and contrapuntal narrative of intertextuality. Stories, texts, and genres overlap and intersect in the discursive literary journalistic discourse to transcend the dichotomy between the fictive and the real through intertextual narrative
glimpses of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity. Through the provision of contrapuntal inter-texts, reality becomes unreachable, meaning indeterminate and traditional roles of character, the narrator, author, and reader changeable and unstable. In *The Armies*, this trope manifests itself in the two contrapuntal versions of the story of the March by the *Time* reporter and by the narrator.

The narcissistic trope shows the idea of linguistic and narrative playfulness in flux through processes of reflection and reflexion as prominent characteristics of the meta-factual texts of literary journalism. Historical and realistic representations are problematized by alternately holding the mirror from various lenses up to the text, the author, and the reader. In *The Armies*, Mailer uses this trope linguistically and diegetically to tremble the static roles traditionally played by author/narrator, character, and reader within a self-reflexive text. The autobiographical trope, in turn, is invested by literary journalists to subvert the claims of objectivity and impersonality of conventional journalism. Such a trope enables literary journalists to reinterpret a historical fact from the lens of an intersubjective experience; to portray characters with psychological depth, and to convey information. All these features are usually not possible in conventional journalism.

In *The Armies*, the author/narrator’s autobiographical self, consciously and reflexively, defies, by form and content, the idea of absolute truth and objective reality. In so doing, the autobiographical trope in *The Armies* suggests the possibility of a new discursive narrative, permeated with the living presence of an author/observer of the world, inserted discursively in the great history and in his own story, prepared to refuse, to some extent, the most restrictive path of generality and the will to total omniscience. Overall, *The Armies* utilizes the three literary tropes of literary journalism by developing a discursive narrative in which intertextual, narcissistic, and autobiographical tropes overlap. Such a combination is an important characteristic of Mailer’s style that brings together the historical and novelistic narrative in one discourse, holding them together, and making them inseparable parts of the same story. It calls for novelization, explanation, evaluation, and understanding of the historical event of October 1967 March in Washington.

**Works Cited**


May 1948 witnessed the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe) during which the Zionist Yishuv\(^1\) declared Palestine their homeland. The Palestinian historian and academic Nur Masalha observes in his work, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thoughts, 1882-1948*, that this resulted in a situation where the Palestinians were systematically and brutally massacred (1993, 175). However, the Zionist hegemonic narrative calls these atrocities, reaching their climax on 15 May 1948, the Israeli Declaration of Independence. Narrating 1948, the Zionist grand narrative and Palestinian/Arab metanarrative\(^2\) compete over who owns the land, who regains it, and who has future plans for it (Said 1994, xiii); unfortunately, the hegemonic Zionist grand narrative has so far determined answers to these questions. It is not only that the Zionist grand narrative does injustice to the Palestinian Nakba, but ironically – and perhaps also tragically – the elitist male-dominated Palestinian/Arab metanarrative sometimes misrepresents the Nakba. The Palestinian historian Mahmoud ‘Issa observes that the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative has always been politically driven and has been dominated by male elite members of the Palestinian society (2005, 180), which resulted in marginalising the voices of the *fellahin*, women, refugees, camp residents and poor uneducated Palestinians. Therefore, since the need for a Palestinian/Arab counter-hegemonic Nakba narrative arises, the aim of this paper is to critically analyse the novel, *Time of White Horses* (2007) by the Palestinian-Jordanian Ibrahim Nasrallah as an exemplary literary work of Nakba narrative that resists the Zionist grand narrative, defies the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative and represents an authentic Palestinian peasants (*fellahin*) Nakba narrative.

**Theoretical Background**

The equally limiting and limited view of the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative started to change. Masalha observes that recently “historians have been paying

---

* Lecturer at The British University in Egypt (BUE).

*Cairo Studies in English* (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
increasing attention to the idea of ‘social history from below’ – or ‘from the ground up’, thereby giving more space to the voices and perspective of refugees and women … and incorporating extensive refugee oral testimony and interviews” (2012, 219). Time of White Horses represents the Nakba from the ground up as it is primarily concerned with the Palestinian fellahin. As a way of representing the voices of the silenced, Nasrallah relied on oral testimonies of several Palestinian witnesses and survivors to write Time of White Horses (Nasrallah 2012, ix). Therefore, analysing the novel would be in light of resistance literature. In fact, the late Palestinian prominent literary figure, critic and revolutionary, Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972) was the first to call Palestinian literature as resistance literature in his study Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966 (Harlow 1987, 2). Kanafani defines resistance literature as “writing within a specific historical context, a context which may be most immediately situated within the contemporary national liberation struggles and resistance movements against Western imperialist domination” (qtd. in Harlow 1987, 4); this could describe the Palestinian literary work of concern here. Resisting the Zionist grand narrative that denies the existence of the Palestinians, Nasrallah is keen to represent a glorious Palestinian history. Accordingly, Time of White Horses includes many elements of the epic novel. Defining the epic genre, Mikhail Bakhtin states that it is primarily concerned with: a) the “national … past [that] serves as the subject for the epic; b) the national tradition [that] serves as the source for the epic; c) an absolute epic distance [that] separates the epic world from contemporary reality” (1981, 13). Time of White Horses revolves around Palestine in the nineteenth century with the aim of representing chivalrous Palestinian men.

Nasrallah’s novel has also certain postmodern features that correspond with what Linda Hutcheon calls ‘historiographic metafiction,’ a term which “refutes the … common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact or fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity” (Hutcheon 2000, 93). Time of White Horses intermingles historical figures and events with fictional characters to deconstruct the claims of the Zionist grand narrative and defy the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative. Further, a basic feature of historiographic metafiction is transtextuality, which is defined by the French critic and theorist Gérard Genette as “the textual transcendence of the text” (1997, 1). The two types of transtextuality that Nasrallah uses here are paratextuality and
interextuality to further deconstruct several Zionist claims, but the most prominent of all is the famous Zionist slogan: “a land without a people for a people without land.”

From this perspective, the authority of the author influences both the meaning and ideology of his text.

**Time of White Horses as Part of a Palestinian Resistance Literary Project**

Nasrallah’s novel simultaneously resists the Zionist grand narrative and defies the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative. *Time of White Horses* was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2009 (“Ibrahim Nasrallah” 2015). It is part of Nasrallah’s project *The Palestinian Comedy* in which he documents, in a fictional wrap, the atrocities that the Palestinians have been subjected to throughout history. Nasrallah was greatly offended by Ben Gurion’s declaration: “the old [Palestinians] will die and the young will forget”, which he saw equivalent to the Zionist statement: “had the Palestinians been a people then they would have had a literature” (Nasrallah "On Writing the Palestinian Historical Novel" 2012). Accordingly, he embarked upon this literary project to foreground the Palestinian identity and literature. On the other hand, with the continual misrepresentation of the Nakba, the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative has marginalised any national aspiration that the Palestinians ever had; for example, it has marginalised the Palestinian Great Revolt (1936-1939) and ignored its main figure Ezz Al-Deen Al-Qassam (1882-1935) (Swedenburg 1995, 3). Nasrallah defies this in his novel by centralising the Palestinian fedayeen’s resistance during the Revolt.

Set in the fictional village al-Hadiya, *Time of White Horses* is a Palestinian saga that tackles a span of seventy-five years of the Palestinian struggle, starting from the end of the nineteenth century until the Nakba. Choosing a village to be the setting of the whole narrative significantly serves Nasrallah’s aim of presenting the Palestinian authentic fellahin narrative because the village was “the most important unit in the fellah’s [peasant’s] life” (Ruedy 1971, 122). Nasrallah sought to foreground the fellahin resistance because they were the backbone of fighting the British and Zionist occupations (Sayigh 2007, 4). Thus, the novel focuses on Khaled Al-Hajj Mahmoud’s resistance against the Turkish Ottoman Rule and the British colonial rule.

**Turath and Arab Culture as a Means of Resistance**

Colonial practices seek to destroy the colonised people’s culture and heritage. Frantz Fanon explains that colonialism “[b]y a kind of perverted logic … turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it” (1970, 169); Zionism is no different. In order to secure the disappearance of the
Palestinian people, the Zionist grand narrative has deployed what is known as cultural genocide which is defined by the Jewish Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who himself coined the word “genocide”, as: “the destruction of the cultural pattern of a group, such as the language, the traditions, the monuments, archives, libraries, churches. In brief: the shrines of the soul of a nation” (qtd. in Docker 2004). Writing a Palestinian counter-hegemonic narrative, Nasrallah relies, in his novel, on turath (traditional) elements to preserve the Palestinian identity and heritage.

Time of White Horses begins with a culturally significant place in the nineteenth century Palestinian fellahin’s houses; the madafa (Guest House). The madafa, in the novel, is the place in which many decisions are taken throughout the course of the narrative. For instance, it is the place in which Shaykh Nasir Al-Ali, “one of the most prominent clan-based judges in the country” (Nasrallah 2012, 18) saves the marriage of Khaled, the main character in the novel. It is also the place in which the elders meet strangers. For example, the madafa is where the horse Hamama’s owners come to claim her back. The cultural significance of the madafa is worth mentioning here. Traditionally speaking, the madafa is a place detached from the house; it “can be described as a multifunctional public space for socialising between men as well as for coordinating all sorts of communal duties, responsibilities and services in the village” (Büssow 2011, 120). It is where the village men learn their ancestors’ traditions, ethics and morals that would help them lead a decent life. The seating system in the madafa reflects how the Palestinians respect social order and decorum: it was the norm in pre-1948 Palestine that the person sitting in the centre of the madafa is the village elder and around him sit the rest of the fellahin depending on their social status and role in their community. In some cases, the centre of the madafa was left to a religious scholar or sheikh in a gesture of respect and appreciation as it was the norm in Ottoman Palestine that fellahin would respect the older people and those with high social and religious ranks (Al-Moubaid 1990, 519-21). This deconstructs the Zionist claim that the Palestinians were merely savages, violent, immoral group of Arabs. Thus, giving the madafa this value signifies celebrating the Palestinian past (Slyomovics 1998, 140).

The madafa is also a place in which the Palestinians used to greet their guests by serving them coffee. The task of making coffee was dedicated to a certain person who uses special tools to roast, grind, boil and then serve coffee (Al-Moubaid 1990, 522). The coffee maker used his mortar and pestle to grind coffee, while making a beautiful rhythm that was sometimes accompanied by songs (Al-Moubaid 1990, 523). The tradition of coffee making is another
element of the Palestinian turath that Nasrallah represents in his novel. The character assigned to making coffee, in Nasrallah’s narrative, is Hamdan: “Every time he ground coffee for a guest, Hamdan would come up with a special rhythm suited to the occasion” (Nasrallah 2012, 30).

**Deconstructing the Zionist Grand Narrative**

As the roots of Zionist colonisation of Palestine go back to the nineteenth century (Masalha 1993, 5), Nasrallah sets his novel in the same historical epoch when Palestine was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. The novel dwells upon the harsh tax system that the Turkish Ottomans imposed on the Palestinians and the sudden building of the Greek Orthodox Monastery in Hadiya; two factors that would have cost the fellahin their land. Nasrallah’s resistance narrative “provides a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of economic, political, and cultural domination and repression and through that analysis raises a systematic and concerned challenge to the imposed chronology” (Harlow 1987, 78) of the Zionist grand narrative; thus, deconstructing the famous Zionist slogan and the myth that claims that the Palestinians abused the land whereas the Zionists brought life to it (Ramras-Rauch 1989, 6). A short summary of land tenure in Palestine during the Ottoman era is important here. Most rural land in the Ottoman Empire was held hereditarily on a usufruct basis known as miri. Tenure could in theory be terminated for a number of reasons, including, principally, failure to cultivate or non-payment of taxes. . . . The government also owned a considerable amount of land, jiflik, which it rented as landlord on long-term or short-term leases to cultivators directly or through the intermediary of larger private landlords. . . . The individual’s rights were always expressed as a fraction of the whole. In most villages, each constituent kinship group had become entitled to a fixed proportion of soil of each quality represented in the holding. This system called masha’a, was seen by the British and Zionist observers as economically unsound. . . . From a social and psychological point of view, however, and as a reflection of the dependence of the individual upon the group for every security during a disorganized period of history, masha’a represents an appropriate adaptation. (Ruedy 1971, 122-23)

The harsh tax system that resulted in land loss was enforced in the following manner. Being financially exhausted after the end of the Crimean War (1853-1856), the Ottoman Empire issued the Ottoman Land Code shortly afterwards,
in 1858. The new land code was part of the *Tanzimat* (Reform) period that sought to reform land tenure and taxation among other things (Essaid 2014, 58). This law was issued for several reasons: first, increasing “the area of cultivated land [and] bringing as much *mahlul* (land uncultivated for over 3 years), and *mewat* (dead) State land under cultivation as possible” (Kark 2017, 102), resulting in the second reason which is increasing tax revenue. This law was followed by another law in June 1867 that signalled the beginning of land loss in Palestine: “On 10 June 1867, a law was published permitting foreign citizens to acquire urban and rural land in all areas in the empire, with the exception of the Hijaz … The purchasers included the churches and missions, the Temple Society (German Templers), private initiators, and Jews” (Kark 2017, 103); that was one of the ways by which the Zionist *Yishuv* acquired land in Palestine. From a historical perspective, this deconstructs the Zionist claim that the Palestinians willingly sold their land to Zionist “pioneers” during the nineteenth century (Oppenheimer 2012, 383).

In the nineteenth century, the Greek Orthodox Church built a monastery in Nasrallah’s village Burayj, the representation of which is found in *Time of White Horses* (Nasrallah 2012, x). Nasrallah foregrounds the monastery’s colonial aims rather than its religious identity. Historically speaking, the Greek Orthodox Church in Palestine enjoyed a privileged position that allowed it to gain control over important holy places, one of which is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Colonising a country entails creating interests such as religion-based ones; this happens by means of creating a complex apparatus for attending to such interests such as the church (Said 1994, 100). Therefore, the monastery in the novel is represented as a colonial entity inside Hadiya. The Palestinian laity’s role was restricted to being supplicants. Though some of them could have been well educated, such as Father Elias in the novel, they were prohibited from becoming monks in the brotherhood (Robson 2011, 77-8). Though *Time of White Horses* includes a detailed practice of the Greek Orthodox monastery in the village, the novel, unlike some Zionist literary narratives, does not have any religious motif. Nasrallah eloquently presents Hadiya as a village that encompasses Muslim and Christian Palestinians who suffer from the presence of this foreign entity. Such coexistence is absent in Zionist writings; one of which is Alon Hilu’s *The House of Rajani* (2008). Hilu denies the existence of Palestinian Christians, in Ottoman Palestine, and represents, instead, a land that is inhabited by Muslims and Jews only which renders the struggle over Palestine a religious one. It is this particular claim that Nasrallah seeks to deconstruct here.
Deconstructing the famous Zionist slogan that denies any presence of the Palestinians during the nineteenth century, Nasrallah presents the nineteenth century Palestinians’ struggle with the Greek Orthodox Church’s colonial attempts to exploit their land and annihilate the Muslim identity of some Palestinians. Christianity is the religion of the White coloniser; thus, it is the religion of “civilisation.” The Christian missionaries’ activities have always been indirect ways of colonising non-Europeans. By spreading the loving and peaceful teachings of Christianity, the colonised is fooled to believe the good intentions of the colonisers. The church in Hadiya is a hegemonic entity (Gramsci 2007, 64) that forces its principles on the small village society. In the context of the novel, the church also functions as a school. Schools are social institutions used sometimes to spread the cultural hegemony of the ruling class, but in this context, it is the hegemony of the foreign entity in the village. The monastery’s missionary activities began with appealing to the villagers’ need to educate their children, which echoes Fanon’s perception of colonialism: “the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness” (1970, 169). Hajj Mahmoud, consequently, makes an agreement with Father Georgiou who states that the “Muslim children [would] simply learn to read and write [and the] Christian children [would] … attend lessons on religion if they chose to” (Nasrallah 2012, 50). Nevertheless, this agreement is breached by the evangelist Antonius who “would slip booklets of Bible stories containing simplified Christian doctrine into the children’s pocket” (Nasrallah 2012, 35) and urges the children to memorise them in return for a piece of chocolate. Breaching the agreement signifies that this Father disregards the Palestinian elder and proves the colonial nature of their project.

As it is land that is contested over in the Zionist and Palestinian narratives, Nasrallah dedicates a large part of his novel to discuss the Ottoman harsh tax system, the Greek Orthodox monks’ usurpation of the land’s produce and their abuse of the collected tax. Similar to the Zionist colonisers, the Greek monks aimed to dominate the land; but unlike them, the monks did not seek to expel the Palestinians from their land. The land is the centre of attention of Father Georgiou and Father Theodorus who are certainly determined to usurp it from its rightful owners. The foreign Christians of the monastery appointed themselves owners of the land and set to make use of its fertility and produce. Father Georgiou, like other members of the Greek Orthodox Church in Palestine, “took vows of chastity and obedience but -- significantly -- not poverty” (Robson 2011, 77). Father Georgiou is sure that the monastery’s presence in Hadiya would grant him privileges: “he would be able to collect the tithe, which he could
dispose of however he pleased, as well as the basket of fruit and vegetables, the jars of milk, and the cheeses that came into the monastery in a never-ending stream from one season to the next” (Nasrallah 2012, 54). Father Georgiou’s greed does not stop here; he also makes use of the offerings by the generous villagers to the church. Actually, Father Georgiou could be easily described as a common thief, exactly as Ghada Karmi described the Zionist Yishuv (Al Jazeera English 2013, 16:18-30). The villagers willingly give the monastery the tithe to pay the Ottoman Empire their taxes giving the opportunity to Father Georgiou, and other Greek Fathers as well, to steal their money. Father Theodorus, who is the successor of Father Georgiou, does not hide behind a friendly mask as Father Georgiou did. Father Theodorus invites himself to stroll in the land to be certain of its fertility and produce: “Not a day had passed since his arrival in Hadiya but that [the villagers] had seen him touring the village’s fields and orchards” (Nasrallah 2012, 72). Like his predecessor, Father Theodorus is keen to have the tithe of the land claiming that the monastery would pay it to the Ottoman authorities; he asserts, and at the same time threatens, Hajj Mahmud in an undertone that he has to get the full tithe: “Don’t forget, Hajj, that what you all give me is something I owe the state, and I wouldn’t want to come before the authorities with an incomplete tithe” (Nasrallah 2012, 72).

Though Nasrallah does not mention the Crimean War or the Ottoman Empire’s financial crises, he elaborates upon the war’s consequences on the Palestinian fellahin as they are his main concern. However, he does not victimise the Palestinians, rather he shows their naivety and blind trust of the coloniser. Hajj Mahmoud, like the other fellahin, unwittingly trusts the Greek Orthodox Church. He tells Father Georgiou “because we trusted you … we began paying you one-tenth of our crops and even more. So now, we pay you, and you in turn go and pay taxes on our behalf” to the Ottomans (Nasrallah 2012, 36). The system of paying the fees and taxes is probably the Maqtoo’ whereby “peasants pay a fixed amount of money on an annual basis, whether or not there is an increase in the land's produce” (Mahafzah and Abd Al-Lateef 2009, 100). This tax was collected by “bidders at annual public auctions, usually to city merchants and moneylenders” (Sayigh 2007, 7), but in Hadiya’s case, it is the Fathers of the monastery who would do this job. It was a normal procedure; maybe that is why the peasants did not suspect any colonial motives. Hajj Mahmoud explains to his son “the people at the monastery know more than we do, and they know what to do when they go there. If we went ourselves, we might have to pay a lot more. And, as you can see, we’re trying in every way to free ourselves from the Turks’ iron grip” (Nasrallah 2012, 36). Hajj Mahmoud accepts the monastery’s
authority over the peasants and consequently the land; he unwittingly tries to drive off a colonial domination by another one. This power is granted to the monastery people in the form of “knowing” more than the villagers; as knowledge “induces effects of power” (Foucault 1980, 52). Hajj Mahmoud’s greatest fear is the loss of the land especially that the “the Turks had sold scores of villages at public auction to landowners in Syria and Lebanon. The villages in question had been unable to pay the tithe for a number of years running, and as a result had accumulated large debts to the state” (Nasrallah 2012, 72).

Moved by their determination to resist the Ottoman Empire’s unjust system, the Palestinians were indirectly responsible for land loss. Some of the fellahin, driven by an urge to resist tyranny and fear, did not register their land according to custom during Ottoman rule of Palestine. In Hadiya, some actually trusted the deeds of their land to the Greek Orthodox monastery: Hajj Mahmoud clarifies to Khaled “[t]here are … people among us who haven’t registered their land in their names. However, every one of us knows exactly where his land begins and ends … This is the way it’s been since time immemorial” (Nasrallah 2012, 36). At that time, there were no official documents attesting to a person’s legal title to any land; ownership of a certain part of the land was established by tradition (Aumann 1974, 117). Not registering the land officially is one of the ways by which the Palestinian villagers resisted the Turkish tyranny: “the existence of a deed could only mean one thing, namely that [they] would have to pay more taxes” (Nasrallah 2012, 36) especially that these taxes have been unjust. The Palestinian villagers, at that time, did not comprehend the “the concept of ‘ownership’, so foreign was it to their own concept of ‘right’” to the land (Sayigh 2007, 27). Further, the villagers’ fear that the Turkish Ottoman army recruiter and the tax collector would make use of registering the land made them refuse the whole concept (Ruedy 1971, 124). Answering the hypothetical question of someone claiming the land, which became reality after a few years, Khaled’s grandfather shouts angrily “[c]ould somebody come along and divorce me from my wife?” (Nasrallah 2012, 37), signifying the deep relation between these villagers and their land. This land is elevated to the level of human beings. The Palestinians “feel a ‘mystical affinity’ with their land as the sources of their human and social systems” (Mir 2013, 124). Accordingly, Nasrallah deconstructs Benny Morris’ claim that the Palestinians before 1948 were mere “Arabs” with no distinctive identity and no land to hold to (2004, 42). In this sense, the novelist subtly explains the loss of some acres of land and defies the Zionist grand narrative.
Defying the Palestinian/Arab Mainstream Nakba Narrative

_Time of White Horses_ does not stop only at deconstructing the Zionist grand narrative, precisely the famous Zionist slogan, it moves forward to defy the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative. In the Arab collective memory, women are traditionally seen as weak and dependent on their male kinship. Many literary works follow the famous analogy that equates "land with women and women with land" (Faulkner 1985, 847); the Palestinian literature is no different. In addition to representing land, women have also come to represent the mother figure in Palestinian literature. This might be due to the Palestinians’ loss of land; i.e. life giver, which renders women symbols of fertility and love. Contrary to the literary works of major Arab writers who deal with women as symbols rather than individuals (Mikhail 2011), Nasrallah’s work individualises each woman and enables her to control her destiny. From the beginning of the novel, women’s value is emphasised: “the only thing that was never allowed at any time [in the houses of Hajj Mahmoud, Khaled’s father, and his father’s] was to insult a woman” (Nasrallah 2012, 38). One of the distinguished women characters in the novel is Rayhana.

Rayhana’s contribution in demolishing the only Palestinian tyrant in the novel is as important as Khaled’s as will be analysed later. She is the only woman in the narrative that defies the sole patriarchal power, Habbab. From this perspective, Nasrallah defies the Arab/Palestinian male dominated narrative and culture; he deconstructs the patriarchal binary thought which entails that “the male constitutes the norm, the positive, and the superior; the female is the aberration, the negative, the inferior” (Eagleton 1982, 204). Habbab is a ferocious, dishonest person who confiscates properties and people alike. His mere name inspires “dread both near and far” (Nasrallah 2012, 206). In fact, the presence of Habbab in Nasrallah’s novel is the means by which he deconstructs the ideal past of Palestine prevalent in the narratives of many Palestinian camp residents who usually lament the old days saying: “We lived in Paradise” (Sayigh 2007, 1).

Rayhana begins defying Habbab by refusing to marry him after the latter deliberately kills her husband for the sole reason of marrying her. As a sexual relationship is in some cases a form of interior colonisation (Cesairé 1997, 81; Millett 1971, 25), Rayhana resists consensual sex with her enforced husband by challenging him to mount Adham, her late husband’s horse. Nevertheless, Adham refuses to “get a saddle on his back” (Nasrallah 2012, 112) by anyone after the death of his owner. Rayhana’s attitude is challenging because none of Habbab’s previous wives or other women, who were forced to marry him, ever
defied him. That is why Rayhana’s condition and words were a breach of his manhood; “an eerie tremor went through him like a fine blade” (Nasrallah 2012, 112). Defying Habbab enables Rayhana to possess the phallic power represented in the “blade” that cuts through Habbab’s inside. Here it is an inversion of power relations, from a male dominated relationship to a female dominated one. Failing to mount Adham becomes the catalyst which brings Habbab’s downfall. In representing Rayhana as such, Nasrallah defies the lack of representation of Palestinian women in the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative.

**Foregrounding the Palestinian Fellahin’s Resistance**

As mentioned earlier, the epic novel is suitable in the context of representing the Palestinian chivalrous past that Nasrallah is concerned with. Khaled, the main character in *Time of White Horses*, is a typical epic hero. He symbolises honourable chivalrous Palestinian men who make any Palestinian proud. However, Khaled’s qualities and actions that could be described as legendary in the beginning of the narrative, develop to be realistic throughout the course of the narrative. Khaled’s legendary and sometimes mythological aspects in Nasrallah’s narrative contradict the authentic portrayal of pre-Nakba Palestine that the author tries to present in his novel. It also attributes the Palestinian past to fantasy which renders Nasrallah’s effort to re-write the Palestinian resistance history at risk of being merely the work of the Palestinians’ wild imagination.

Nevertheless, representing a legendary character could be traced to Nasrallah’s early years in the refugee camp. Nasrallah’s parents were Palestinian refugees who probably arrived at Jordan in a devastating state and had to reside in Al-Wihdat Refugee Camp. Being the headquarters of the Palestinian guerrillas, Al-Wihdat camp was heavily bombarded by the Jordanian army in 1970 (Tuastad 2010, 27). Born in the camp, suppressed, and a refugee, could all be factors that drew Nasrallah to investigate the lost glorious Palestinian history. Further, the “sons of the camp,” that refer to the *fedayeen* “embodied the archetypal Palestinian” (Achilli 2015) man who stands for courage and willingness to sacrifice himself for the nation; the reflection of such an image is found in Nasrallah’s Khaled.

Presenting a heroic and legendary Palestinian *fedayee* like Khaled necessitates the use of the epic genre. Nasrallah writes a novel that is based on the Palestinian national history during Ottoman Palestine until pre-Nakba Palestine which sets it far away from the reader’s temporality. Time as a concept is also quite important in the epic genre: it “is not just that the epic’s events occur in an idealized past [but also] … the timeframe of the epic is resolutely closed, and nothing more can be added” (Head 2011, 157); thus, in the novel, the defeat
of the present can never change this closed glorious Palestinian past. It is significant and appropriate that the events of the novel take place in the past since the Palestinian present is saturated with occupation, expulsion and exile. The first chapter of the novel resembles the beginning of the Arabic epics. The arrival of the mare Hamama, acts as the delineator that traditionally marks the beginning of the stories in Arabic epics (Lyons 1995, 73). Hamama’s arrival begins Khaled’s journey in this Palestinian saga. Khaled is the embodiment of chivalry and honour who will accomplish heroic deeds throughout the course of the narrative.

As the central character, Khaled Al-Hajj Mahmoud is a typical epic hero. He combines both extraordinary characteristics and human ones; he represents the saviour’s image present in his people’s consciousness that would relieve them from a horrific nightmare (Khorshid 1994, 96). Khaled, who develops to be Hajj Khaled, symbolises the Palestinian leaders and fedayeen whose achievements in resisting the British coloniser during the Palestinian Revolt are glorified. Like the hero of the Arabic epic that acquires “an extraordinary sword and an exceptionally powerful steed at the start of his career” (Kruk 2014, 1), Khaled has the exceptional mare Hamama and is set on a mission to bring down tyranny and resist occupation. However, Khaled is not a mere fictional character; his historical roots could have been based on the Palestinian fedayee Abdel-Raheem Al-Hajj Mohammed (1892-1939) or Al-Qassam.

Khaled’s heroism begins locally in the village and develops externally to fight for Palestine. His internal victory is manifested in his encounter with Habbab. Khaled, now a young man disguised as a Bedouin, defies Habbab, tactfully destroys his legacy and restores peace and security to his small community. Externally, Khaled defies the Ottoman and English colonial powers: the main incident that elevates Khaled to the level of legendary heroes is his victory over with the Turkish military police. Dissatisfied with the taxes paid by Hadiya’s villagers, the Ottoman authority sends a delegate of a tax collector, a military assistant and soldiers to Hadiya that steal Hamama, cattle, sheep, horses and camels. Stealing a horse, as was established in the beginning of the narrative, is an act that breaches the village’s moral codes; consequently, Khaled’s mission entails returning the honour and right of his village. The Palestinian epic hero’s plight reveals his tact, resilience, courage and prowess. Reaching the delegate while being off sight, Khaled threatens the group several times. He begins with: “[t]he mare, or your lives! Let her go and take everything you’ve stolen from us!” (Nasrallah 2012, 145), until he reaches “Let her go, as well as everything you’ve stolen from us!” (149) and restores his precious Hamama and all the
stolen livestock of his people. With each threat Khaled courageously kills one member of the well-armed Ottoman delegation. As a result, his people elevate him to the level of folktales heroes: “it wasn’t unusual for a child to ask his mother to tell him ‘stories about Khaled’ before he went to sleep, the way she might have told him stories about … ‘al-shatir Hasan’, and ‘Pretty Girl’” (Nasrallah 2012, 182).

However, Khaled develops from being a mere legendary figure to a realistic one; he has developed, through the course of the novel, from being a young man who solely overcomes his enemies in a mysterious, heroic, and hyperbolic way to a realistic Palestinian fedayee that -- among other Palestinians and volunteers -- resists the British occupation of Palestine during the Palestinian Revolt. Resisting occupation signifies the Palestinian national spirit that sprang in the end of the nineteenth century. The Palestinian identity was created as opposed to the British and, later, the Zionist occupations; it “solidified the Palestinian sense of belonging … to a distinct national group with a language (the Palestinian Arab dialect) and a specific communal sense … of its own” (Said 1992, 12). It is this Palestinian national identity that Nasrallah effectively foregrounds in his novel.

Blending the boundaries between history and fiction, Nasrallah embodies the historical figures of Al-Qassam and Abdel-Raheem Al-Hajj Mohammed in his fictional character of Hajj Khaled. Defying the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative and reincarnating the legacy of Al-Qassam, Nasrallah presents the military prowess of Hajj Khaled. Al-Qassam, for the Palestinians, represents a “hero of the liberation struggle and a model of patriotic sacrifice” (Swedenburg 1995, 1). He left Haifa with his comrades and resided in the mountain to declare military resistance against the British coloniser in 1935 and initiated the first Palestinian guerrilla force to resist the British and Zionist colonisers (Ibrahim 2005, 154; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003, 94). Likewise, Hajj Khaled took to the mountains alongside many volunteers to resist the British Occupation: “[t]here wasn’t a mountain left in all of Palestine, but that Hajj Khaled had made it his home” (Nasrallah 2012, 379). He ferociously fought the British coloniser but was doomed, like many Palestinian fedayeen to die at the hands of the enemy. The death of Hajj Khaled is probably inspired by the death of Abdel-Raheem Al-Hajj Mohammed: both were trapped in a village, and their whereabouts were leaked to the British by Palestinian infiltrators. Both were surrounded by three lines of forces, refused to escape and chose to fight till they were killed by the British forces (Nasrallah 2012, 459; Arrar 2009; Abu Azza 2013). In the chapter entitled “The Will,” the British finally succeed in killing Hajj Khaled; however, his last will to the Palestinians/fighters of his village and his family is: “[b]eware of
losing forever” (Nasrallah 2012, 458) which paradoxically foreshadows the Nakba and an eventual victory that is yet to come. Though Hajj Khaled was caught in an ambush, his killing scene culminates his heroic representation that has been built up since the beginning of the narrative. Hajj Khaled and his fellow fedayeen Nur, and Iliya Radhi were “confronted unexpectedly by half the soldiers, who stood with their rifles expertly aimed. [Trying to charge ahead, they] came up against a wall of soldiers with their bayonets at the ready” (Nasrallah 2012, 460). However, Hajj Khalid manages to come out of this encounter with a bullet through his shoulder only to be faced with a third barrier which consists of “three armored cars and a number of jeeps in the middle of it” (Nasrallah 2012, 460). Though certain of his death, Hajj Khaled is determined to resist the colonisers; “he fired several shots right at the soldiers … He saw one of them fall before a sudden fog descended and filled his eyes” (Nasrallah 2012, 461). Both Hajj Khaled and Al-Hajj Mohammed were able to trespass three military barriers to be engaged with the third one, they kept fighting until the last moment when they were shot (Abu Azza 2013).

The fictional Hajj Khaled and real Al-Hajj Mohammed’s burials were attended by Major General Bernard Montgomery: the commander of the British forces in northern Palestine. Hajj Khaled’s death is a graceful one that won him the respect of Peterson, who was in fierce trials to catch him. Peterson admits that Hajj Khaled was a courageous and honourable man and refuses to be congratulated for conquering him. Hajj Khaled’s burial scene, like Al-Hajj Mohammed’s, is one of war heroes. After laying his body in the grave, “a number of soldiers formed a queue and fired in the air in a gesture of respect, while Peterson and Montgomery and the senior officers saluted the deceased” (Nasrallah 2012, 462). In this part, Nasrallah successfully uses one of the features of historiographic metafiction, which is blending the real with the fictional in an attempt to resist the rigid Western and Zionist grand narrative that marginalises the Palestinians. This is not to suggest that Nasrallah’s narrative is a mere reflection of a historical event, since the aesthetics of the narration offer a richer insight into the incident that history books and archives can never catch. The dynamics of the epic character and his relation to other characters, the development Khaled undergoes from the epic figure to the fedayee paradoxically adds to the ‘authenticity’ of the narrative fiction as they reinforce the human aspect of Khaled’s depiction.
Textual Aesthetics

One of the main features of historiographic metafiction used in Nasrallah’s novel is transtextuality. The novelist uses transtextuality to further deconstruct the Zionist slogan. He uses transtextuality through the use of paratextuality and intertextuality. The first element of paratextuality is peritext manifested in Nasrallah’s use of a preface. Nasrallah uses the preface to evoke truthfulness; he writes “[t]he story of the monastery in the village of Hadiya is true from beginning to end. It is the story of my village” (Nasrallah 2012, x). His sincerity is manifested by declaring that his novel is based on oral testimonies of uprooted and exiled Palestinians (Nasrallah 2012, ix), but at the same time, he uses what Genette calls “the contract of fiction” (1997, 217) in declaring that “names of all individuals and families that appear in this work are fictitious, and any resemblance between them and those of real people, living or dead, is purely coincidental” (Nasrallah 2012, x). Such authorial intention reflects the historiographic metafictional element of blending fiction with reality, which clearly runs throughout Nasrallah’s narrative.

Another element of peritext is notes. Nasrallah inserts footnotes in the middle of his narrative in which he adds historical events related to the narrative and comments or adds new information about the characters or the Palestinian traditions. He uses footnotes to “verify, validate, authenticate and historicize fictional narrative” (Harb and Matar 2013, 93). Peritext has a discursive function; footnotes function as “self-reflexive signals to assure the reader as to the historical credibility of the particular witness or authority cited, while at the same time they also disrupt our reading – that is, our creating -- of a coherent, totalizing fictive narrative” (Hutcheon, 2005, 81). Nasrallah’s footnotes provide the reader with historical information outside the text; for example, he states the date of appointing the first Greek patriarch in the church of Jerusalem and ends with the colonial fact that the Palestinian elements were excluded “from the patriarchate’s administration and from higher ecclesiastical positions” (Nasrallah 2012, 34). Crucial to the narratives of resistance, as Harlow believes, “is the demand they make on the reader in their historical referencing and the burden of historical knowledge such referencing enjoys” (1987, 80). Thus, Nasrallah authenticates and verifies his narrative.

Intertextuality is manifested in the voices of witnesses, including women voices in Nasrallah’s fiction. Nasrallah uses italicised letters to differentiate between what seems to be eye witness accounts of the events and the novel’s omniscient narrator. These eye-witness accounts are used as historical documents which are used “for both its metafictive and historical suggestibility” (Hutcheon 2017, 8). However, again, he does not make a clear distinction
between fact and fiction; he does not clarify whether these testimonies are eyewitness accounts of fictional characters or real ones. In the chapter entitled “Battlement of Fire”, Nasrallah uses intertextuality and paratextuality by means of testimony and footnotes. The whole chapter is the testimony of a Palestinian veteran who witnessed one of the battles between the Palestinian fedayeen and the British-Zionist joint forces. The testimony, written in italics, is supposedly a historical account of the battle scene; however, the witness brings details related to the fictional Hajj Khaled, which leaves the narrative lingering between fiction and history. The chapter begins with a real historical event: the assassination of General Andrews. A footnote was written explaining the assassination of General Lewis Yelland Andrews (1896-1937) intermingled with an omniscient narrator who narrates the testimony of the Palestinian fedayee who did the assassination. The story bears historical resemblance to the actual event of assassinating General Andrews in 1937 (Ibrahim 2005, 165).

**Conclusion**

Being part of a greater Palestinian literary project, *Time of White Horses* explores the life of nineteenth century Palestinian fellahin who enjoyed culture and traditions, and were attached to their land and ferociously fought for it. Nasrallah’s work “calls attention to itself … as a political and politicized activity” (Harlow 1987, 28-9). By blending fact and fiction, Nasrallah elaborates upon the glorious past of the Palestinians who resisted different colonial powers, especially the British one during the Palestinian Great Revolt. Centralising the Revolt is significant as it simultaneously deconstructs the Zionist grand narrative and defies the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative. Through exploring the Palestinian culture, experience, resilience, and certainly resistance, Nasrallah deconstructs the Zionist grand narrative generally and the famous Zionist slogan “a land without a people for a people without land” particularly. Nasrallah is well aware of the misrepresentation of the Nakba in the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative. Accordingly, in his novel, he sought to defy the male dominated metanarrative by presenting strong willed women, like Rayhana. Reinforcing Palestinian historical leaders like Al-Qassam and reincarnating other Palestinian fedayeen like Al-Hajj Mohammed; he explores areas of the Palestinian history that are deliberately hidden in both mainstream narratives. This acclaimed Palestinian writer even used literary aesthetics to further resist and defy the Zionist grand narrative and the Palestinian/Arab metanarrative respectively. By writing *Time of White Horses* Nasrallah seems to answer ‘Issa’s questions “why is it that Palestinians are still, by and large, represented by others? … what happened to
all Palestinian intellectuals and revolutionaries?” (‘Issa 2005, 180). Nasrallah succeeds indeed in representing an authentic Palestinian counter-hegemonic Nakba narrative from the ground up.

Endnotes

1 Zionist Yishuv: is “a predominantly European settler community immigrated into Palestine in the period between 1882-1948” (Masalha 2005, 1).

2 The French literary theorist, philosopher and sociologist, Jean-François Lyotard explains that metanarratives/grand narratives are presented by a hegemonizing system as master narratives and are also perceived as the absolute truth (60). Thus, grand narrative and metanarrative are used interchangeably throughout my paper.

3 The famous Zionist slogan is formulated by the British author Israel Zangwill (Said 1992, 9). The Palestinian Professor of History Bishara Doumani sees that this slogan entails “the absence of ‘civilized’ people, in the same sense that the Americas and Africa were portrayed as virgin territories ready for waves of pioneers” (2007, 15). Said explains that this slogan means “to cancel and transcend an actual reality – a group of resident Arabs – by means of a future wish – that the land be empty for development by a more deserving power” (1992, 9).


7 See Leon Uris’s Exodus (1958). For more about the religious motif in the Zionist grand narrative, refer to Mohamed Doudi and Zeina Barakat’s “Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives.”

8 See, for example, Mahmoud Darwish’s (1941-2008) “Lover from Palestine”/ “Ashiq min Filastin” and “He Came Back in a Shroud”/“Wa-Ada fi Kafan.”

Works Cited


Mahafzah, Mohammad Abd Al-Kareem and Zuhair Ghanaim Abd Al-Lateef. 2009. "Fees and Taxes from Agricultural Lands in Palestine during


EMERGING VOICES

The Cartography of Confinement/Escape: Crossing Over from Margin to Center in Carol Ann Duffy’s The World’s Wife

Nariman Eid*

Introduction
This paper aims at reading the poetic cartography of confinement/escape as shown in Carol Ann Duffy’s 1999 poetry collection, The World’s Wife. Moving from the margin to the center – through the technique of foregrounding and backgrounding – leads to questioning the concept of space(s) in Duffy’s poems. Jeanette Winterson explains that the poems in The World’s Wife are “about women behind the scenes, women behind the throne, women behind history” (2015, n. pag.). Instead of listening to the male celebrities, in myth and history, we listen to their women’s stories in their own spaces that allow them such a voice. “This headstand, the world turned upside down, gives us another look at history through her-story: the “other”; the angry and the ignored, as well as the sure-footed and sexy” (2015, n.pag.). Where the women move, where they go/stay, how they carve safe spaces for themselves away from the normative dominant patriarchal system, and how they perceive the concept of “home” are the guidelines which could generate an interpretive reading of Duffy’s poetry collection.

The first official holder of the position of a Poet Laureate in England was John Dryden in 1668. Since that year until 2009, the post was held by men. In 2009, Carol Ann Duffy (1955–present) became the first woman to hold the post. Duffy was born in Glasgow in 1955. She attended Stafford Girls’ High then studied in the University of Liverpool, obtaining a degree of Philosophy in 1977. She rose to fame after publishing her first poetry collection Standing Female Nude in 1985. In 1999, Duffy published The World’s Wife.

* Assistant Lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. This paper is derived from the author’s PhD thesis entitled “The Politics of Space in the Poetry of Carol Ann Duffy” (Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University), under the supervision of Prof. Shereen Abouelnaga. Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
Written in the same year that Duffy lost the title of Poet Laureate to Andrew Motion, the poems in *The World’s Wife* came out bolder and louder. Characterized by “a roistering, wickedly spiced burlesque” (Forbes 2002, n. pag.), this collection endows most of its women figures with voice. How Duffy depicts maps in her poems which the characters use to navigate their way from margin to center is thus the focus. This poetic cartography will be analyzed through examining the places where the characters are positioned and consequently their ability/inability to find their voice.

Cartography is the art and science of graphically representing a geographical area, usually on a flat surface such as a map or a chart. It may involve the superimposition of political, cultural, or other non-geographical divisions onto the representation of a geographical area (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). This paper concerns itself with poetic cartography; that is, how maps of different spaces/places are portrayed through the use of poetic devices. The importance of self-location is expressed by Robert Tally in his article, “On Literary Cartography: Narrative as a Spatially Symbolic Act”:

The experience of being in the world is one of constant navigation, of locating oneself in relation to others, of orientation in space and in time, of charting a course, of placement and displacement, and of movements through an array of geographical and historical phenomena (*New American Notes*).

That the concept of space has come to occupy a remarkable place in literary studies is a fact. Towards the middle of the 20th Century, the term “the spatial turn” has surfaced in the field of humanities, coming out as an interdisciplinary field of study. Studying space(s) and place(s) has pertained to various academic fields other than geography as well. It has flourished significantly within the over-arching realm of Cultural Studies; creating bonds between gender and post-colonial studies, identity politics and politics of representation.

The work of [Michel] Foucault, [Henry] Lefebvre, [Michel] de Certeau, and [Paul] Virilio, which newly emphasized the power relations implicit in landscape under general headings like ‘abstract space’, place, and ‘symbolic place’, interpreted through new spatial metaphors like “panopticism” have become highly significant during the 60s, 70s and 80s of the twentieth century constituting the above mentioned spatial turn (*Guldi, University of Virginia Library*).
This noticeable position of the study of space has dictated the need to investigate such spaces in Carol Ann Duffy’s poetry collection; particularly the presence on the margin and the possibility of crossing over to the center.

Since the margin is a form of space, the analysis will make use of bell hooks’ “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness” to look at the nature of the margin on which the female personae in Duffy’s poems may or may not use as a space of resistance; thus their ability to cross it over to the other side. Bell Hook’s approach in “Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness” will help trace the movement of the marginalized figures in Duffy’s selected works. Whether the space(s) in the poems are lost, forbidden to tread on, hidden or made clear will be explored in the light of the characters’ motion from the center to the margin or vice versa. If they do move, the possibilities of creating alternatives to substitute the normative choices they are left with will be looked at. hooks observes that,

“our living depends on our ability to conceptualise alternatives, often improvised. Theorising this experience aesthetically [and] critically is an agenda for radical cultural practice. For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a “safe” place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance.” (1989)

hook’s assertion that “spaces can be real and imagined[,] spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated and transformed through artistic and literary practice” (1989, 23) will be traced in Duffy’s poetry so as to unfold its meanings through its use of the spatial and if it is accepted and/or appropriated by the figures inhabiting it.

Additionally, Hannah Arendt’s concept of ‘the space of appearance’ will be employed to ascertain the ability or inability of the characters to express their voice. For Arendt, the space of appearance stands for that space “where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly” (Arendt 1998, 198 – 199). This public space of appearance is a result of the third category of human activity classified by Arendt, namely, action. According to the definition of this space of appearance, its existence will be investigated in Duffy’s poems so as to hunt for the characters’ state of confinement or the ability to cross over to the safety of having a voice. The space of appearance is governed by two main activities which are speech and action. Therefore, if one does not have a voice
and is not engaged in active action then he/she is to be excluded from the public space, thus becomes confined and helpless. The inability to speak and act leads to a state of non-existence in the free realm of appearance. If the others do not hear one’s voice or do not see one perform an action then one does not exist. This space must be recreated by means of action. After determining whether the conditions in which the poems’ personae are contextualized would allow them such a space of appearance, it becomes easier to decide if they lack power as they will be deprived of agency and thus not engaged in action.

In *The Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, Chris Barker asserts that, “it is necessary to grasp human activity as distributed in space since human interaction is situated in particular spaces that have a variety of social meanings” (2004, 186). The spaces that Duffy situates her women figures in either imprison them or allow them to cross the limitations and turn to active agents. If they are denied their agency, they cannot escape the margin. Agency can be understood to mark the socially determined capability to act and to make a difference. The agent “is a being with the capacity to act, and ‘agency’ denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity” (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*). That the validity of agency is connected to the location of the agent is not to be denied. The presence of the individual in the center or on the margin or even on the margin’s margin determines how an active or passive agent he/she is.

The women figures who manage to cross over from margin to center in *The World’s Wife* transcend the borders of gender limitations, thus exemplifying the notion that agency is not to be determined by a certain gender. In her article, “What is Gender Performativity?”, Gergana Stoyancheva explains the problematic notion that “gender is a stable identity from which everything else falls into places and the individuals that fail to comply with one of the two categories are labelled as abnormal and unnatural” (2). This in turn hinders the capacity to act, thus being an agent. Duffy’s women who cross over do not comply with what gender acts dictate, embodying what Judith Butler’s asserts in her essay, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”:

> Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy. Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure. (1988, 531)
Therefore, to break free from the constraints of patriarchy, these women – making full use of the spaces Duffy situates them in – are not confined within the limitations of their gender as female. “In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed” (Butler 1988, 519).

Women’s agency should not be defined according to their relation to men. A long time ago, Simone de Beauvoir has stated that a woman “is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other” (2010, 26). Since man is the subject, then accordingly a woman becomes the other, the weaker, the passive object. Against that, most of the women in The World’s Wife do not fit into that frame. They undergo a process of transformation and cross over from voicelessness to voice. There is action involved, which surpasses that of the male figures and is not defined by their presence. Thus, Duffy portrays active agents rather than passive followers.

The complex interplay between center and margin provides the figures with new spaces that engage them in processes of motion and transformation. Crossing the margin therefore becomes such a crucial step to attain the above mentioned agency. In his article, “The Subject and Power”, Michel Foucault draws attention to the fact that studying the margin can yield an understanding of its power which actually helps shed the light on the forms of former oppression. This is carried out by:

taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. For example, to find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. (Foucault 1982, 780)

Duffy’s figures, therefore, move in order to find their freedom after being oppressed or they lose their battle and remain in shackles. In his article, “Spatiality's Mirrors: Reflections on Literary Cartography”, Robert Tally mentions that
storytellers survey the territory they wish to describe, they weave together disparate elements in order to produce the narrative, and these elements may include scraps of other narratives, descriptions of people or places, images derived from first-hand observation as well as from secondary reports, legends, myths, and inventions of the imagination. (2011, 561)

Similarly, Duffy employs myth and history in order to shed light on the characters of those forgotten wives. The women tell their stories and express their opinions in different significant spaces/places, the poem being the first space where – for example – we can hear Mrs. Darwin’s or Mrs. Faust’s voices; telling their own stories and that of their husbands. The majority of the poems in The World’s Wife speak of the victory of the women figures who are either powerful or have gone through a process of transformation so they end up reborn, thus crossing from margin to center. The minority of the poems, however, display some sort of confinement of the women whose voices get lost.

One way of establishing power and highlighting the agency of women who were forgotten in history is the use of the dramatic monologue; a form which has always characterized Duffy’s poetry. The dramatic monologue “is a type of lyric poem that was perfected by [19th century Victorian poet], Robert Browning. A single person, who is not the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem, in a specific situation at a critical moment” (Abrams 1999, 70). In cases of crossing over from margin to center, the dramatic monologue acts as an adequate form as it provides the space needed for that transformation. Even though some monologues do not feature active agents, there remains the form as a given metaphorical space for the reader to acknowledge the plight of the speaker.

Audre Lorde says: “I write for women who do not speak; who do not have verbalization because they were so terrified, because we are taught to respect fear more than ourselves” (2004, 72). Similarly, Duffy’s women figures who manage to cross from margin to center by having such a voice are a witness to what Lorde asserts. It is this idea of being articulate, loud and heard that endows the voice of the world’s wife with power. The fear which Lorde mentions – which is well established through history – is primarily gone in most of Duffy’s poems and replaced by a new story of the female speaker. Thus, we do not see a traditional scared Red Riding Hood but a Red Riding Hood who killed the wolf and “filled his old belly [unapologetically] with stones” then calmly “stitched him up” (Duffy 1999, 4). We see another agent, Delilah, who states that “…with deliberate, passionate hands/I cut every lock of his hair” (Duffy 1999, 29),
Emerging Voices: Nariman Eid

speaking of Samson whom she took his power away purposefully as she boldly says.

Mary Beard, in “The Public Voice of Women”, talks about the “first recorded example of a man telling a woman to ‘shut up’; telling her that her voice was not to be heard in public. I’m thinking of a moment immortalized at the start of the Odyssey.” (London Review of Books) Beard then tells of an incident where Telemachus, Odysseus’ son was involved:

The process starts in the first book with Penelope coming down from her private quarters into the great hall, to find a bard performing to throngs of her suitors; he’s singing about the difficulties the Greek heroes are having in reaching home. She isn’t amused, and in front of everyone she asks him to choose another, happier number. At which point young Telemachus intervenes: ‘Mother,’ he says, ‘go back up into your quarters, and take up your own work, the loom and the distaff … speech will be the business of men, all men, and of me most of all; for mine is the power in this household.’ And off she goes, back upstairs. (London Review of Books)

It was this defining moment in one of the oldest surviving texts in Western literature where the fact of silencing a women’s voice could not be denied. Penelope is confined within the physical space of her home in Ithaca, while Odysseus is away roaming the world and encountering different adventures, thus different spaces. At the same time, Beard’s example sheds the light on Penelope’s metaphorical confinement as well, namely, her being overshadowed by the presence of a strong dominant male voice, that is of her son. Beard elaborates,

What interests me is the relationship between that classic Homeric moment of silencing a woman and some of the ways women’s voices are not publicly heard in our own contemporary culture, and in our own politics from the front bench to the shop floor. It’s a well-known deafness. (London Review of Books)

Duffy rewrites the myths of the women figures she mentions in The World’s Wife, the likes of Mrs. Faust, Red Riding Hood and Medusa. Penelope – opposed to the Penelope shut up by her son – in Duffy’s poetry chooses her work over waiting for Odysseus. She changed to be “self-contained, absorbed, content/most certainly not waiting” for the return of a man who “sailed away/into the loose gold stitching of the sun” (Duffy 1999, 70 - 71). Even when the woman figure
in her poetry collection does not manage to push herself to the center, she draws the attention that it is because of the over-powering male figures hindering the process of crossing that border.

**Confinement: The Failure to Escape**

Digging the spaces which Duffy inserted all through her poem “Thetis”, one can figure out the goddess’ power which unfortunately fades away resulting in confinement. Thetis is a Greek mythological figure who, due to her superpowers, could change shapes. Her marriage to the hero Peleus was one celebrated event during the Trojan War, a marriage which produced the legendary hero, Achilles.

Thetis announces her power early on in the first stanza: “I shrank myself/to the size of a bird in the hand/of a man” (Duffy 1999, 5). Despite the shape-shifting power, the first line is a foreshadowing to the shrinking of such a woman “in” the hands of a man implying his domination. To underscore the effect, Thetis says: “Sweet, sweet, was the small song/that I sang” connoting a voice; a voice that was loud “till I felt the squeeze of his fist” (1999, 5). Thetis then tries to turn into a divine bird: the albatross. In a clear allusion to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, the scene moves to an open space, namely, the sky which supposedly connotes freedom:

> Then I did this:  
> shouldered the cross of an albatross  
> up the hill of the sky  
> Why? To follow a ship. (Duffy 1999, 5)

A repeated pattern follows where Duffy shocks the reader. Every time Thetis attempts to take the shape of an animal or any entity within its natural habitat, there is a male figure which hinders her trials. Becoming an albatross is not a successful attempt despite the open space: “But I felt my wings/clipped by the squint of a crossbow’s eye”, again mocking Coleridge’s mariner whom she accuses of a squint. The snake is “a big mistake”: “Coiled in my charmer’s lap/I felt the grasp of his strangler’s clasp at my nape”. The sense of entrapment is implied through the repeated use of the preposition “in”. The bird is “in the hand of a man” and the snake is “in” the charmer’s lap. The lion – the fiercest of animals – also does not survive: “my golden eye saw/the guy in the grass with the gun” (Duffy 1999, 5). The “mermaid, me, big fish, eel, dolphin/whale, the ocean’s opera singer” come to an end because “over the waves the fisherman
came/with his hook and his line and his sinker” (1999, 6). The same pattern continues until the defining moment when she marries Peleus.

Her body which is her vehicle of control allows her to change to a woman hungry for love. But that is the last change she could undergo. According to Greek mythology, Peleus received help from Proteus – an early prophetic sea god – in order to overcome Thetis’ ability to change form. Every adventure of the brave female shape-shifter turns to a pitfall because of male figures, then marriage takes place as the final pitfall: “Then my tongue was flame/and my kisses burned, but the groom wore asbestos” (Duffy 1999, 6). Asbestos is a highly resistant mineral to heat; so it acts as the antagonist to the wife’s burning passion. The state of confinement reaches its peak when she is no longer in control of her most precious gift, namely, her body. She is no longer a shape-shifter, she adapts to her new life as a wife then mother: “So I changed, I learned/turned inside out – or that’s/how it felt when the child burst out” (1999, 6). Not only did she lose her power because of the confining space of marriage, but her voice, deeds and ability to take action will no longer be valid because of the legendary male figure that has just appeared on stage, her son, Achilles. Thus, Thetis is losing the space which allows her to appear, to exist. Thetis is no longer an active agent so that she can engage in action. Giving in to the limitations of being a wife and a mother, the woman figure here will remain confined, and worse marginalized by the birth of one of the most popular male Greek heroes. It is the same situation in The Odyssey – mentioned above by Mary Beard – where Penelope found herself silenced and overshadowed by her son Telemachus whose status was rising and who thought that “speech will be the business of men, all men, and of me most of all; for mine is the power in this household” (London Review of Books).

The other voice which is obliterated as a result of falling into the grip of a husband is that of Mrs. Darwin. In The World’s Wife, Duffy’s poems are all named after the women of very famous men to shed the light on those lives that were eclipsed by the popularity and success of the male figures. Mrs. Darwin has only the space of her diary in which she writes one entry which comprises the whole poem:

7 April 1852.
Went to the zoo.
I said to Him –
Something about that Chimpanzee over there reminds me of you. (Duffy 1999, 20)
A stunning short length of the poem speaks of the density of the subtle truth between its lines. Despite the piercing humour found in the wife’s remark, it cannot be overlooked that Mrs. Darwin wrote her entry in 1852, seven years before Charles Darwin published his seminal book *On the Origins of Species*; the book which made him one of the most influential figures of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. The simple remark documented by the woman carries the whole idea of evolution which suggests that creatures can be the descendants of other older creatures. Then what happens to the space? It is no longer on the map. It shrinks, leading to the disappearance of the voice that once inhabited it. Later, history only remembers the more powerful figure, namely, the husband. Mrs. Darwin remains confined within the margin of ‘history.’

Another woman who finds herself confined within a space which does not allow her a voice is Mrs. Sisyphus. Duffy presents a woman whose greatest contribution is seeing her husband push a stone up the hill: “That’s him pushing the stone up the hill, the jerk” (Duffy 1999, 21). All what the woman can do is express her anger towards a man who is ignoring her and their marriage because he is too invested in his job; a modern dilemma which a lot of stay-at-home women complain of. The husband fails to carry out ordinary daily tasks; so Mrs. Sisyphus goes on complaining: “What use is a perk, I shriek/when you haven’t the time to pop open a cork/or go for so much as a walk in the park? He’s a dork” (1999, 21). The woman’s marriage which should be a pleasant experience is no longer a space where she can feel comfort or love. Duffy employs imagery as Mrs. Sisyphus describes her husband’s work ethic. Even though the stone rolls back down the hill; “what does he say? Mustn’t shirk/keen as a hawk/lean as a shark/Mustn’t shirk!” (1999, 21).

Instead of being a keen husband or a lean lover, Sisyphus compares himself in two similes to a hawk and a shark; two predators that make use of all their instincts to push the stone up the hill. The result is a gigantic indifference which invades the space of the wife; typical of the marriage boredom which attacks a lot of modern couples. While the husband makes use of his own ‘space of appearance’ as a result of his free action, the wife in contrast says, “But I lie alone in the dark” and in a more significant confession: “My voice reduced to a squawk/my smile to a twisted smirk/ while he, up on the deepening murk of the hill/he is giving one hundred per cent and more to his work” (1999, 22). The woman’s voice is “reduced”. The choice of diction is to be underscored. Her voice is reduced to a “squawk” which is typical of fowl such as ducks or geese. Such birds are not predators as hawks or sharks; such birds are prey. The woman
is confined “in the dark”. A lonely wife with a reduced voice and a feeling of a prey, Mrs. Sisyphus is an abandoned woman on the margin of a failed marriage.

Hannah Arendt aims at highlighting the importance of action and the danger of giving up on this action – which is the highest form of practicing freedom in her triad of human activity – and giving in to theories; that is when theory overcomes and controls application. To elaborate more, Arendt speaks of the unique distinctness of humans and asserts that,

speech and action reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they are the modes in which human beings appear to each other not indeed as physical objects, but qua men. (1998, 176)

In other words, it is through action which is the pillar of creating the space of appearance, mentioned before, that a figure can be an active subject rather than a passive object. Since the chances given to marginalized women so that their voice can come out are controlled by patriarchy which represents a hegemonic culture, their ideas, potentials and activities are confined. Therefore, these women are left with no space for these activities to crystallize. Thus, there will be no proper chance for speech and action – especially action – as illustrated through the plight of Thetis, Mrs. Darwin and Mrs. Sisyphus. The confinement does not seem to diminish. Thetis is confined within the shadow of her legendary son. Mrs. Darwin is confined within the fame and success of her husband. Mrs. Sisyphus is confined within the boredom of a failed marriage.

In her article, bell hooks defines home as “no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and ever-changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference” (1989, 36). Therefore, the margin created is not used as a space of discovery. Those women in the previously analyzed poems cannot feel this space as a shelter or a home, nor can they use it as a space of resistance or escape it. They cannot cross the margin, they remain motionless.

**Escape: Crossing the Border**

In “Little Red Cap”, Duffy retells the story of Red Riding Hood. The little girl undergoes a journey from childhood to maturity. “At Childhood’s end…it was there that I first clapped eyes on the wolf” (Duffy 1999, 3). The first mentioned space is the one where innocence ends. The girl crosses that line dividing innocence and experience. The woods, which is “a dark tangled thorny
place”, is the realm of the wolf personified as a male poet. He is very fluent and lures her in by reciting poetry. Then she wakes up in his lair with torn clothes.

The wolf does not eat the girl, but she is raped time after time as ten years pass by. He keeps her as a prisoner by means of books, poetry and offering her knowledge. However, she uses that well. She steps out of the margin which is “his heavy matted paws” at some point. Her last ounce of naivety is lost when she searched for an innocent white dove which flew right into his mouth: “One bite, dead” (Duffy 1999, 4). The death of the dove symbolizes the end of all that was once naïve. After killing the wolf calmly with an axe, Red Riding Hood says, “I filled his old belly with stones. Stitched him up/Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone.” (1999, 4) Stepping victoriously out of the place representing the margin, namely the dark forest, which had imprisoned her for ten years, she comes out with “her” own flowers. The possessive pronoun implies strength and emphasizes the cross over or the leap from the dark forest to its borders. Additionally, she is singing, which implies voice and free will. For the second time, she crosses the borders, yet this time empowered.

Similar to Red Riding Hood is Mrs. Faust. We learn that Mrs. Faust was unhappily married to a man who sold his soul to the devil, hence the famous story of Dr. Faust. The wife tries to escape her failing marriage. She is always “on the move” in an attempt to escape her feelings of frustration. She says, “I went my own way/saw Rome in a day…went to China, Thailand, Africa/returned enlightened” (Duffy 1999, 25). The map drawn here is of many countries and the woman is moving. Duffy makes use of repetition as a stylistic device so as to stress the idea that this woman is making the best use of her time and the result is becoming “enlightened”. Faust dies and his wife reveals the secret she had only known all through their married life: “I keep Faust’s secret still – the clever, cunning, callous bastard/didn’t have a soul to sell” (1999, 27), a fact which cancels what has been established in history. This woman now has a space of her own, no longer confined within a marriage with a selfish, cunning man whom she knew had many affairs during his lifetime.

Pygmalion’s Bride is another figure who makes a full use of the margin. She turns it to her own map of tactics. During the time she had been a cold statue, she feels Pygmalion was crazy about only one thing: touching her. She was an inanimate object, dehumanized, with no space of appearance, no action, and no agency. “He kissed my stone-cool lips…He brought me presents..pearls and necklaces and rings…He let his fingers sink into my flesh” (Duffy 1999, 51-52). The humiliation becomes clear as he is only interested in her external cold beauty which he thought would satisfy his masculine hungry desires. In order to get rid
of such a figure who had always objectified her, she decides to “act”. She changes and turns into a real living woman, “grew warm, like candle wax/kissed back, was soft” (1999, 52). The fact that it was her decision, her trick, not his will that changed her, is noteworthy. Finally, Pygmalion leaves: “simple as that” (1999, 52). He fell into the trap of boredom that she willingly set. A statue on the margin of humans, then a woman on the margin of a man, then a trickster who manages to get rid of her jailer makes Pygmalion’s bride a figure crossing over from that objectified margin to a living active center.

One other example is of the famous Medusa who reveals that: “A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy/grew in my mind/which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes” (Duffy 1999, 40). Now we know a reason why Medusa looks – as perceived through history – ugly. It is because of being confined within the love of a man leading to stress and doubt that ate her up. It is an imprisoning space which left her no chance of growing. “My bride’s breath soured, stank/in the grey bags of my lungs”; a powerful metaphor by Duffy shows the bride whose breath – which is supposed to be sweet and perfumed – turns rotten with a stinking smell. The breath itself is confined within her grey lungs. Yet, Medusa escapes, again using her being thrown or dumped on the margin as her ultimate weapon. It is that moment when she orders, “Be terrified” that she starts crossing the margin. This is done by having a choice to embrace the super power that she is discovering about herself, namely, turning creatures to stone. Medusa here is close to every female who falls in love then has doubts because of her lover’s many affairs. She realizes that she is not enough. Yet she grows strong. She turns everything to stone once she gazes at it. She wonders about the time she was beautiful and why her man did not see her that way. Consequently, she chooses to make him pay the price of his infidelity: “And here you come with a shield for a heart/and a sword for a tongue/and your girls, your girls/ wasn’t I beautiful? Wasn’t I fragrant and young? Look at me now” (1999, 41). The reader is left with the final stunning reverse of the male gaze. He looks at her, thus turning into stone indicating that Medusa has crossed over from the margin of defeat to the center of avenging herself.

Finally, Duffy presents a transformation of Penelope, Odysseus’ wife. It is well known how Penelope waited for her husband who sailed away and left her for ten years fighting off the unwanted suitors who competed for her hand in marriage. In Duffy’s poem, Penelope engages in two main actions which she narrates. One is waiting eagerly for her husband to come back, then the other is gathering “cloth and scissors, needle, thread/thinking to amuse” herself (1999, 70). Penelope here speaks of her trick to fend off the suitors by sewing a burial shroud for Odysseus’ father then undoing it every night as she “played for time”
The woman discovers a new space different from being confined within a marriage to a man who sailed away for many years. At first, Penelope says, “I looked along the road/hoping to see him saunter home” then “Six months of this/and then I noticed that whole days had passed/without my noticing” (1999, 70). Adapting to the husband’s absence, the wife allows herself to discover the beauty of being dedicated to another action, namely, sewing and creating something new. She sews the shape of a little girl “running after childhood’s bouncing ball” and “a walnut brown for a tree/my thimble like an acorn/pushing up through umber soil” (1999, 70). The simile in this line implies her growth, or may be a whole rebirth just like an acorn pushes up and creates a space for itself in such dark soil.

The space created by embracing her sewing – thus engaging in action freely and willingly – allows Penelope a voice that admits: “…and lost myself completely/in a wild embroidery of love, lust, loss, lessons learnt” (1999, 70). The result is that she is picking out “the smile of a woman at the center/of this world, self-contained, absorbed, content/most certainly not waiting” (1999, 70). That is Penelope’s triumphant crossing over from margin to center. She states plainly that after discovering the worth of work, she is right now at the center not on the margin of her heroic husband whom she is no longer waiting for. The end of the poem intensifies the discovery. Odysseus is finally home one day but she says, “I licked my scarlet thread/and aimed it surely at the middle of the needle’s eye once/more” (1999, 71). Penelope becomes so invested in her work that she receives the once longed for return of Odysseus with an indifferent yet confident gesture, namely, resuming her needle work diligently and “surely”.

It is apparent that the complete process of crossing over is achieved when the above women figures act upon their free choice, thus being transformed from a silent object to a subject with a voice. bell hooks says, “Being oppressed means the absence of choices” (1989, 5). If one has a choice, then one is gaining power, and is moving one step closer to the center. Judith Butler asserts that “gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly” (1988, 531). In the light of those two assertions, Thetis, Mrs. Darwin and Mrs. Sisyphus – in the first three poems – do not have such a choice and there is an unfortunate surrender to the limitations of their gender. The first one gets entangled in marriage and motherhood, the second is completely overshadowed by a revolutionary achievement belonging to her husband and the third remains helpless due to her husband’s apathy. In Thetis’ case, her husband received help from the gods in order to strip her of her super power of shape-shifting. The oppression is double-fold here. A woman with power should be contained by
both worlds: the world of men and the divine world of the gods who seem to approve of her surrender to her stronger mortal counterpart, namely, her husband. Confined women lose their space. Consequently, their status is defined in relation to the more powerful masculine grip in which they are confined in. Thus, exemplifying what Simone de Beauvoir has mentioned, namely, the man “is the Subject; he is the Absolute.” and “she is the Other” (Beauvoir 2010, 26).

“Moving, we confront the reality of choice and location” (hooks 1989, 15). Location matters when it comes to having a voice. It leads to empowerment, which pertains to Hannah Arendt’s concept of power which is “actualized only when word and deed have not parted company” (Arendt 1998, 200). By crossing the borders, the women in the second part of the previous analysis find ways to practice the politics of action; they engage in both speaking and acting. Planning, mapping, and acting upon free choice, they manage to actively move from margin to center. Based on where the majority of the women figures in Duffy’s The World’s Wife are, they determine their own choice because they emerge in Hannah Arendt’s “space of appearance”. They not only have a voice but they act upon it as in the examples of Mrs. Faust, Red Riding Hood, Pygmalion’s Bride, Medusa and Penelope. Then Duffy provides them with the poem itself as a free space for their voices to be heard, crossing over the normalized historical accounts of their celebrity male spouses.

The process of crossing over takes place when these figures move/escape from a failed marriage to roaming the whole world, from childhood’s naïve lair to freedom outside the forest, from a statue within the hands of its sculptor to the freedom of individuality, and from the confinement of a stereotype of evil to the liberty of embracing/accepting power. Even when the first three figures, Thetis, Mrs. Darwin and Mrs. Sisyphus, fail to cross the border from margin to center, they still have the dramatic monologue as a space to voice out their story. Mrs. Darwin had a diary too.

This draws attention to the nature of the margin that still can be used as a tool of resistance even if one cannot cross it. Thetis, Mrs. Darwin and Mrs. Sisyphus document their stories reminding the reader that it is the confining grip of a more powerful male figure that is the reason why they are overlooked and denied their agency. Despite being on the margin, one cannot help but remember their voices. “Our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting” (hooks 1989, 19). So the margin works; both by being on it or away from it. “For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a “safe” place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance” (hooks 1989, 19). This also highlights the intertwinement between voice and the margin being a space for radical openness.
Because of its nature as being a “profound edge” as hooks calls it, it gives an opportunity for such woman figures to document their dilemma of confinement. The act of documentation is what serves their struggle and helps the reader to remember their plight.

Eventually, through tracing the spaces that Duffy gives her women figures in *The World’s Wife*, one is bound to say that by having a voice; the resistance of the marginalized is guaranteed to keep going. Duffy puts those women figures on the map of the world after they have been forgotten. They now have a voice. So they cross from the margin of history to the center of the readers’ awareness. Borders are not easy to define. Thus, Duffy advocates women empowerment through the process of motion.

**Works Cited**


Guldi, Jo. “What is the Spatial Turn?”. *University of Virginia Library* http://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/what-is-the-spatial-turn/.

Emerging Voices: Nariman Eid

Stoyancheva, Gergana. “What is Gender Performativity?”. www.academia.edu/12377673/What_is_Gender_Performativity.
Despite having authored only one work of fiction, Waguih Ghali (192?–1969), an Anglophone Egyptian writer who died in the late sixties, has had a growing fanbase as a novelist, specifically in the past decade. Ghali is now being read again through the publication of his diaries which have been edited in two volumes and published in 2016 and 2017.¹ Ghali’s diaries, some of his letters, and a very rough draft of the beginnings of a second work of fiction are rare findings of "self-referential writing" (Smith and Watson 2019, 1)² left by an author who wrote a book hailed as "one of the best novels written about Egypt".³ Although the original manuscript of Ghali’s diaries have been available online as part of the Cornell University archive since 2013,⁴ it is not an easy task to delve into pages and pages of his handwriting which makes the publication of the edited diaries a literary treat for his fans. These manuscripts reveal how the last four years of Waguih Ghali’s life were spent in exile between West Germany and London, echoing a physical movement between different geographical spaces, as well as a sense of not belonging to a certain place.

Ghali’s novel, Beer in the Snooker Club, (first published in 1964 by Andre Deutsch), humorously reveals a very raw depiction of his protagonist's existential crisis: Ram is caught between two cultures as he narrates a story that moves between Cairo and London; he is stuck in the class he is born in, yet does not fit in. Physical and emotional displacement could be easily traced – specifically the latter – in the life of Ram who feels that he does not belong somewhere or the other. The concept of borders controls the movement of his characters and their ability to obtain visas to travel to England through the scenes where Ram and Font desperately go to the Home Office time after time. To travel

¹ Assistant Lecturer in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University. This paper is derived from the author’s PhD thesis entitled “Representation of the Self in Works by and on Waguih Ghali” (Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University), registered in 2018, under the supervision of Prof. Hoda Gindi and Prof. Hala Kamal.

Cairo Studies in English (2019-Summer): https://cse.journals.ekb.eg/
to London is the dream which they cannot wait to fulfill. Similarly, in the first notebook of his diary, Ghali excitedly writes that he is finally going to London. Four years later in London, a very desperate Ghali left six notebooks in total of his diaries, to Diana Athill, writer, and editor, who had edited his novel for its publication with Andre Deutsch, after committing suicide in her apartment. Ghali writes to Athill in his final diary entry, which is his suicide note, that "well edited, [the diary] would be a good piece of literature," (2017, 2: 211).

The premise of this paper is how Ghali’s diary-keeping was connected to his need for writing fiction and how exile, as a state of existence, delineates the borders between the two literary genres he writes in: fiction and diary. Moving forward from examining physical borders which restrict movement in Ghali's novel and in his diaries, the paper will examine the lines governing diary as a sub-genre of life writing. Rather than just examine his novel generically as an autobiographical novel, this paper will read the novel as a pretext to the diaries. By using theories on diary as a genre of life writing, I will read the diaries to examine how the generic markers of such a genre reflect the state of physical and emotional exile Ghali expressed both in his fiction and his diaries. It is important to note at this point that the paper is concerned with the edited and published diaries and not the manuscript online. The reason for this is to limit the focus of this paper to works that have been published under specific generic labels to readers. Therefore, the texts that are read are Ghali’s novel, Beer in the Snooker Club, and the volumes of his diaries edited by May Hawwas. To examine the fluidity of genres in the process of reading life writing, in opposition to the rigidity in which published narratives are presented to readers in print, the first section will present a theoretical overview of the differences between genres.

**Diaries: Exiles of a Genre**

Within the broad spectrum of life writing, autobiographical fiction and diaries are very far apart in terms of structure and intention as well as the generic labels which they are stamped with and presented to readers. Autobiographical fiction deviates from autobiography in that the autobiographical pact is not fulfilled since the narrator, the author and the protagonist do not share the same identity (Lejeune 1982, 193). In the introduction to The Treacherous Imagination, Robert McGill defines autobiographical fiction as "narrative prose labeled as fiction but identified as drawing significantly on its author’s life," (2013, 2) and comments on the effect and role of paratexts (2013, 7) in the process of reading fiction as autobiographical. McGill adds that "it seems appropriate to think of autobiographical fiction, like fiction in general, not as a formal quality but as a
hermeneutic orientation toward a text. In other words, “autobiographical fiction” is a lens through which one reads," (8). Autobiographical fiction is hardly a genre stamped on a published book which allows for it to become what McGill calls "a hermeneutic orientation toward a text" (8); it becomes an endeavor by the readers to trace the autobiographical in the fictional. Beer in the Snooker Club is narrated in the first-person by Ram, whose real name we never get to know. The geographical and temporal circumstances in which Ram lives and the details of his family, class and education are very similar to the details known about Ghali's life and background.

Even though diary as a genre does not leave room for the reader to search for fiction in the real, it is governed by hazy generic borders and definitions despite being very different in form and purpose. Smith and Watson define the diary as "[a] form of periodic life writing, the diary records dailiness in accounts and observations of emotional responses...The immediacy of the genre derives from the diarist’s lack of foreknowledge about outcomes of the plot of his life," (2010, 193). The question as to whether diarists write essentially for an audience and for what purpose they keep the diary itself marks diary writing as much more different from other more intention-based genres of life narratives such as autobiography and memoir. Diaries have a specificity which cannot be controlled within the generic markings of other life narratives which is the immediacy of the act of writing: the move between the immediate present in the act of writing – without editing or intention of editing – and everything between a faint memory and the near past. The reason why writers keep diaries, to whom they address them, and whether they are published or not, and when, all differ from one diarist to another adding yet other impossible specifications to this genre. Nonetheless, the later work by Philippe Lejeune on diaries has produced theorizations about the act of keeping, publishing and reading diaries that allows for broader speculations and readings of such intimate narratives.

The first generic specificity according to Lejeune is that “[t]his is a type of writing for which none of the ordinary working procedures is allowed: the diarist can neither compose nor correct. He must say the right thing on the first try,” (2009, 182). Then what happens when a diary is edited? The question here of course would include publishing circumstances and whether the editor is the diarist or a different person. All such details manage to control a genre that refuses to be controlled within specific generic markers except for the fact that by writing a diary you cannot be expected to be writing fiction. "Diary writing is a sport," explains Lejeune, "it is not first and foremost an art that is developed to give meaning or pleasure to others. Instead, it is a performance. Something
Emerging Voices: Zainab Magdy

like skiing or sailing: for your own purposes, you use the energy from a natural force that carries you along" (182). This definition of course, marks the difference between fiction being written for the pleasure of others, while diaries are a personal ‘performance’ or an extended treatise of the self in daily segments. It is worth noting that Lejeune compares diary writing to a ‘performance’, which would automatically entail an audience: for whom is the diary written; for whom do I record my life? The lines defining and separating Ghali's published work are at once constricted and fluid because of how Beer in the Snooker Club is read as autobiographical fiction; Ram travels to London when he is around the same age that Ghali left Cairo to study medicine in Paris. Unlike Ram though, Ghali does not go to fight the British in Suez in 1956. His subject matter seems to be his own life whether in fiction or in the published diaries.

One other question which still speaks to how diaries are constructed, published and received (in relation to fiction) is whether they are read on their own or as merely paratexts to another primary text. How can a diary, such as Ghali's, function as a paratext when it is published as a separate narrative, when it could also be regarded as a literary sequel? Gerard Genette defines the paratext as "a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d'être" (2001, 9). If we think of an author's diary as a paratext, we would question how it is dedicated to the existence of another essential text, because according to Genette, "the paratextual element is always subordinate to ‘its’ text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence” (9). How then do published diaries as a genre, by authors who are already known for works of fiction, function within these defining lines of text and paratext especially that Ghali's diary is written after his novel.

Genette gives a primal and general definition of the paratext where "[i]ts most private part consists of messages the author addresses to himself, in his diary or elsewhere: this is the intimate paratext, so designated by the mere fact of its being addressed to oneself, regardless of its content" (2001, 9). He comes to later define a diary in detail as an "epitext" which "is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space," (2001, 344) making the epitext more loosely attached to a text it could be read against. It is then, the connection between genres and authorship that could link Ghali's novel and his diaries: he is the author of both texts and his life appears to be the subject matter of both diaries and novel as autobiographical. However, if read as a sequel, the diaries would appear to be following into the footsteps of how the novel itself is read: as fiction that can tell us about the life of its author. Diary is
essentially not that. Yet, *Beer in the Snooker Club* is read as a guide to the life Ghali led before leaving Egypt in 1958. This brings us to the problematic of function, intention and specifically addressee in relation to diary and autobiographical fiction. The reader(s) is a complicated entity which can determine the fluidity of a generic marker in the process of reading itself. They "come to their readings of an autobiographical text … from different experiential histories and geopolitical spaces. There is, then, no way to predict what kind of “reading” they will take away from, or give to, an autobiographical act" (Smith and Watson 2010, 78). This complexity instigates the question of which narratives are telling of the lives of their authors and how does genre control each narrative until the moment it is read either alone or paratextually.

For the case at hand, Ghali indicates in his final diary entry that if edited the diaries could become "a good piece of literature" (2017, 2: 211). What, then, are the generic 'markings' that govern the medium in which a narrative is written and what it is edited into? I use the word markings specifically to highlight those words, indicators or nuances that control and mediate how a text is read, similar to those markings of a musical score denoting tempo or rhythm in performance. If, as Genette claims, an "epitext is any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space" (2001, 344), then how do we determine, in the case of the diaries, which Ghali writes after the publication of his novel, the relationship between them as paratextual to begin with? Reading the diaries as paratext by no means indicates that they cannot function as texts. Diary as a genre is not determined by the question of publication because as an act, it surpasses such a purpose: a diary is written first and foremost because its writer commits to such an act. This commitment is at once a generic determinant but also a liberating one because whatever happens to a diary, however it comes to be read by others, it does not change its generic function both when it is written and when it is published as a diary: a diary is a diary, no matter who it is addressed to.

When a diary is written, it happens to remain outside of the lines of a peritext in its totality because it is an independent text. Genette differentiates between a ‘peritext’ which is controlled and contained within the text and an ‘epitext’ that is not controlled within the confines of the text (2001, 344). Yet, I wish to argue, that once published, in whole and in their own generic marker as 'diaries', a diary can take on a new function of becoming text rather than paratext. The diary, as private authorial epitext, exists in a loose generic mold:
our study of the epitext confronts us with its lack of external limits: the epitext, a fringe of the fringe, gradually disappears into, among other things, the totality of the authorial discourse … we would do well to bear in mind this potential for indefinite diffusion. (Genette 346)

This marginal yet limitless position allows for both generic rigidity but also malleability that allows a diary to be a diary and to also have a generic function in relation to autobiographical fiction. The question remains, however, when looking at Ghali's diaries, as to how a published diary can "disappear" as Genette says, "in the totality of the authorial discourse" (2001, 346), especially that the two volumes of Ghali's diaries are read at once separately and in junction with anything else he wrote.

Ghali's diary is, in essence, a fluid text; it wavers in generic existence. This fluidity of the diary is generically important because it highlights its function as an epitext in its relation to Ghali's novel: "[t]he location of the epitext is therefore anywhere outside the book - but of course nothing precludes its later admission to the peritext" (2001, 344). The diary acts in the same fluidity when it comes to function as a peritext in different publications. Its function as a paratext changes when it moves from a free floating epitext to a constrained peritext when Athill includes part of Ghali's diaries in her memoir about him, After a Funeral (1986). It is important here to note that Athill exercises a specific authorial and editorial power over the diaries and what she includes from them as segments of Ghali's diaries move out of context and are reused paratextually. What remains of a diary, then, when it can be used so fragmentally and yet read as a whole? Can the same be done to Ghali's novel?

Keeping a diary is a precarious and intimate act, very much unlike the act of writing a fictional narrative. Lejeune differentiates between the two acts of writing as he highlights how "[t]he diary is a sort of “installation” that plays on fragmentation and the tangential in an aesthetics of repetition and vertigo that is very different from traditional narrative aesthetics" (2009, 203). This fragmentation and tangentiality give the diaries a looser form of existence so that they can move from epitext, to paratext, to being read as a text that stands alone. As Ghali was writing the drafts of his unpublished novel, 'Ashl', while keeping a diary, the generic difference between the flow of the diary up until the 'end' contrasts greatly with the unfinished manuscript Ghali was trying to write. It also contrasts greatly with the selective nature of the finished novel where we know of Ram's life not in an ordered daily narrative such as the diary and hence, call it autobiographical fiction. The question here, though, is whether a diary by an author can ever be read alone, when the whole diary itself is structured and is
initiated so that fiction can be written. However, the fiction that is written is not published, and in the world where readers act as audiences for published texts, the fiction he writes before keeping the diary is read in conjunction with it because whenever Ghali mentions *Beer in the Snooker Club* in the diaries a connection is struck that entails a reading of both together in some way.

**Liminal Bodies, Liminal Worlds**

How a text is narrated is part of what governs the way it is read, sometimes moving away from the designated generic label. According to Genette, what distinguishes a diary, as a private authorial epitext, is the presence of a possible addressee who receives the addressed text before it is published to the reading public (2010, 371). The addressee could be the physical diary itself, but it could also be according to Genette, simply "a first addressee interposed between the author and the possible public, an addressee (a correspondent, a confidant, the author himself) who is perceived not as just an intermediary or functionally transparent relay, a media "nonperson," but indeed as a fullfledged addressee" (371) who is not related to whether the text is intended to be made public or not. This single addressee is quite different from the concept of readership which writing and publishing a work of fiction entails.

One subtle way in which his diary resists fine generic definitions is that Ghali does not address the diary as an addressee in the traditional manner of ‘Dear Diary.’ He, rather, writes to himself: to a ‘self’ that understands and comprehends the need to keep the diary and one that knows his history all too well. I call this the liminal addressee, because it is neither Ghali himself nor is it addressed to someone specific. This liminal addressee echoes Ghali’s position in exile:

> the attributes of liminality or of liminal personae ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since…these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminial entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention. (Turner 2004, 79)

To this liminal addressee, Ghali writes about his life and about the madness he hopes to avoid by engaging in an act of writing. The 'self' he addresses, this liminal addressee, is an all-knowing omniscient receiver rather than a narrator: the liminal addressee stands between him and whoever will read the diary later.
Emerging Voices: Zainab Magdy

(whether it is us or Athill, for instance). The liminal addressee knows what we as readers cannot and they share with Ghali moments of reminiscence such as that in the very long entry on 3 November 1967: "Do you remember the first time I met Lilian?" (2017, 2: 147). Almost a week later, at the end of the entry dated the 9th of November, Ghali writes, "My tenderness is beginning to turn into passion— and we know ourselves, mate" (2017, 2: 151), turning the liminal addressee into an accomplice. The liminal addressee shares a knowledge of Ghali's memory but only functions by existing in the present moment as we see from the pronoun 'I' and later 'we'. But by that stage of reading the diary, the reader has also become an accomplice and can know 'them' (Ghali, his diary, and his addressee) all too well. The repetitive nature of writing entries and the nature of writing an unsculpted narrative make the diary what it is: very different from a novel and the conventions in which a novel is written.

To move beyond the generic label of 'novel' in which Beer in the Snooker Club has been published, to examine the question of narration in the first-person, we will find the same mesh of feelings, events, physical relocation, belonging, and the inescapable inquisition into the self that one can find in a life narrative. However, the narrator of the novel, this first-person narrator, does not address a liminal addressee, but rather a reader who becomes implicit in the narrative at hand. In other words, the reader implicates her/himself in the act of writing the novel. In the act of keeping a diary, the reader's immersion in it is not an implication but rather a mediation; it is a transient sliding across the world of someone's mind. The implication takes place in diary-writing when the writer has already committed to keeping the diary and not in the reader's implication of reading it. The reader does not matter here, as it does for the novel.

It is worth noting here that Lejeune makes another generic distinction between diaries and fiction in his argument about diary as 'antifiction'. He states that "[t]he absence of control that characterizes real diaries contrasts with the imaginary control of the novelist" (2009, 208). This control exists in the manifestation of what we see as traces of Ghali's life in his novel, which make readers consider it 'autobiographical.' As a writer of fiction, he can control what details to include from his life in the fictional narrative and in what way they are presented. Yet, this notion of control is manifested in the diaries as well, thus further problematizing the clear distinctions between diary and fiction. Ghali at one instance keeps himself from writing, in case Athill reads his diary again and comes to read and know the intimate details of his thoughts and emotions and therefore see him in a different light. Similar to the process of writing fiction, Ghali practices control – an abstinence of a sort – of what and when he writes in his diary.
When Ghali finally passed away in January 1969 in London, after swallowing twenty-six sleeping pills at the end of December, Athill wrote an obituary in The Times describing Ghali as “an exile from Egypt” (1969, 10). Similar to the life of its author, Beer in the Snooker Club moves between two temporal and geographical dimensions: London and Cairo in 1956 and onwards. The diaries, however, start in Rheydt, Germany, and then travel to London, as Ghali moves into Athill's apartment sometime in 1965 and end with this suicide note in 1968. On the other hand, Egypt does not appear at any point in Ghali’s personal writings as a place where he lives or an identity to which he belongs. Egypt only belongs to the fictitious Ram, and to a world that Ghali no longer occupies.

Edward Said's "Reflections on Exile" offers insights to the discussion of geographical borders in Ghali’s writings (though Ghali's visit to Israel definitely separates him from Said politically). However, Said's essay is about a state of being and not a person, and the existence in exile that we can see beyond literature, perhaps in intimate writing as he says that "to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself" (Said 1984, n. pag.). If we decide to map, as Said says, those territories of experience beyond generic differences, what do we find in diaries kept in a state of exile of a sort? Relating this to Ghali, we know from his diaries that he resides in London because there is nowhere else he would prefer to be. In the first volume of his diaries, Ghali writes about the excitement of being in London and the anxiety he anticipates because of having to leave the only place he can call home in a month's time:

London, Tuesday 13th April 1965
London … London … LONDON. My town, my city, the only place on earth to which I belong, my spiritual abode, my love, the great love of my love. No sooner have I been here, than I have started to worry about leaving it …(2016, 1: 113)

Being in London, however, does not help him write no more than it keeps him from his addictions. London, his "spiritual abode" (2016, 1: 113) cannot keep him from falling in and out of his depressive episodes. Throughout this period, he keeps the diary. Alongside his regular sexual adventures, alcohol consumption and gambling, keeping the diary becomes a constant. While Ghali moves freely, geographically, in the diaries, he is stuck when it comes to writing fiction; he is also unable to deal with his depressions.
The transience of the temporal and geographical limitations in diary-keeping are important generic specificities of the genre. Lejeune argues that "[o]ne of the paradoxes of the diary is that having a date on it immunizes it against aging … The journal is on a different playing field. It is in a daunting face-off with time. What it is betting on, if there is any bet, is escaping death by building up traces and hoping to be reread" (2009, 210). The dates of Ghali's diaries keep them set within the confines of a world which we can imagine; so does the historical framework of his novel. However, the diaries do not lend a critique of a society nor do they offer something beyond the protagonist's gimmicks; they just reveal what a diary reveals: a writer sitting down to write about mostly painful matters. The dates matter and they don't in the published diaries. They initiate us into the defeat of Egypt in the Egyptian-Israeli War of 1967, for example, only so Ghali can talk about what has happened with Athill the day before:

Tuesday 6th June 1967
Tragedies – catastrophes. Native, international and personal. There has been war between the Arabs and Israel for forty-eight hours…
Since one person is not a collective, all these horrifying happenings haven't diminished my own disasters -- I've left Diana again and am again hopelessly bewildered, lost, insecure, etc. (2017, 2: 103)

Ghali's entries on the defeat of 1967 do not function as political commentary nor as a historical record; the diary is rather a personal document where his feelings come through. In exile, his relationship to what happens in Egypt is based on geographical distance and reveals anger and not nostalgia or homesickness for instance. The scope of the catastrophe is not only being away from Egypt while it loses the war, but also that he can no longer live with Athill.

The war of 1967 is one temporal marker in the second volume of the Diaries that locates them within a political and historical context. Beer in the Snooker Club is set within the temporal framework of post-1952 Egypt: it is struck from the first scene in the novel of Ram's landowning aunt signing papers to minimize her financial losses. The Suez War in 1956 is a solid temporal marker in the plot of the novel. Ram and Font participate in the resistance against the British in 1956; they are politically aware of the implications of the war when they are finally allowed to travel to London. Exile, in the lives of the characters, does not have the same bleak outlook it has for Ghali in 1967: no prospect of being in a good place to write his second book. Ghali writes in his Diaries that "[t]here is something nauseating about someone living here, far away from it all, and permitting himself to judge" (2017, 2: 105), exiling himself even further by not
allowing himself to make judgements in his own diary. Perhaps to assume that
generic markers control how Ghali – some eight years apart – is affected by exile
is not fully presumptuous. His political stance against Nasser and the 1952
regime – which forces him to leave Egypt in the first place – does not change.

Generically, diaries by authors of fiction can hardly be separated from the
works of fiction, as the process of reading them becomes intricately bound with
the fiction produced by the same writer. Genette believes that a reader who
searches for details in journals kept by writers on their fictional work "is likely
to be disappointed…[because] many a writer looks on his journal rather as a
complement to – indeed, as relief from – the work, and uses it preferably to keep
track of events ("intimate" or not) external to his work" (2001, 390). The edited
and published volumes of Ghali's diaries come to function differently because
they are written after Beer in the Snooker Club is published. To make a slight
generic turn between diary and autobiographical fiction, what changes, then,
when readers try to find details of the author's life in their fiction? This reading
essentially implicates the readers into a fragmented narrative of the author's life
that is scattered across genres. The reader's imagination becomes a contribution
to the fragmentation of generic borders between diary and fiction. Everything
we read about Ghali's life in the diaries, seems to push us back to his novel as
autobiographical fiction to try to understand where this exile started and how it
came to be the way it is described in the diary entries. Closer towards the ends
of the entries, we see how Ghali's exile has taken new dimensions for him. He
writes in the entry on 26 May 1968 about the lecture he was to give on "Israel
and Palestine at the LSE" and which left him "shattered as a consequence" (2017,
2: 191) when a representative of the Egyptian government declares to the
audience that Ghali is "not Egyptian. He has defected to Israel," (2017, 2: 191).
Amidst a terrible depression, this public declaration manages to magnify all that
exile has left him with:

I wiped the floor with the chap … But afterwards … It suddenly, after all
those years, dawned upon me that not only had I had no 'home' since the
ages of ten or so, but that I now also had no country. Why it was only now
that it struck me – and why it should affect me so much, I cannot say. But
it did, very much… Driving back in the car … I felt a new kind of
loneliness. (2017, 2: 191)

Having no record of what his life was like, no life narrative of his exile since this
early age, readers are left with an autobiographical novel to create a narrative.
Between autobiographical fiction and diary, a narrative of exile is created where – ironically – neither time nor geography matter.

**Writing Towards an End**

The generic differences between diaries and writing fiction exist within the constraints of writing within a framework, whether it is loose or heavily structured. Ghali's published texts were all written in exile, under restrictions of physical mobility to and from certain places. We see from the diary entries how Ghali goes about writing fiction the same way he keeps a diary, with no plan or structure: "Most writers, I presume, have a 'plan' about a novel, an idea at least. But not I. I start a sentence or a phrase and try to carry or rather to stretch this to a novel never knowing what will come next," (2016, 1: 90, 91). The difference, though, in practice, is the act of remembering to write what you already know has happened, rather than writing to write things in the way you want them to be read. The diary is not a record but rather a flow of emotions; a retrograde written record of a life from a larger lens to focus down to the personal, the very core of the self that is writing and that is being written. The novel moves from the self to a swelling and contained world – it is contained in narrative function by genre – that makes us able to read *Beer in the Snooker Club* as a historical record, geographically and temporally, with Ram's character as a guiding medium at where exactly we are looking. Think of it as a photo album; the novel is a chosen selection of photographs, laid out together in an organized order and a previously decided logic. Time is not important since time can be turned around. The diary is not that; it is rather a personal daily scrapbook where movement is forward. Time is not allowed to exist in the act of scrapbooking because the only order is to move from page to page and not to create a meticulous narrative. Keeping a diary is the opposite of that. It is the mess that it is: "[a] diary is turned towards the future, so if something is missing, it is not the beginning, but the end that changes in the course of writing it" (Lejeune 2009, 191). But does the end of the diary really change in the course of keeping it?

Ghali states the intention behind keeping the diary in the very first diary entry: "Rheydt, Germany, Sunday, 24th May 1964/Going mad, as I seem to be going, perhaps it'd be better to keep my Diary […] if only for a streak of sanity" (2016, 1: 23). Ghali's diaries are a text that is read with the knowledge of the ending. Since, as Lejeune writes, "[a] real diary is always written without the knowledge of where it will end … No one knows where he is heading, except towards death" (2009, 207) we can look at Ghali’s diaries as a writing practice to withhold the state of madness which brings about a desire for death. He begins the diary to postpone death and ends it with death. It is his psychological state of mind that
brings the diaries to the end that they have postponed. They exist by putting off
the one act that they lead to. Perhaps Ghali's suicide severs the connection
between reading his novel as a testament of a past life, and rather proposes a
reading of the novel as the life he did not live. The diary is the novel he does not
write. Lejeune writes that “[o]ther connections certainly exist between the diary
and creative writing, which make the ‘end’ of the diary a minor problem, or the
variant of a larger question—the end of writing” (2009, 196) which for Ghali
meant the end of life. The final entry and the act of writing are tied together in
an equation where one cannot but undo the other. Beer in the Snooker Club ends
with an act which we as readers know all too well as it is one of Ram's social
habits. He goes to Groppi to drink whisky which he cannot pay for and looks for
a gambling game. Although it does not go back to the actual beginning of the
novel, or the opening scene, it takes us back to a recurrent daily practice; very
similar to keeping a diary.

It is significant, in trying to look at generic boundaries between his diary and
his fiction, to examine how Ghali's relationship with the diary changed for the
sake of looking at the larger question of writing as an exercise for staying sane
and hence, alive. While in Rheydt he writes on ”Monday, 18th October 1965/I
am beginning to hate this Diary somehow— it has become a 'person', who goes
on and on putting with my complaints and groans…and whenever I look at it,
see it, it is only a reminder of the utter misery that I am" (2016, 1: 193). The
evening of the same day, he writes: "I think I shall not write this Diary for some
time. It depresses me to look at it" (2016, 1: 193). He cannot stand what the diary
has become when it becomes exactly that which he initiated it to be and changes
the genre of writing to maintain some sanity:

Friday, 22nd October 1965
As I said, the Diary does depress me. Have worked well the last three days
on the novel. It is my salvation. I am slowly entering my cocoon, and when
I am in it, I am alright. I've discovered an isolated pub, which is becoming
my local. One or two beers now and then, all alone, dreading any of my
acquaintances finding the pub … But the novel is my salvation. (2016, 1:
194)

By the time he has resided in London, the diary takes on a different function; it
becomes the record of the life he imagined would finally make him able to write
his second work of fiction. Instead, he starts new notebooks of his diary leading
up to what Lejeune calls "rituals of closure" (189), of both life and diary.
It is when Ghali seems most at home at London, that the mania of his life as he knows it unravels and writing the diary is again the only thing he continues to do. The significance of Ghali's suicide note being the final diary entry is not only a paradox of insisting to write which manifests a desire to live and choosing to die. The final diary entry, the final act of writing, is a performance of existence despite death that shows how "[t]he tragic conflict between the acceptance of life implied by writing and the refusal of life signified by suicide can be read in the different forms that diary endings take," (Lejeune 2009, 198). The paradox of life in postponement of death and of diary that could be well edited into fiction all seem to culminate in a moment that seems to be delayed in time and not in space. Borders do not matter at this moment. Ghali eventually dies in the only place he feels he can exist and function. It is the passage of time that controls the suicide. The diary is a temporal movement towards suicide.

If we think of Ghali's final diary entry, we are brought back to what we already know. We know before reading that Ghali commits suicide in 1968 and we know from the entries that he constantly has suicidal thoughts. However, the way in which the final entry crosses generic borders between diary entry and suicide note ends generic liminality. The suicide ends Ghali's liminal state. The liminal addressee is no longer there; there are multiple addressees. The purpose of the entry is to announce the end of his life and the end of the diary:

And the most dramatic moment of my life – the only authentic one, is a terrible let down. – I have already swallowed my death…I could vomit it out if I wanted to. Honestly and sincerely, I really don’t want to. It is a pleasure. I am doing this not in a sad, unhappy way; But on the contrary, happily, and even (a state of being and word I have always loved, SERENLY) … serenely. (2017, 2: 212)

The first and final entries of course tie the whole performance of keeping the diary together creating a circular plot. Physical borders form a map of locations where Ghali lived and wrote; but from Rhydet which he hated, to London which he could call home, the madness he writes to put off is a constant. If we think of how Lejeune believes that "[r]eviewing all the functions of a diary demagnifies the problem of its ending," (2009, 196) in relation to Ghali's diary, the end is presupposed at the beginning; the function of the diary is to postpone its end. I would argue that in Ghali's case, the editing and the publication of the diaries in their totality do not demagnify the problem of its ending, since it presupposes it at the beginning. The way the diary comes to function as Ghali writes it generically and how it is read in accordance with his published fiction, magnify
the end – the suicide – as a starting point from where we know about Ghali’s life. We come to know about his life through his suicide first.

Ghali’s final entry proposes an impossibility of an end despite his decision to kill himself. The end of a diary does not presume an end of a life. The end of a life presumes the end of writing in the diary; it does not however mean that the diary ends. The diary moves beyond death to become what it can become generically: text, epítext, perítext, etc. It goes through a metamorphotic process of being whatever it is, of being read by whoever will read it. This initiation from being written to the liminal reader to being read by hundreds or thousands of readers makes the end quite impossible. It is an inevitable beginning. What is significant about the endings, in Ghali’s published diaries and *Beer in the Snooker Club*, is that both narratives create an extended reading process about Ghali’s life and who he was. You finish the novel to pick up the diaries, to finish the diaries and then perhaps read the novel again, or perhaps go online for more. Curiosity is insatiable.

The narrative movement in both the diaries and the novel echo a geographical movement which reveals a life between borders, a life of exile: physical, emotional and even generic. Ghali is not preoccupied in the diary entries with the passage of time but with the repetitiveness of it that comes through the recurrence of his bouts of depression, and of course, his bouts of love. He writes at the beginning of the third notebook in the entry dated 15 October 1965: "Later": "Come my 'part 3' – the humor is in my heart, but again the 'want' to put it down on paper. This 'theory' of love of mine … is not proofed," (2016, 1: 193). Ghali’s diary at notebook three records the passage of time where the dates are merely markers of the same rehearsed performance. Time is not a denoting marker in the diary of exile, especially emotional exile; time does not alter the nature of such borders which Ghali lives through; time does not change the struggle to find love, the struggle to fight off depression, the struggle to write. Lejeune describes the relationship between journaling and time in a beautiful image where

[k]eeping a diary is surfing on time. Time is not an objective, continuous thing that the diarist tries to portray from the outside using tiny discontinuous brushstrokes, as a novelist would. He is himself caught up by the movement he is sculpting, moving along with it, emphasizing certain lines and directions, transforming this inescapable drift into a dance. (2009, 182)
Ghali moves along the geographical mappings laid down by the many layers of his exile, in a "dance" to postpone what he feels is inevitable.

**Last Words**

Months before his suicide, Ghali's depression had reached a plateau; the entries seem to lose the momentum to push forward and yet he keeps writing. It is at that time that he is writing the 'Ashl' manuscript: "I am now trying very hard to finish that novel about Ashl – simply to show something for all [Diana] has done for me. I know it would please her, and the idea that I am doing it for her and not for me urges me on," (2016, 2: 184). At this stage of the temporal and geographical plateau in the diaries, Ghali seems to be writing slowly towards his death. The failure of writing fiction comes hand in hand with the ability to maintain the practice of keeping the diary. He writes a few days later:

Saturday, 27th April 1968

I try very hard not to think of anything at all. I work on the novel, then get stuck and work on a short story, get stuck and come to the Diary … I feel such despair that I tell myself: 'Alright, your life is ended – this is nothing in it for you.' And then I tell myself 'Alright, you've lost everything and everything is hopeless. Why don't you simply start again? Since your life is ended, why don't you coop yourself up somewhere, work in the docks of Hamburg, and write. Edit your Diary. Write whatever fantasies you want –. Since your life is ended, be absolutely occluded from life.' (2016, 2: 186)

This idea of writing fiction from the diary is a generic fantasy, one that underlines the fluidity of writing a life, be it in diary or fiction. Ghali yearns for a different time and a different geography, where he could write; where he could imagine a different life than the one he has faced in his own diary. At the end, the diary becomes both an ally and a constant reminder of failing to write the genre he wanted to write. His life is ended, and yet he still writes. Lejeune says that we "can regard the diary as a force of opposition and renewal that … taps into a new type of relationship between author and reader, with a more active role for the reader," (2009, 209), necessarily because of the diary's fragmented nature. The diaries never really end because the reader is involved in a matrix of decoding and determining what happens. Can the readers then make up a new narrative that lies between what we imagine from his novel and what we know of memory in the diary? Is it a generic impossibility to look at the diary as fiction?
Lejeune argues that diary is exactly not that: diary is ‘antifiction’. Ghali does not leave London to go work in the docks in Hamburg; he does not edit the diary, but rather leaves it with a hope that it could become fiction based on his life. While Ghali ends the diary with a final entry denoting a fatal finality, he manages to revoke the diary generically in the wish that it is edited into something else. He writes moving to the end of the performance of keeping a diary only to pose the possibility of diary becoming fiction. The fantasy of fiction allows him a space beyond himself where he can exist outside the trappings of geographical and temporal limits, beyond the limits of the self.

Endnotes

1 Ghali's diaries have been edited into two volumes by May Hawas and published by the American University in Cairo Press. His novel has been recently translated into Arabic by Reem Saleh and Iman Mersal and published by Dar Al-Shorouk in 2013.
2 Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson use the term "self-referential writing" to mean all writing that 'refers' back to the self. The overarching genre is, however, life writing. The genres examined in this paper, autobiographical fiction and diary, are subgenres of life writing. Ghali's personal papers are self-referential: about his life.
3 Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif described Beer in the Snooker Club as "one of the best novels about Egypt ever written" in the blurb of Serpent's Tail's reissue of the novel in 1987, more than twenty years after Ghali's death.
4 In January 2013, the online archive of Ghali's papers on the Cornell University website went public; the archive is based on copies made by Debora Starr, Associate Professor at Cornell University, in 1999, and was made available with the help of a Digital Collections Grant.
5 Philippe Lejeune's concept of the autobiographical pact, in "The Autobiographical Contract", is very important in the understanding of autobiography as a genre. He later writes, comparing it to diary, that "[a]utobiography, a public act, has a solid history based on events and the crossing of thresholds, guided by precedents and made visible by the reception of published texts. Not so the personal journal, which was developed blindly by individuals who, unbeknownst to one another, decided to keep private or secret writings, most of which have been lost. But these decisions to write were underpinned by a collective logic and contain patterns that we must discern from the few traces that remain" (2009, 93).
6 In "O My Paper!", Lejeune investigates the history of the tradition of "address[ing] personal writings to the physical medium on which they are written," asking, "[w]hen did ‘Dear Diary’ begin to be used as the heading for a journal entry?" (2009, 93).
Emerging Voices: Zainab Magdy

Works Cited