Connections: Corruption, Conscription, and Counterrevolution in Egypt after Mubarak

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Critical Theory

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Charles Hirschkind, Chair
Professor Stefania Pandolfo
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Spring 2021

Abstract

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This dissertation examines the Egyptian counterrevolution of 2013 through an ethnographic account of young men living in a rural Nile Delta province associated with state power and corruption. Building on two years of ethnographic fieldwork, it considers the moral dilemmas of corruption through forms of giving and kinship, paying particular attention to the ways that love produced through affinal kinship justifies making exceptions to the law. Through a historical investigation of the origins of the Egyptian nation-state, this research posits the formative role of the conscription of the Egyptian peasantry during the reign of Mohammed Ali Basha, arguing that the politics of the counterrevolution can be traced back to this constitutive moment. Through the conscription of the peasantry *en masse*, Ali Basha also instituted the family as the sovereign exception to the law and laid the conditions for the army to emerge as the primary institution for the expression of popular will.

For Joyce, Saba, and Mido

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Acknowledgements

> How did people ever get the idea they could communicate with one another by letter! One can think about someone far away and one can hold on to someone nearby; everything else is beyond human power. Writing letters, on the other hand, means exposing oneself to the ghosts, who are greedily waiting precisely for that. Written kisses never arrive at their destination; the ghosts drink them along the way. It is this ample nourishment which enables them to multiply so enormously. People sense this and struggle against it; in order to eliminate as much of the ghosts' power as possible and to attain a natural discourse, a tranquility of soul, they have invented trains, cars, and aeroplanes—but nothing helps anymore: These are evidently inventions devised at the moment of crashing.
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> From *Letters to Milena* by Franz Kafka

The word for "dissertation" in Arabic is *risala*, literally a "letter," a word that emphasizes reception somewhat more than its English counterpart. Like any letter, this text leaves my fingertips ready to get lost on its way. To any who read and hear me, I say thank you.

I used to gloss the concept of rhetoric for my English composition students by arguing that writing is real magic, a way to make people feel or imagine or believe things at a distance, even after you're dead. Now I think I had the idea backwards: that it is when we write that the dead speak to *us*. Writing is not the absence of voice, but a place of memory where the words of others become our own.[1] Moreover, this contact with the dead need not be a source of despair, as it was for Kafka, but of comfort and joy. Much of this dissertation was written after the death of my extraordinary teacher, Saba Mahmood, but I heard her voice every time I sat down to write, and it was through writing that I discovered the ways her voice made mine possible. I am relieved to find her still present in this world, and I have written so that she may drink from this letter. Thank you for everything, Saba.

To my advisors Charles Hirschkind and Stefania Pandolfo, I express my gratitude and love. You have both been generous and loyal mentors for well over 15 years. I have struggled mightily in bringing this project to completion, and you have never left me. Charles, I will never forget the hours you spent with me submitting and resubmitting my IRB application, a drudgery that demonstrated enormous care. Your insights into my work have been nearly clairvoyant in their subtlety. I apologize for all the worry on my behalf, and I thank you for the enormous horizons you have opened. Bless your hands.

To my outside committee member, Mia Fuller, your patience and generosity is near saintly. Thank you for your steadiness and open mind. Thank you to the incredible teachers I have taken courses from and taught with over the many years I've been at Berkeley: Laurie Wilkie, Lawrence Cohen, Rosemary Joyce, Mariane Ferme, Samera Esmeir, James Holston, Hans Sluga, Beshara Doumani, Liu Xin, Judith Butler, Alexei Yurchak, Ramona Naddaff, Carolyn Smith, Sabrina Agarwal, Cori Hayden, Brian Karl Charles Briggs, Brad Erickson. Each of you has challenged and

[1] I am thinking here not only of Derrida's definition of grammatology (), but of conceptions of the dead common in the Afro-Caribbean religious traditions that brought me to anthropology (see Questions: an Introduction), particularly as described in Ochoa's *Society of the Dead* () and Deren's *Divine Horsemen* ().

cared for me. Thank you. To the Arabic teachers who taught me in the United States and in Egypt, I express enormous gratitude. Without Margaret Larkin, Sonya Shiri, Elizabeth Saylor, and Rahma El-sebaie, I surely would have choked.

This research was made possible by a Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Wenner Gren Foundation in 2014, as well as two Sultan Fellowships, in 2011 and 2016, from the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. Infinite thanks to Sandrine Gamblin, who was the director of the Middle East Studies Center (MESC) at AUC while I was a Scholar without Stipend there, as well as to Radwa Wassim and Hany Luke. My thanks to Atta Gebril for guiding me through the IRB process at AUC.

My thanks to the many scholars with whom I shared ideas and writing while I lived in Cairo, particularly Ilka Eickhof, Ali Atef, Yaqeen Fouad, Angela Smith, Angela Giordani, Claire Panetta, Nicolien Kegels, Fouad Halbouni, Mona Oraby, Heba Goweid, Anny Gaul, Rafi Arefin, Nada Ramadan, Surti Singh, Rozina Ali, Jonathan Guyer. My heart aches at the memory of your brilliant company. Ismail Fayed, you are a genius and one of the truest friends I've ever had. Thank you.

So many extraordinary colleagues at the UC Berkeley have offered insight and comradery over the years, and I am in their debt. My particular thanks to Jean-Michel Landry, Candace Lukasik, Jason Price, Rosa Norton, Aaron Eldridge, Elizabeth Kelley, Brittney Bierbek, Caylee Hong, Mohammed Jarada, Jacob Liming, Michael Allen, Brent Eng, Milad Odabaei, Callie Maidhof. Patricia Kubala, Michael D'Arcy, Ashwak Hauter, I would have given up long ago without you.

To my long-suffering friends, I hope to see more of you now that I'm done. Christina Hart, Leia Asanuma, Emma Alpert, Ines Farag, Nadia Osman, Ann-Sophie Jespersen, Edna Bonhomme, Claire Cooley, Chris Rhett, Shanna LoPresti, Kenneth Givens II, Adham Kalila, Jared Malsen, Oliver Bacon, Greg Barnell, Alex Klass, Sherif Shabana, Maged Koukou, Jared Malsin, Mai Nguyen, Matt Rahaim and Jenna Rice. Sure do miss you.

To my family, it's been a long, hard journey, and I'm thankful for all of the ways you supported me in getting here. Thanks to my parents, Joyce and Paul, Schuyler and Margaret, for your constancy and encouragement, my fabulous siblings Alex and Allie and Farrell for helping me to laugh and to cry, and to John and Carol, Teresa and Sylvia, Orky, Ervin, and Gingie for your love and patience. Mom, you are my first and greatest teacher; thank you for teaching me how to love and how to write. Mido, you are the kindest and sweetest soul I've ever met, and I am so grateful you've come with me all this way.

Without the kindness, generosity, honesty, and insight of my interlocutors, this dissertation would not exist. Respect for their privacy requires that they remain unnamed here, but I hope that any who recognize their stories here find themselves excited by what they read and eager to continue our conversation. *Hobb fi-l-hobb*.

Questions: an Introduction

"If I were not Egyptian, I would have wished to be Egyptian."

Mostafa Kamil Basha

Saad and I were walking back to Tahrir Square so I could get a cab to my apartment. It was my first week in Egypt, seven months after the January 2011 revolution, and Saad and I had struck up a conversation earlier that day in the enormous outdoor clothes market on 26th of July street. We had agreed to meet up for tea and shisha after *iftar*, the breaking of the Ramadan fast. Though we would become close friends and collaborators on my research, at the moment we were both shy, testing the waters of what could be said. He waited until the end of the meeting to ask if I could help him travel to the United States. Unsure of what to say, I asked why he wanted to leave Egypt.

"Because Egypt is choking me," he replied. "*Li'an misr bitkhanaqni*."

I shook my head. "*Bitkhanaqni*?" I didn't understand the verb, though Saad had been carefully modifying his Arabic to accommodate my reliance on the formal, schoolish register of the language. I had studied Arabic for three years at UC Berkeley, but I had never been to an Arabic-speaking country before. I had planned on doing research in Libya after a year of colloquial Arabic study in Egypt, but that future would look less likely as the year wore on. Saad lifted his hands up to his throat and stuck out his tongue, pantomiming. I was surprised and embarrassed, so I punted.

"Don't you think things are going to get better because of the revolution?" I asked.

He shrugged and shook his head.

"Not really."

Saad was right to be pessimistic. Two years later, Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi would remove Egypt's first democratically elected president from power with the support of the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar, the Coptic Orthodox pope, the heads of the major left- and right-wing parties, and millions of protestors who had turned out in city squares across Egypt. Claiming a mandate to protect the freedoms won in Egypt's 2011 "Arab-Spring" revolution, on August 14th, 2013 al-Sisi ordered the violent dispersal of Muslim Brotherhood protestors occupying major squares in Cairo, killing at least 817 but well over 1,000 by most accounts. Leader of the left-opposition and interim Vice President, Mohammed ElBaradei resigned and fled to Vienna, while al-Sisi imposed a curfew. A crackdown followed, targeting first Muslim Brotherhood members and other dissenters, then journalists, NGOs, atheists, sexual minorities, academics and artists. That winter, amidst an ongoing curfew and sporadic protests, Saad was arrested by an undercover state security investigator (a *morshid*) for refusing to present ID on demand, then held overnight to be beaten and tortured with electric cables and cigarette lighters for his insouciance. That first week I spent in Egypt, Saad had seen much further than I had. Egypt did not get better after the revolution. In its most general terms, this dissertation seeks to explore why.

One answer is that not everyone supported revolution to begin with. Saad comes from Monoufiya, a governorate just north of Cairo famous in 2011 for being the land of *feloul*—"remnants" of the Mubarak regime and therefore counterrevolutionaries. Most Egyptians with

whom I spoke, both from Monoufiya and elsewhere, identified the source of Monoufi power in nepotistic "connections," or *wasta*— literally a "means" of getting jobs, favors, or just getting things done. In Spring 2012, Saad invited me to his brother's wedding, an extravagant festival of giving (described more fully in Chapter 3) that led me to reconsider the relationship between norms of gift-giving and the politics of patronage. To Saad and my advisors, I proposed Monoufiya as a productive fieldwork site and *wasta* as a subject of study because of its potential to illuminate counterrevolutionary currents in Egyptian politics. It seemed to me that the academic and journalistic focus on the 2011 revolutionaries and the Muslim Brotherhood had provided an incomplete picture of Egypt after the Arab Spring. Even in 2011, many people I spoke with in Monoufiya expressed pride at being from the true center of power in Egypt, and, after the 2013 coup and subsequent massacre, they crowed about Monoufiya returning to its rightful place in Egyptian politics. Al-Sisi had been born and raised in Cairo, but his family was from Monoufiya, and that was enough for my counterrevolutionary friends to declare him *wahid minnina*, "one of us." Given mass mobilization of Egyptians against their elected president and for military intervention, it seemed clear that this expression of connection was somehow related to counterrevolutionary politics. Looking at the Egyptian Counterrevolution[2] through the lens of Monoufiya and *wasta*, many of my questions focused on how one becomes "one of us" or not, and on what the consequences of that position might be.

One of us, I clearly was not, as Saad's question about me helping him to leave Egypt had pointed out. Reflecting on fieldwork in the Nile Delta in the 1980s, Amitav Ghosh writes about certain formulaic questions Egyptians asked him over and over, even in the face of his obvious discomfort—Do Indians really worship cows? Do Indians really burn peoples' bodies after they die? Are you circumcised? These scenes are striking to me because they remind of similar, insistent questions I heard during my fieldwork, questions aimed ascertaining my role in narratives already important to Egyptians—questions that sometimes made me feel deeply uncomfortable. Since the debates on ethnographic authority associated with the publication of *Writing Cultures* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), it has been considered good ethnographic practice for the anthropologist begin with a description her positionality as a fieldworker. My experience in Egypt was that Egyptians often positioned me in the power structures of their world for themselves by asking me simple questions. Speech, as John Austin observes, does not only describe—as in, "this is a chair"—but creates and *does*—as in, "I now pronounce you man and wife." At times, the "constative" or referential function of language mixes with the performative—as when we say, "I love you." Questions have yet other kinds of rhetorical force depending on how one might be expected to respond. Here, I address five of the most common questions to my readers in hopes of channeling some of that force: Where are you from? What is your religion? Are you married? Can you help me travel? Are you a spy?

[2] For ease of expression, I often use the shorthand of referring to the January 25th, 2011 revolution as "the revolution," and I combine the interim presidency of ʿAdly Mansour with the subsequent Sisi regime under the umbrella term "the counterrevolution." Two other events in Egyptian history are accorded the status of revolution: the 1918 revolution that led the British Empire to unilaterally declare the conditional independence of Egypt, and the 1952 Free Officer's coup that led to the complete nationalization of the Suez Canal and the end of British hegemony. I discuss both earlier revolutions at length in this dissertation, but I reserve the unspecified form of the noun for the revolution that was the immediate context of my ethnographic research.

Exploring the social force of these questions, my aim is to not only account for the conditions of my fieldwork but to illustrate the ambivalence that characterizes Egyptian nationalism. As scholars like Fanon (2004 [1963]), Chatterjee, Massad (2007), and Mahmood (2016) have noted, colonial and post-colonial nationalisms tend to be structured by a simultaneous hyper- and hypovaluation of the colony in relation to the metropole. Registering this ambivalence is crucial to understanding the counterrevolution in Egypt because it reveals some of the positive attachments Egyptians have to the state. The Egyptian counterrevolution of 2013 too easily flattens into an object lesson in false consciousness if one only considers the reasons Egyptians have to fear, hate, or overthrow their government.

Where are you from?

This was always the first question asked—perhaps the obvious question, but clearly also the most salient. From the color of my skin, the way I dressed and talked, I could not be Egyptian. After my Arabic improved, sometimes people would guess that I was one of the Syrians who had lately come to Egypt as refugees, but most saw my blue eyes and knew me for a *khawaga* before I opened my mouth. The word *khawaga* is a Persian import to Arabic originally referring to Christians, but these days Egyptians use it to refer to Westerners in general, often ignorant tourists. In the latter context, Egyptians tend to lace the expression with the mock deference they employ in calling waiters *rayyis* (president) or *kabtan* (captain), a legacy of the nearly five centuries through which *khawagas* enjoyed the "extraterritorial rights" of their home countries while present in Egypt. Though the word can have a nasty bite—a crowd of elementary school children once followed me down a street near their school shouting "*Khawaga*!" and throwing bits of street trash at me—it is not primarily derogatory. When Saad's sisters saw photos of the sleek blue cocktail dress my mother bought for my sister's wedding, they expressed their approval by calling it "*khawagiya*," or *khawaga*-ness, a certain type of elegance they associated with Western women.

Indeed, ambivalence is at the core of the word's power to oppose "Egyptian." In the last year I lived in Egypt, the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry released a series of public service advertisements for play during ever-popular Ramadan TV serials that decried the infamous Egyptian *khawaga* complex (*ʾoqdat al-khawaga*). In one, a white man approaches a fruit stand and asks for two bananas in broken Arabic, and the fruit seller obligingly brings them. A pair of older men sitting nearby overhear and praise the good sense of the white man for only buying what he needs, wishing that Egypt had "order" of the kind demonstrated by the man's frugality. The same scene is then repeated with an Egyptian customer, only this time the fruit seller replies to his request with incredulity, and the old men deride the silliness of the young man for bothering himself for a little bit of fruit. The voice of an announcer sounds out and scolds the older men, who hang their heads. "Why do we always have the *khawaga* complex, seeing anything the *khawaga* does as better than the Egyptian?" ("*Lieh dayman ʾindina ʾoqdat al-khawaga, wi shayfeen inn ayya haga illy byʾamilha al-khawaga ahsan min illy byʾamilha al-masry?"*) The voice continues, getting to the point of the ad and addressing the audience directly, "Like when you buy an imported product and think that it's always better than the Egyptian, even though they're the same." The advertisement closes with an appeal to buy Egyptian made products, presenting economic nationalism as the cure for a kind of shared psychological affliction. Yet, as the ad also shows, the *khawaga* complex cannot be reduced to a psychological

phenomenon like false consciousness or internalized Orientalism because it structures so many everyday social interactions.

The social effects the *ʾoqdat al-khawaga* became clearer to me when Saad first visited a new apartment of mine in Cairo in early 2013. Like most apartment buildings in the center of the city, my building had a doorman, a *bowaab*, and mine had stopped Saad from entering. Thinking he simply needed an introduction to my friend, I went downstairs to the lobby. There, I discovered that the doorman had refused Saad entry on the grounds that he is Egyptian.

"Didn't you already know?" the *bowwab* asked, smiling. "Didn't your landlord tell you? No Egyptians allowed." I was flabbergasted. How was I supposed to live in an Egyptian apartment but have no Egyptian guests?, I asked. The doorman replied that I didn't want Egyptian guests anyway because Egyptians were just going to steal and break things if I let them in the house. I told him I thought the rule was *ʾonsoury*, ("prejudiced" or "racist"), to which he replied, "No, no. It's not racist. It's out of appreciation for you." ("*Huwa min taqdir leek*.") I called the landlord, who didn't see anything discriminatory in the rule either. It was only when I appealed to the shame of turning away my guest that the landlord relented and made an exception *for Saad*. Having Egyptians come to my apartment would be a struggle for as long as I lived there, often requiring that I be present in the lobby of the building when my guests arrived so I could introduce them to the doorman and try to convince him that we were actually friends. Housing a *khawaga* in Egypt seemed to require reinstating the national border at the at the boundary of my home, a repetition of the principle that it should be easy for Westerners to visit Egypt but difficult for Egyptians to visit Western spaces.

That said, the *bowaab*'s use of the word "*taqdir*," appreciation, articulates something important about the racialized treatment of the *khawaga* in Egypt. For me as a white American man, being a *khawaga* felt like a kind of fame, a feeling that I walked into every conversation with some sort of prior credit. Both before and after the counterrevolution, Egyptians I barely knew ascribed to me a knowledge of political rights (*hoqooq*) and social order (*nizam*) purely on the basis of my nationality—often as a rhetorical trump card in an argument with another Egyptian. At the same time, being American by no means made me a benevolent emissary of democracy: Egyptians know what most Americans do not, which is that the forty years of kleptocracy under Sadat and Mubarak had taken place under the blessing of the Camp David Accords. If my take on politics was interesting, it was not because revolutionary talk about liberty put us on the same side but because my government had the power to shape the rights Egyptians enjoyed. After a few months of living in Egypt, I discovered that claiming my Scottish or Swedish heritage could help me to avoid tense conversations about politics with taxi drivers and other strangers. Looking back on the beginning of my research, it's clear to me that I pursued the lines of questioning I did in part because Egyptians so insistently asked me my opinion about politics in Egypt.

After I figured out what to study in Egypt, one of my first tasks was to figure out a way to ask questions about *wasta* and *feloul* without harming anyone. Since the release of the Belmont Report in the late 1970s, all research institutions that receive direct or indirect support from the United States government have been required to set up Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) to ensure that research done under their auspices respects the three basic principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Among other things, these principles require researchers to inform potential research subjects of their right to refuse to participate and to explain any

foreseeable benefits or risks to participation before asking subjects to sign a consent form. In my case, the IRBs at UC Berkeley and the American University in Cairo both approved an exception to the requirement for written consent on the grounds that making written records could itself expose participants to harm if those documents were seized by the Egyptian state.

Even so, Saad thought that the idea that I could walk into his village and present people with a legal document explaining their rights—even one they didn't have to sign—was ridiculous. I would look like a spy, straight out of the movies. Eventually we compromised: Saad would approach people I wanted to interview first and ask if they were interested. He would show them a letter of introduction in Arabic from the Middle East Studies Center at AUC, and, if they seemed open, he would explain that I had to do something that would seem strange but that I was insisting on as an ethical responsibility. He would then show them my Arabic consent forms and let them read and ask questions, only making an appointment with me if it seemed like the folks he was talking to weren't spooked. Given the fact that I had been visiting the village for over two years before I started formal research there and had friends among the people I wanted to interview, he felt that it wouldn't be too difficult to find people who were willing to participate.

By the time Saad arranged my first interview, I had become nervous about the prospect of conducting interviews at all, so I was surprised to find that the two friends I hoped to interview, neighbors of Saad's named Morad and Mostafa, seemed less interested in my procedures for protecting their confidentiality than they were in securing the right to ask their own questions. The four of us met at a street-side café on the main road running through Saad's village, choosing a table tucked off to the side of the building where we could have a more private conversation. As I walked through the consent form that Saad had already explained to them, Morad and Mostafa sat up straight and listened attentively, asking a few questions to confirm details. Then, with a knowing glance to Morad, Mostafa leaned forward and made a counterproposal: I could ask whatever questions I wanted as long as they could do the same. When I did my fieldwork in Monoufiya, a young person might not have had the experience of seeing a real-life foreigner, much less the chance to ask one questions, until they had reason to spend some time in Cairo, and Mostafa and Morad saw my interest in them as an opportunity. My immediate response to Mostafa's proposal was relieved and delighted assent, after which Mostafa gathered himself again and posed his first question. I had ruled out tape recording interviews long before submitting my research plan to the IRB for approval, so my notes, written the next morning, only record a gloss of his question: *You are Christian, right? No offense, but do you really think Jesus is God?*[3]

What is your religion? Are you married?

When I arrived in Egypt, I was not surprised to discover that complete strangers felt comfortable asking me if I was married and what religion I practiced, but I was surprised by how it felt to have to present these aspects of identity to strangers, largely because neither question was easy for me to answer. My father had sometimes taken me to a Presbyterian church when I was small, but his own faith was deistic and my parents were already divorced, so I was never

[3] I use italics rather than quotation marks whenever the dialogue I've presented is a gloss rather than a direct quote. When I was able to record phrasing accurately in my notes, I've presented the original Arabic phrase in parenthesis.

baptized. My mother remarried when I was 11, when my step-father introduced us to Santería, an Afro-Cuban religion I enthusiastically embraced. Strangely enough, an honest account of my religious identity would lead, by twists and turns, to the reasons for my stay in Egypt: It was through Santería that I first encountered anthropology and anthropologists, as not only were many of the extant books about my new religion written by ethnographers, but some of the elders in my Oakland, California-based religious community studied or taught anthropology. When I became an undergraduate at UC Berkeley, I chose to study anthropology in hopes of channeling my spiritual passions into an academic career, and, following my step-father, mother, and sister before me, I began the year-long initiation into priesthood at the start of my senior year. Two years later, I was accepted to return to UC Berkeley to study the interaction between socialist ideology and African religious traditions in Cuba—just as I made the painful decision to leave the religion in which I had become an adult. I was too hurt and angry to continue to study religion in Cuba so, with my advisor's blessing, I refurbished my project into a study of socialism and religion in Libya through institutions devoted to study of Moʾammar Gaddafi's Green Book. In the period leading up to the Arab Spring, Gaddafi had begun a process of international rehabilitation, and limited scholarly exchange had begun between American and Libyan universities. Though I knew that the final shape of my dissertation would not be conceived through the framework I had proposed for research in Cuba, I supposed that, with enough study, I would come to see Libya in its own context.

I wouldn't normally claim my identity as a lapsed Santero in the United States, but there (with the exception of the year I spent in white) I never had much occasion to talk about my religion unless I chose to bring up the subject myself. Like my sexual orientation, my religious identity was something that I could choose to disclose or not, as it fit into whatever story I wished to tell about myself. Not so in Egypt. Membership in the "people of the Book"—*ahl al-kitab*, the Muslim way of referring to the kinship of Jews, Christians, and Muslims through the prophetic tradition—is the guarantee of a shared moral order, and claiming an unknown African religion would have made it difficult for people to trust me. Colleagues with experience doing research in Egypt had recommended that I follow the example of many Jewish scholars and simply claim what Christian heritage I could.

My reception as a Christian was universally friendly. Even when Saad's neighbor, ʾAmm Fathy, pulled me aside to explain why I should convert to Islam, he did so stating up front that he considered us brothers and that he respected my right to choose my faith. More often, as in my conversation with Morad and Mostafa, people ultimately wanted to know why I was Christian and not a Muslim. Before I came to Egypt, I had never considered replying to such a question. Over the course of dozens of conversations, I honed a passable Arabic-language defense of Christianity that emphasized the narrative of redemption between punishment of Adam and the death of Jesus, arguing that, as a Christian, I didn't understand what the message of Mohammed added to this story. I developed ways of explaining, among other things, the difference between Protestant and Catholic Christianity and the demographics of circumcision in the United States. In the right circumstances, normally hanging out with friends of Saad's late at night, these could be some of the liveliest and most engaging conversations I'd had before or have had since, even if, at the behest of my interlocutors, I sometimes committed the ethnographic sin of talking more than listening. Once, in the wee hours of the morning after a wedding, a college friend of Saad's announced that he was so happy to have talked with me about the Christian concept of love that

he would extemporize a poem on the theme of brotherhood. My notes tell me that Ahmad figured brotherhood as water, as that which relieves and sustains and without which there is no life.

Though my religious identity did not appreciably limit the kinds of questions I could ask or the kinds of situations I could participate in, my marital status did. As a gay man, I was unmarried for reasons I did not want to disclose and, like my religious identity, this required the elaboration of a fiction if I was to do research. As Ashwak Hauter notes in her ethnography of prophetic medicine in a hospital in Saudi Arabia, the process of protecting human subjects initiated by IRB review requires negotiation with those research participants over what can and cannot be reported in the final ethnography, ensuring that even the most straightforward reporting of fact is never an account of the whole truth of what the ethnographer witnessed. Indeed, though the events I report in this ethnography happened as I describe them, I have disguised the identity of my interlocutors by creating composite characters through whom I narrate these events. These composites are necessary because I have written this dissertation with the expectation that its audience already includes the people whose life stories are recounted here: disguising individual identities requires more than the change of a name. My point in drawing attention to questions about my religion and my marital status is that my research was predicated on another kind of necessary fiction, the fiction of my identity as a recognizably "normal" American—straight, white, and Christian.

Western researchers have often discussed ways that norms of separation between unrelated men and women limit the forms of research appropriate in Muslim societies, and it is true that the voices of women from Saad's village are not as present in this dissertation as those of men because I had less opportunity to become close with them. Rather than presenting this condition on my fieldwork as a lamentable blow to the scientific ideal of a representative sample, I have chosen to embrace the opportunity to consider the relationship between masculinity, nationalism, and belonging. Scholars of Egypt will recognize strong affinities between this dissertation and themes in the ethnographic work of Sawsan el-Messiri (1978), Diane Singerman (1995), Julia Elyachar (2005), Marcia Inhorn (2012), and Farha Ghannam (2013). This dissertation builds on their work, I hope, by reconsidering subjects like ethics of generosity, the production of masculinity, the moral economy of informal networks, and the legitimacy of violence in light of the counterrevolutionary forces that have prevailed in Egypt since the summer of 2013.

The secret of my sexuality often made me acutely aware of the ways that nationality informed the calculus of my gender. One of the recurring assumptions both unmarried and married men made about me as an American man was that I had had lots sex with lots women, and this assumption shaped some of their most urgent questions for me. Many questions focused on the norms of propriety around sex in America—where can it be done, with whom, and who can know about it—but a large number aimed at mining my presumed expertise for lovemaking techniques. Again, many of these questions came from strangers or near strangers. A taxi driver once pulled over to the side of the road in one of the desert suburbs of Cairo to tearfully confess his frustration with his wife's lack of interest in sex and implore me to help him figure out how to please her. At one point, a married interlocutor in Monoufiya urged me to change my research topic to focus on the norms surrounding extramarital sex in Egypt, an invitation I declined because I didn't think it was appropriate research for a white American man to attempt. There is an extensive scholarly literature about the different ways Orientalist discourses examined,

fetishized, and sought to reform sexuality in the East that I will not recapitulate here. Part of why I bring up these insistent and sometimes uncomfortable questions about sex is to register the fact that the "incitement to speak" about sexuality (Foucault 1978) was not a pressure I introduced into conversations except, it appeared, by my presence.

As it was, the fact that I had no apparent plan to get married worried the older people I met in Monoufiya. *Surely that's what all this research and writing was leading up to, no?*, Saad's neighbor ʾAmm Fathy asked after I had been visiting the village for some time. *A good job so I could find a wife and have some kids?* Whether or not he suspected my sexuality as the cause of my bachelorhood, I don't know, but this kind of pressure to marry is famously constant for unmarried young people in Egypt. The younger men with whom I did most of my research often discussed the romantic aspects of marriage, or marriage as the threshold for legitimate sex, but marriage was also the prerequisite for living independently of their parents. As the marker of social autonomy, marriage was the minimum achievement for taking a seat of one's own among the *nas al-kabira* in the community arbitration sessions, *qaʾdat al-ʾarab*, organized in as an alternative to legal courts. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that unlike the young men Saad introduced me to, older men in the village tended to meet with me once and quickly decide I wasn't worth their time. For the handful who proposed business partnerships, the disappointment was quite justified. In general, however, my impression was that older men saw me as *tafeh*, trifling, because I rarely evinced interest in the essential project of saving up to settle down. It's also possible that, compared to Saad and his friends, married men simply had less to gain and more to lose from talking to me.

Can you help me travel?

Sometimes the question about traveling abroad would come to me as a part of friendly banter with strangers. Egyptians are famous among Arabs for their sense of humor, of which an ironic stridency forms an important part. In her study of *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt* (2004), Samah Selim notes the serious dimensions of comic trope of backwards peasant (*fallah*), who oversteps propriety but thereby plays the role of the wise fool pointing out hypocrisy. When lower-class Egyptians I didn't know well asked me about traveling, it was often a pointed joke, not intended for me to follow up on. "Why don't you take me with you in your bag?" ("*Matakhodny maʾak fi al-shanta?*") was the most common formulation of this joke, most often accompanied by an invocation of how bad politics were in Egypt or how tired ("*taʾbana*") the Egyptian people were.

Often, however, the request would be made in earnest within a few days of someone making my acquaintance. *Could you write a letter of invitation? Could you give your address as a personal reference to be used by a visa-procurement company? Do you know anyone in the government who could move things along? Do you know anybody willing to provide a job? How much money needs to be in my bank account before applying for a tourist visa? Do you know of any graduate programs that might match my interests?* On a simultaneously serious and joking register, *Why don't you find me an American woman I can marry?*

The limits of my powers in these matters surprised both me and my petitioners. Of course, I knew that the United States is extraordinarily protective of its borders, but I didn't realize, for example, how unhelpful it could be for me to sponsor Egyptians to come to the US. While the US

State Department does encourage visa applicants to provide letters of invitation to help prove the traveler's intent and itinerary, in fact these letters are often interpreted by customs officials as evidence of strong ties to the United States that could entice visitors to overstay their temporary visas. More galling for many Egyptians was my refusal to provide connections, or *wasta*, with the American embassy to help their application along. Egyptians are fully aware that corruption exists in the US as it does in Egypt, so my insistence that I did not have any connections to give often read as a lack of generosity, and, in one case, even led to the loss of a friendship.

That my inability to help could lead to resentment points to the stakes of traveling abroad. On a basic level, the vast majority of Egyptians I met lived in conditions of poverty and political repression that were capable of "choking." When Saad first used this word to describe living in Egypt, I didn't know that *makhnouq,* literally "choked," is a common way of saying "frustrated" in Egyptian Arabic, and that his complaint was therefore a less flamboyant comment about living in Egypt than I initially interpreted it to be. Whether or not the expression is common, it is an expression of distress, one that draws its power from the image of being unable to breathe. In the context of Morocco, Stefania Pandolfo (2009) analyzes religious treatments for *tadyiq al-nafs,* or "soul choking," a spiritual malady indicating political oppression (*al-diq*). The word Pandolfo translates as "choking" in the Moroccan context shares the same root for another common word for being frustrated in Egypt—*mitdayiq,* or, as I would translate it, feeling "pressed," "squeezed," or "penned in." As in the Moroccan context Pandolfo analyzes, in Egypt being *makhnouq* or *mitdayiq* involves being divested of the power to change one's situation. Though Egypt had undergone an ostensive revolution just six months before, when I first met him Saad was already convinced that his condition had not changed.

And it had not. When I first met him, Saad was 21, late in finishing on his college degree because of the pressures of work and family. He worked six days a week, 10-12 hours a day as an all-purpose errand boy for an office furniture store in the middle class neighborhood of Nasr City making 1200LE a month (at the time, a little less than $200). He slept most nights at the store or at a nearby apartment shared with three or four other young men employed by the same company. At his subsequent job he worked the "buffet" at small advertising company, which meant that he was responsible for getting or making food or drinks for the other employees. Though Saad slept in the office during the work week, his boss had a habit of inviting friends after hours for drinks Saad would be expected to serve. When the same boss caught Saad eating dinner in the office with a cousin after hours, he confiscated Saad's keys and locked him into the office at night for a week. Twice Saad failed end of semester exams because the boss would not give him time off to study. For Saad, making a life for oneself in Egypt involved enduring the abuse of employers. Over time, I came to understand how a request for help in traveling abroad was related to escaping conditions that choke the soul.

Of course, this made my acceptance or refusal all the more fraught, entangling me in difficult ethical questions about the possibility of consent to participate in my research. According to the Belmont Report, the exchange of gifts with human subjects potentially violates their right to consent freely to any research conducted about them; while many studies involving human subjects offer monetary or other incentives to participation, any incentives must be so

small as not to constitute an act of coercion. For example, a incentive of $5 might be prohibited by an IRB overseeing human subjects research at a prison because such the value of that amount of cash is magnified in prison economies. In other words, in as much as it would be difficult to for a prisoner to refuse such an incentive, it would compromise his or her ability to refuse participation in a study. Knowing this, I never promised or hinted that help with a visa could be the outcome of participating in my research. Instead, I informed myself of the answers to common questions and helped materially however I could when the querant was anyone with whom I had a more than passing connection.

Nonetheless, I was disturbed by the gulf between my personal and professional ethics. As Marcel Mauss argues in his seminal *Essay on the Gift*, reciprocity and exchange are fundamental ways human beings cultivate solidarity with one another. In as much as a gift always demands reciprocation, and even a returned gift must in turn be reciprocated, the exchange of words, favors, goods, and even people bind human beings into relations of responsibility to one another. In the conclusion to his essay, Mauss argues that the task of reforming modern capitalist political-economies into some form of socialism requires the acknowledgement and formalization of the solidarity cultivated through exchange and reciprocity. While I understood that helping Egyptians to travel abroad could constitute a coercive gift if given in exchange for participating in my research, I wondered if the ethics guidelines that governed my research did not only limit *my* coercive powers over Egyptians, but *their* coercive powers over me: by preventing researchers from entering into certain relationships of exchange and reciprocity with fieldworkers, human subjects guidelines also prevent human subjects from making coercive demands for prestation and counterprestation from researchers. This bind is enshrined in the way IRBs interpret the ethical principle of "beneficence," or the affirmation that research must be beneficial and not harmful to human subjects. In practice, this means not only that the potential risks of research must be minimized through careful study design, but that anthropological research need only be useful to its subjects in an abstract way, that is, as a contribution to general knowledge about humankind. In other words, the responsibility of the anthropologist to benefit her interlocutors is discharged simply through the production of knowledge, and the researcher is thereby absolved of any further tangible commitment to the people she studies. The considerable political powers of the researcher, whether granted by her passport or monetary or cultural capital, are thereby nullified as far as the consenting research subject is concerned. Thus, the request for help for travel pointed not only at the difference between my political rights relative to Egyptians', but also at the embarrassing difficulty of my using those rights to help them directly.

I felt I could not ignore requests like Saad's: I scoured State department visa application guidelines, consulted with immigration lawyers, wrote letters of invitation, helped secure scholarships and college admissions—even (under considerable financial duress) made a living on the demand for help when I worked at posh Cairo admissions consultancy. Given the insistence with which countless Egyptians asked me about getting out of Egypt in the five years I lived there, I feel responsible for registering the weight of that appeal here. Moreover, the dream of escape from Egypt lends to context to the cultivation of *wasta*: the feeling of being choked—of clawing, grasping, gasping for breath, of needing to get out—is a condition that pushes Egyptians to participate in forms of corruption that they recognize among the causes of their

immiseration.

Many of my main interlocutors made this moral judgment quite explicit. During my first interview with Mostafa and Morad, after answering Mostafa's questions about divine nature of Christ and a handful more about sex from Morad, I asked for their opinion on the association between Monoufiya and *wasta*. Morad savored his opportunity to be an expert, sitting up as straight as possible and talking loudly. "The problem with this country," he announced, "is corruption" (*fesad*). Though this is a judgment he might have shares with an IMF administrator or a protester in the 2011 revolution, his explanation indicated that he did not just mean bribery. "Someone can go get a good education and still end up sitting in a coffee shop without a job. That's corruption." The Arabic word *fesad* can mean corruption on a couple of registers: it can refer to acts of official corruption by state actors; it can refer to rottenness in food that's gone bad; and by analogy, it can refer to any kind of moral rottenness. Though I pressed Morad on the double or triple-entendre, he changed the topic of conversation.

A few minutes later, Mostafa elaborated on Morad's comment. The problem with *wasta,* he explained, is that nobody's doing the job they are qualified for. If you get a good job, you don't get it because you worked hard and deserved the position, but because someone in your network did you a favor. It would be nice to be recognized for one's work, but that's not how things are. So there's no point in working hard. The only thing left for you to do to make money and have a family is to rely on *wasta*. That's why *wasta* is corruption. He referenced a *hadith*, or reported tradition, concerning one of the companions of the Prophet Mohammed, in which the early Caliph Omar took personal responsibility for a person injured on poorly maintained roads within the Caliphate. "That is right," ("*howa da al-haqq*") Morad said. "There," pointing to me and meaning America, "everything runs on right" ("*kul haga mashiya ʾala al-haqq*"). It's not like that here. It used to be, but it's not anymore.

Morad and Mostafa's reckoning of *wasta* articulates an ethical dilemma they acknowledged explicitly, namely that it is both wrong and pernicious but unavoidable. Casting Morad and Mostafa's comments in Saad's language, we could interpret choking to be both cause and effect of *wasta,* that is, as that which inspires one to do what one knows is wrong and therefore that which also entails one's desperation. Morad's reference to the image of the unemployed college graduate figured corruption not as the act of seeking or acquiring nepotistic favors but as the waste of human potential. Mostafa agreed with Morad's analysis but took his logic in another direction, identifying corruption with a state in which it is impossible to do right. In as much as Egypt's corruption is imagined to be noxious and impossible to resolve, escape from Egypt represents an eminently practical way of seeking a more prosperous and conscionable way of life. The insistent question of whether I could help anyone to travel ensured that this dilemma was never far from my mind.

A valid visa, however, was not the only prerequisite for the right to travel. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the impact of the reign of Mohammed ʾAli Basha,[4] the Ottoman viceroy widely credited as the founder of Modern Egypt, on the relationship between family and state in Egypt.

[4] "Mohammed Ali Basha" is the Egyptian rendering of the Ottoman Turkish name and title Mehmet Ali Pasha, which I've chosen for its fidelity to the way my interlocutors spoke about this figure. Because Pasha is a title, I sometimes do not include it when I write of Mohammed Ali.

Here I simply want to point out that, in building a conscript army strong enough to challenge Ottoman authority, ʾAli Basha found himself forced to identify and track the movements of his peasant subjects to prevent them from fleeing the draft. Consequently, to leave one's village in 1830s Egypt meant presenting a license to travel. When I lived in Egypt, young men like Saad were prohibited from traveling abroad until they carried a supplement to their passport showing they had completed their military service. Egyptian police officers, with the exception of making religious pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, were prohibited from traveling abroad at all.

Are you a spy?

Another constant question I faced—was I a spy?—also arose in my first week, and was both troubling and germane to understanding the counterrevolution in Egypt. A few days after we first met, Saad took me out to meet his Cairo friends to drink tea and eat the dawn meal before fasting. As a handful of lower-class Egyptians and I walked through a downtown Cairo gas station on our way to an outdoor restaurant, one of the gas station attendants shouted at my companions, asserting that I was a spy (*gasoos*) and interrogating them about my presence among them. My new friends laughed and side-stepped the man as he tried to block our way, but this suspicion—like interest in travel—became such a refrain in my life in Egypt that it, too, fundamentally conditioned the research I was to do there.

In summer 2012, a full year before the counterrevolution, the Egyptian state television broadcast—and then pulled—advertisements warning Egyptians from befriending foreigners because they might have concealed motives. In the advertisement, a scowling man enters a typical Egyptian Cairo shop to the sound of tense, buzzing violins. A voice-over intones that he will have no trouble getting to know people because Egyptians are so generous. The man stumbles over the phrase "I… like you a lot" in Arabic, and his new Egyptian friends begin talking to him "as though [they've] known him for a long time" giving away "important information" "for free." The Egyptians complain about prices, gas and transportation crises as the man smirks and records their complaints into his smart phone. "To whom are you complaining, and why are you opening to him the heart of the country?" ("*Bitishtiky li meen, wi leih bitiftahlo qalb al-balad?*"). "Every word has a price," concludes the announcer, "and the word saves a homeland" ("*Kul kilma bi-taman, wi al-kilma bitinqidh watan*").

After the ad aired, foreign journalists criticized the xenophobia of the ad, which prompted State Television to withdraw it on fears it would harm Egypt's already shaky reputation abroad and thereby dampen tourism. Nonetheless, the ad had already fomented suspicion between Egyptian and foreigners, the former fearing espionage and the latter, imprisonment and torture. Though I had gone to Egypt warned by my advisors that I would likely be surveilled while there, and though I had already been asked numerous times whether or not I was a spy, the ad helped to generalize my fear of surveillance: I needed beware not just state security but ordinary Egyptians. What's more, I came to understand, I needed to account for the potential risks to which I could expose interlocutors simply by speaking to me: while I would likely be deported, the consequences for interlocutors speaking to me should I be accused of espionage would be far worse. I eventually chose to substantially restrict the scope of my research to avoid exposing interlocutors to undue danger.

Reciprocally, many Egyptians hearkened to the call to fear foreigners. Most absurdly, security forces detained a swan reported by a man in upper Egypt for having an electronic device attached to his leg—a device later revealed to be a tracking device placed on the bird by French researchers studying the bird's migratory patterns. In a parallel of the scenario imagined in the pulled advertisement, state security briefly detained French journalist Alain Gresh in 2014 for speaking about Egyptian politics in English and Arabic at a downtown Cairo cafe. According to Gresh's account, "After half an hour, a well-dressed lady sitting next to us—and of whom I had taken no notice—stood-up visibly furious and addressed us, before leaving the place, saying: "You want to destroy the country!" Upon leaving the cafe, Gresh and his companions were detained by waiting security officers, who interrogated him about "where I was staying in Cairo, why I changed hotels during my stay and when I arrived in Egypt." Gresh continues,

> […] one of the officers asked me if I had an authorisation from the Ministry of Information; I did not. Following my answer, that same officer, thinking he had me cornered, replied: "And if I had to interview people in France, wouldn't I need authorisation?" He was surprised by my negative response. (2014, sic throughout)

Gresh's account not only confirms the reality and strength of the fear stoked by the 2012 State Television advertisement, but also points to a widespread ignorance about how political rights are manipulated and managed outside of Egypt. In the wake of the 2012 publication of the *Innocence of Muslims*, the YouTube "documentary" defaming the Prophet Mohammed as a pedophile that sparked protest worldwide (including the protest used as cover for the attack on the American consulate in Benghazi in Libya), many Egyptians with whom I spoke expressed disbelief when I told them the American government did not have the power to order the documentary's removal from YouTube. Despite the fact that many of these same people often resorted to my expertise in arguing political battles with other Egyptians—"*you* know all about rights"—they had little sense of how Americans (or Europeans) understand and adjudicate rights to expression. That it is enormously difficult for Egyptians to travel to the United States and that Egyptians are encouraged to fear foreigners only contributes to this misapprehension.

At the same time, it's useful to note the defensiveness of the position I've just articulated. The way Gresh and I have written about being called to account in light of the actual, historical interference of our governments in Egypt's domestic affairs seems to suggest that the mistake is made by *them* for even asking the question. Of course *I* am not involved in untoward subterfuge of Egyptian political aspirations. *I* would never undermine the right of Egyptians to defend their own interests—except, perhaps, if I write that they were wrong to ask if I was a spy.

This concern expressed by this insistent question was in fact very much legitimate. As Talal Asad showed in his contributions to *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973), the work of social anthropologists during colonialism *often* served the imperial interests of the metropole; more recently, Gonzalez has documented the use of "human terrain systems" research in the US occupation of Afghanistan (2008). Western governments, including the American government, have a long history of profoundly consequential covert interventions in the state affairs of Middle Eastern countries—the assassination of Mossadaq in Iran and the Suez

Crisis in Egypt being two examples Egyptians remember well—and *so do Western researchers*. (How do Egyptians benefit from research published about them in English? Who is the intended audience of *this* text? Who paid for it and why?) While many of the specific accusations and rumors about American intervention in the revolution of 2011 and the counterrevolution of 2013 will likely turn out to be false (I was often bemused by the minute control over events in Egypt attributed to the United States in light of President Obama's difficulty in responding to crises back home) it will likely be years before the American government declassifies information about its interventions in Egypt and other Arab countries during and after the Arab Spring.

In the course of my research in Monoufiya, was Morad who came closest to concluding that I was a spy and could not be trusted. The very night he proposed to answer my questions in exchange for my answering his, he put the limits of that exchange to the test. After talking for several hours at the café, he, Mostafa, Saad and I went to Saad's house to watch a movie on Saad's computer. I had brought my own new computer to Monoufiya, but I was nervous about having it with me: given that I was interested in *wasta*, an everyday but nonetheless illegal behavior, UC Berkeley's ethics review board had deemed it necessary that I keep my fieldnotes on an encrypted cloud storage service; my computer was password protected, but I took my notes on my computer and could not upload them to the cloud until returning to Cairo. I knew that if Morad or anyone else saw my new computer, they would want to explore the new piece of technology. Though I had talked about my worries to Saad before I came to visit, and he had assured me that I could just keep the computer in my bag, I was horrified when he mischievously suggested that I show Morad and Mostafa my new computer.

Morad fancied himself the town's computer expert and heartily acclaimed the suggestion. I opened my computer and unlocked it, showing him its features. He took over the computer, and I watched carefully over his shoulder as he started to play around with it. He soon started to dig into the folders beyond my desktop, and I became nervous. Taking control of the machine, I made a show of pointing out a few of its other features before closing the computer and suggesting we watch the movie. We only made it through the film's first five minutes before Morad insisted that he and Mostafa leave. Saad accompanied them to the door, where Morad claimed that my discomfort in him using my computer was clear evidence I was a spy. To my great frustration, Saad came upstairs to tell me that I had screwed up. We strategized, and I suggested simply referring to the confidentiality procedures I had walked through just hours before, a strategy Saad rejected. After consulting with his father, Saad concluded that the only solution was for me to apologize and offer to give Morad my computer: a show of generosity, even one that was patently insincere, was necessary to repair the relationship I had just damaged. The next morning, Saad and I paid a visit to Morad's father's house, where I apologized before father and son and offered up the computer. Morad refused but cautioned Saad and me to be more careful about how my behavior looked to people in the village. Though Mostafa would become a key interlocutor and a close friend in the years after, my relationship with Morad never recovered.

After the 2013 coup, I followed dozens of cases of gays,[5] activists, journalists, and academics arrested (or deported, if they were foreign) by the regime. Amidst the concerns of my advisors, my fellowship grantors, and the Institutional Review Board overseeing the ethics of my research, I gave up on the ideal of being able to conduct organized interviews of a representative sample of the community, recognizing that to attempt to do so would not only put me at risk but could potentially endanger other people. Instead, I opted simply to "be there" socially as much as possible, announcing my research goals and participating in everyday interactions, waiting for moments of intimate conversation in which it was possible for me to ask for consent to write about the topics at hand. These research conditions obviously limit the perspective from which I write: in the rural Delta community where I focused my research, I mostly spoke to unmarried men, most of whom were poor, almost all of whom were Muslim. My relationships in Cairo crossed boundaries of gender, class, and religion and often provided a productive contrast to what I observed in Saad's village, but in both places I cultivated a paranoia about speaking openly with strangers that isolated me even as it kept me and others safe.

I was right to be concerned. A few days after the fifth anniversary of the January 25th revolution, members of my Cairo Facebook network started circulating images of a young Italian graduate student from Cambridge who had disappeared near Tahrir the night of the anniversary. On February 3rd, 2016, a minibus driver found Guilio Regeni's half-naked corpse in a ditch on the outskirts of Cairo, his body covered in cigarette burns—a hallmark of interrogation by Egypt's national security police. Though Egypt's government has repeatedly denied involvement in Regeni's death, none of the foreign researchers and journalists I knew in Cairo doubted their guilt, and, likewise, few expressed much surprise. This atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion around foreigners after the revolution was not new, but my Cairo cohort interpreted the death of a European as a sign that the Sisi government no longer recognized any boundaries as to who could or could not be subjected to torture and death, and, moreover, that as one of the few Arab Spring governments still considered nominally stable by the West, it no longer feared sanction for human rights abuses from the international community.

If we recognize xenophobia as a both legitimate and sincere reaction to the depredations of neocolonizing states like the United States, how are we to reconcile the insistence of the question that expressed that fear—are you a spy?—with the equal insistence with which Egyptians asked me if I could help them travel? Put abstractly, both questions involve problems of borders, of the possibilities of crossing territorial boundaries and of defining the limits of the nation, but the values they invest in the image of the nation are opposed. In the ambivalence revealed by the juxtaposition of these two questions, we can also perceive deep concern with the problem of the relation of the sovereign state to the citizen. As I will explore through the concept of nepotistic connections, or *wasta*, I argue that the crisis of legitimacy for the post-2011 Egyptian state involved the question: who is in, and who is out?

By introducing this question through the questions of my interlocutors, I hope I have afforded my readers a sense of both the limits and the possibilities of this inquiry. Though I belong

[5] Joseph Massad's critique of the ways international gay rights organizations intervene in Middle Eastern politics notwithstanding, Massad's public insistence that gay Arabs do not exist amounts to yet another

to an anthropological tradition that favors the investigation of concepts through the practices that embody them (Asad 1993; Mahmood 2004; Hirschkind 2006), this dissertation is not an ethnography of practices of corruption or political activism against it. If there are practices studied here, they are practices of reckoning, of trying to understand the situation one is in and to find a path through it. Though *wasta* can be both a means of governance or an object of reform, in this text it appears more often a tool that is ready-at-hand for use towards the end of living one's life. In this way, the inquiry pursued here belongs to a broader conversation on the anthropology of ethics (for example, Laidlaw 2002; Lambek 2010; Fassin 2013), particularly on the theme of ethical action against a horizon of moral breakdown (Zigon 2006).

As Yazan Doughan shows in his recent study of the politics of *wasta* in Jordan, *wasta* occupies an ambivalent moral status in many Arab countries, both vicious and virtuous, that is a testament to the historical forces that folded local, patrimonial authority into centralized, bureaucratic states (2019). An analysis of the ethics of *wasta*, consequently, requires a historical particularism not always evident in accounts of corruption outside of anthropology.[6] In the long-sedentary Nile Delta, I will argue, the historical forces that shaped *wasta* emerged not through efforts to incorporate and settle desert tribes, as in Jordan, but in the constitution of the Egyptian conscription state in the reign of Mohammed ʾAli Basha. In the agonism of conscription, kin emerged as the sovereign exception, configuring the distinction between friend and enemy, citizen and alien, in ways that are difficult to understand through the normative lens of liberal social contract theory.

In Chapter 1 of this dissertation, I introduce the popular figure of Monoufiya as a foreign part of Egypt in post-revolutionary discourse. I will trace the trope of the treacherous Monoufi through a series of historical narratives that illustrate ways that being subject to foreign rule deranges one's ability to reckon the difference between insider and outsider.

In Chapter 2, I consider the reign of Mohammed Ali, the Ottoman viceroy often hailed as the founder of modern Egypt, in light of the longer history of Egypt's experience of colonialism sketched in Chapter 1. Here, I argue that Ali's central innovation in Egyptian government, the conscription of the Egyptian peasantry, not only folded nation into state but instituted family obligation as the exception to the rule of law.

In Chapter 3, I argue that the kinship metaphors mobilized in *wasta* relationships emphasize the obligation to give rather than the obligation to reciprocate. Exploring different ways that kinship precipitates giving in Egypt, I propose that *wasta* embodied forms of love and care that were of ethical importance to my interlocutors.

Chapter 4 connects the obligation to break the law to the rights of them= family through two figures of marginal masculinity, the hustler and the thug. This analysis leads me to challenge assumptions about the proper relationship between public and private domains that are implicit in many assessments of Egyptian corruption.

In the conclusion, I discuss conscription as figure for the operation of power, emphasizing the importance of understanding the 2013 counterrevolution through logics of political inclusion.

[6] For other ethnographic accounts of corruption and/or favor economies, see Pierce's work on corruption in Nigeria (2016), Danet's work on pulling strings in the US and Israel (1989), Ledeneva's ethnography of *blat* in Russia (1998), Yang (1994) and Smart and Hsu (2007) on *guanxi* in China, and Gupta's accounts of corruption in India (1995) and (2012).

Throughout this discussion, I hope my readers will recall the insistent questions I have redirected to them here. It is easy, when reading or watching news from the Middle East, to imagine that one is not involved in what one sees, and I do not wish my readers to form that impression in the course of their reading. Rather, it seems to me that the difficulty I found in struggling to answer these questions was that I had *already* been called on to respond and, indeed, my answers had *already* been framed by forces much larger than me. My hope is that my readers find themselves in a similar predicament when they imagine their own answers.

Chapter 1

Monouphobia: the Politics of Fearing Monoufiya after the Revolution

When I first started visiting Monoufiya in fall 2011, before I had considered doing research there, Cairenes would warn me against going.

Follow the Nile north from Cairo and you find Monoufiya where the river branches, unfurling the Delta and feeding the lush fields so many armies have sought to make into a "breadbasket" for empire. The Governorate of Monoufiya has only been known by that name since 1310 CE, but people from there trace its roots back to a pharaonic city called "Bier Noub"—the pronunciation "Monouf" emerging during the Byzantine era of Egyptian history. Home to nearly four million people, Monoufiya is rural but dense; land disputes shape familial and political conflict. In the years immediately following the 2011 revolution, the province saw an explosion of home building, a phenomenon Monoufis recognized as political at the time: Monoufiya's farmland is limited, so to build housing on top of it is to endanger the province and the nation.

It was close enough to Cairo—about two hours by microbus—that many worked in the capital and commuted home every day, and far enough that, for many others, sleeping at work during the week was preferable to spending four hours a day on public transportation.

When people warned me against going there, I would always ask why. Once, at a bus stop on the way there, a microbus driver answered with a gesture, biting his thumb. *Bakhil*. They are *bokhala*, miserly. That assessment was the simplest, but the discourse as a whole was elaborate: If you go to a Monoufi's home at dinner time, he'll pretend they've just eaten a late lunch. They are snakes; they are betrayers; they are two-faced. They will trick you if they can. Monoufiya is the Tel Aviv of Egypt, and Monoufis are her Jews. They are power-hungry—*ʾayzeen al-sulta*—or, as Monoufis would counter, *al-monoufi mabiysibsh haqqu*—"the Monoufi never leaves his right." In the years immediately after the 2011 revolution, they were *feloul*, or "remnants" of the Mubarak regime, a "hidden hand" secretly working to undermine the revolution.

There's cause for this last stereotype: prior to the 2011 revolution, Egypt's two most recent presidents, Mubarak and Sadat, had both been from Monoufiya, ruling collectively for 41 years. Many of the regime's most notorious kleptocrats, like steel tycoon Ahmed Ezz and former Speaker of Parliament Kamal al-Shazly, were from there, too. In the 2012 presidential elections, Monoufiya was the only governorate to vote for former Mubarak Prime Minister Ahmed Shafik by a majority in the first round, and was the governorate with the highest voting percentage for Shafik in the second. After Morsi's year in power, the coup saw ʾAdly Mansour (2013-2016) and Abdel Fatah el-Sisi (2016-present) rise to power; though both men were born and raised in Cairo,

they were acclaimed Monoufis by descent. Indeed, after Morsi was deposed and Mansour installed on June 3rd, 2013, Mansour's Monoufiya family celebrated in the street for several days.[7]

My interlocutors traced the formation of the Monoufi character to recent Egyptian history or, variously, to the Pharaonic, Sassanid, or British periods, differing on its origins while agreeing on its essential dimensions. In the Pharaonic origin story, the people of the Nile Delta learned to be shifty under foreign Hyksos occupation (1650-1550 BCE), while the Egyptians of the Upper Nile, never conquered, overthrew the Hyksos and reunited the Two Lands. In the putatively Sassanid folktale, the Monoufi benefits from a robbery and then turns the robber in for a reward; in the version based on British rule, the Monoufi witnesses the collective punishment visited upon Egyptians after the Dinashaway incident and fixes his ambition on acquiring military power. Some Egyptians pointed to space, rather than time, as the source of Monoufi viciousness: with so little land, sons could not rely on their inheritances for survival and so learned to fight for power. The rhyme Egyptians often recited about Monoufis—"the Monoufi makes no friends, even if you feed him the meet of your shoulder"—offers its truth as a simple fact of the present tense. I understand this profusion of etiologies to mean that Monoufiya and the Monoufi are overdetermined and therefore essentializable only as fictions—that is, as something *fictio*, fashioned by human making (Geertz 1973).

In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Monoufiya became a metonym for the type of power lately wielded from there—that is, for the corruption against which the 2011 revolution arose and, more precisely, for the use of *wasta*, or nepotistic "connections," to acquire favors. Monoufiya held a singular space within Egypt's imagined self-constitution, in which it often stood for much that a good Egyptian should not be and must not do. As an object for national abjection, the fiction of Monoufiya helps define the moral stakes of Egyptian nationalism in the Arab Spring. And yet, in this connection with the Mubarak regime, a peculiar paradox arises in the depiction of the Monoufi: How, if the Monoufi refuses reciprocity, can he also embody the corruption and illicit dealmaking of Mubarak and his cohort? That is, if he never gives back, how can bribes or favors induce him to give?

In this chapter, I will begin by exploring discourses about the Monoufi-as-feloul in Egypt after the January 25th Revolution. After establishing this contemporary context, I will consider a series of historical explanations for the Monoufi character offered by my interlocutors, all of which portray the Monoufi as someone whose loyalties are corrupted because of his intercourse with foreign powers. I then turn to an analysis of the folk rhyme cited above, which, unlike these historical narratives, depicts the Monoufi as unwilling to engage normal forms of exchange. I argue that the supposed lack of generosity of Monoufis is linked to the problem of drawing communal boundaries. I end with an examination of the concept of *wasta*, using examples my fieldwork to suggest that *wasta* mediates the relationship between citizen and state.

Monoufiya after the Revolution

"Al-Bagour is the capital of Cairo."

[7] A story I heard after the celebrations had ended, unfortunately. The next time Saad and I passed through Mansour's home town, Saad made sure to point out the Mansour family home from the main road: a cement house, white and a little dingy, unusual only in that it lacked a wrought-iron door.

Yasser had stopped cutting his client's hair so he could explain and turned to face me on the waiting bench behind the bank of chairs at his barbershop. The statement was plainly ridiculous—al-Bagour is a small administrative center of 50,000 in the governorate of Monoufiya—and Yasser's smirk told me he knew as much.

He gestured outside, "You see that bridge? You see that building? Those are from Kamal al-Shazli." I was supposed to be impressed, and I was. It was early 2012, after the parliamentary elections and at the beginning of the presidential campaign. Legendary reporter Anthony Shadid had recently died in Syria, and a friend had recommended I read a profile of al-Shazli that Shadid had written a year earlier, in the immediate aftermath of Mubarak's ouster. Shadid had presented al-Shazli's mystique in al-Bagour by offering a similar list of buildings: "In a town he represented in Parliament for 46 years, Kamal al-Shazli left his mark. There is the Kamal al-Shazli School on Kamal al-Shazli Street, around the corner from the Kamal al-Shazli Mosque, which is a little ways from the cafe where Mr. Shazli held court when he was the only man in town who got things done." I wanted to know more, so I nodded for Yasser to continue.

"Look, al-Shazli helped everybody, especially with jobs. Everyone here used to get jobs through him. If you needed something, he could help." Al-Shazli had what Yasser called *wasta*, connections. Shadid had described the late al-Shazli, al-Bagour's representative in parliament for 46 years, as the master of enormous networks of corruption. Though the deposed President Mubarak had also been from Monoufiya—as had been President Sadat before him—it was his righthand man, al-Shazli, who had most enriched the region during the Mubarak regime. Next to me, the man waiting for his haircut nodded in agreement Yasser's proclamation, as did the man getting his hair cut.

When I lived in Egypt, Yasser was in his late thirties, married with two kids, and living in al-Bagour in an apartment rented from a cousin. His chair in the barbershop was rented from another relative. Youngest of eight, his father had died when he was baby and his eldest brother had raised him. He, like his brothers, had been a member of the National Democratic Party, Mubarak's party, before it was abolished, and he remembered the late al-Shazli with reverence.

When he broke for lunch, just after afternoon prayer, Yasser took me to see the al-Shazli family compound. Occupying a full city block off the main street, the walls of the compound were too high to see inside. The visible features of the compound were public spaces, adjoined to the wall of the house: a meeting hall, emblazoned with his name and picture; his tomb, honoring his memory; and a religious office under al-Azhar authority where one could apply to send students to al-Azhar secondary schools and universities. Before his illness and death, al-Shazli had received visitors in the hall, meeting with petitioners and using the personal and public resources at his disposal to solve problems like unemployment or difficulties with government bureaucracy; after his death, representatives of the family maintained the same services from the hall but—in the absence of the elder al-Shazli—without an audience. I was struck by the range of public needs met at the literal boundary of al-Shazli's private home.

Across the street loomed a sprawling youth center decked out with a pool, a library, a gym, and a huge stadium. On the front of its main building, a plaque marked the occasion of its opening, attended by al-Shazli and former President Mubarak. From the top of the stadium, Yasser pointed out a stylish new hospital looming over a quiet street at the outskirts of town. "Al-Shazli built that, too."

Over a lunch of sandwiches in the stadium bleachers, Yasser explained that, when he was a young man, being from Monoufiya could get you out of trouble—you really did have *wasta* just because of where you were from. He told me of getting into a fight on a beach in Alexandria when he was young. Yasser had taken a vacation with some friends from Monoufiya, another group of boys on the beach had picked a fight, and Yasser and friends had given them hell back. When the police came and checked everyone's ID cards, the officer saw where they were from and sent them on their way—while detaining the other group of boys. Yasser laughed to punctuate the end of the story, and I found myself struggling to laugh with him.

Older Monoufis I encountered, like Yasser's older brother Omar, acknowledged that the Sadat and Mubarak years had been good for Monoufiya. In the 70s, Sadat had been in the habit of returning to his family compound near al-Shohada every Friday for prayer, and his personal relationships had been channels through which the jobless found jobs and former army officers became factory owners. Mubarak famously never visited his home village near Shibin al-Kom, but figures like al-Shazli had ensured the continued privilege of Monoufis in the Egyptian public sphere.

During the parliamentary elections of the fall and winter after the 2011 revolution, the exclusion of the *feloul* assumed enormous importance. The Brotherhood-affiliated Freedom and Justice party called for a "law of political isolation" under a slate of proposals combating corruption in its Parliamentary Election Program. The proposed law aimed at excluding any political candidates "who participated in or benefited from perversion of economic life" through authority in the old regime. Of course, the law was only a proposal, and there were "remnants" of the old regime already running for office under the banner of new parties. When the Muslim Brotherhood called out individual candidates as friends of Mubarak, the revolutionaries pointed out that the Brotherhood had done everything it could to win the approval Armed Forces since the revolution.

By the time the parliamentary elections ended and the presidential campaign began, the discourse had shifted to the question of whether or not individual voters were *feloul* because of the candidate they voted for. Facebookers, according to their habit, posted memes: "I will vote for Shafiq but I am not *feloul*"; "I am from Monoufiya but I am not *feloul*." Saad told me to stop mentioning that he was from Monoufiya when we went out with friends in Cairo. In this post-revolutionary discourse, the Monoufi came to embody all that an Egyptian must not be, tracing the inverse shape of a national self-image emergent after the January 25th revolution. When I tried out the vocabulary word *ovwara* ("over-the-top-ness") to describe this kind of rhetoric to my Arabic tutor, she laughed. "We're all feloul" (*Ihna kullina feloul*), she joked. Everyone participated in the Mubarak regime, she explained, because everyone had to. You couldn't live a normal life otherwise. Everyone benefited, so, in her eyes, everyone was complicit.

These episodes pointed to something liminal about the figure of the Monoufi-as-*feloul*, an in-betweenness that provoked attempts to name and delimit. On the one hand, Kamal al-Shazli, like other examples of Monoufi notables ("*regala kabira*"), wove the public functions of his office into the fabric of his private life, and for this he was both loved and hated. On the other, the word *feloul* appeared to be easy to define but difficult to use, its capacity to index shifting depending on the political context. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that my research into the cultural and historical resources that Egyptians used to animate these tropes revealed a

paradoxical characterization of the Monoufi as both enmeshed in webs of patronage and connection and averse to participating in the give and take of relationships.

Like the questions I described in the introduction, I eventually began to hear warnings against Monoufis as speech acts, that is, as having the power not so much to describe the world as to shape it. By describing statements about the Monoufi character as speech acts, I do not mean to say that the Egyptians who warned against Monoufis were fabulists, but that their statements were first and foremost warnings of danger—warnings against a type of unscrupulous character they feared I—or they—might encounter there. The tut-tutters in Cairo claimed vindication after my move to Monoufiya in 2013, when my landlord promised a furnished apartment and only grudgingly offered a pee-soaked mattress and cockroach-infested refrigerator after I had lived there for six weeks. Even my friends in the village (while joking they would kill him for me) acknowledged that my landlord, ʾAmm Anwar, had behaved in a way that was stereotypically Monoufi.

But, as the proliferation of discourse about the Monoufi shows, these warnings were only incidentally directed at me; the image of the Monoufi was the medium for a moral warning issued through an image of the nation and its constitutive parts. Monoufiya is not the only province of Egypt to which stereotypical traits are ascribed through sayings: Alexandrians are summed up by the phrase "salty water, scowling faces" (*maya malha, wohoush kalha*), while Mansoura is the "mother of the picture" (*ʿomm al-soura*) due to the beauty of its inhabitants. Upper (Southern) Egyptians, or *Saʾida*, are attributed a wide variety of characteristics, like naïveté or righteousness, that can be cast in approving or disapproving terms, and they loom large as stock characters in film and literature. In her book *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary*, Samah Salim traces the stereotype of the rural peasant and his relation with the more cosmopolitan effendi and officer in the modernist drama of national development ( ). As in other national imaginaries—think of the liberal American polemic *What's the Matter with Kansas?*—local, particularly rural, stock characters stage dramas of reprobation, of normative expectations not always articulated as claims.

As moral philosopher Alasair Macintyre argues in *After Virtue*, part of "what is specific to each culture is in large and central part specific to its stock of *characters*" (1984, 28, emphasis original). The school headmaster (in Victorian England) and the Prussian officer (in Wilhelmine Germany) become "moral representatives of their culture … because of the way in which moral and metaphysical ideas and theories assume through them an embodied existence in the social world. Characters are the masks worn by moral philosophies" (28). Macintyre takes care to distinguish characters from individuals and their social roles. While individuals involve themselves in "chain[s] of practical reasoning whose conclusions are expressed in such actions as mailing a letter"—that is to say, in implicit assumptions about the way certain actions stand to affect the world in particular ways—they can also fulfill the duties of a social role without having to agree with the assumptions embodied in its institutional position. By contrast, a character joins role and personality and thereby "furnishes [members of a culture] with a cultural and moral ideal. … The character morally legitimates a mode of social existence" (29).

If the Monoufi is a character in Macintyre's sense, however, what he illustrates is moral bankruptcy. In narratives of the Egyptian nation, the Monoufi represents a character who is dangerous not only because he may cheat or swindle, but because, as we will see below, he remains in an ambiguous space of social non-belonging by refusing accepted norms of exchange.

Warnings about the Monoufi can be heard as an act of abjection, as an Egyptian saying of the Monoufi, "Not me. Not that" (Kristeva 1982, 2). In other words, perhaps part the danger of the Monoufi is not only that he may cheat me, but that I might be or become him. Indeed, during the post-revolutionary elections, as my Facebook network expanded and I followed Egyptian comedy and meme pages like *As7aby*, I started to see memes expressing a desire to excise Monoufiya from the whole of Egypt. One meme showed a map of Egypt, with an outline around the province of Monoufiya, asking "Isn't there a country willing to exchange this governorate of Monoufiya, and we'll pay them the difference?"

Another depicted a scene from the Disney film *The Lion King*, repurposed. Mufasa looks over the pride lands and tells Simba that this is Egypt and that "one day all this will be yours." When Simba asks after the dark gash in the landscape—in the movie, the elephant graveyard—Mufasa replies, "That, son, is Monoufiya, and you must never go there." In the period after the 2011 revolution and before the 2013 coup, Monoufiya occupied a place in the Egyptian political imagination as that which must be excluded from the national body, as the politically or morally abject.

When I first started hearing the word *feloul*, the Cairo headquarters of the former ruling party, the National Democratic Party, was a literal ruin after being torched on the third day of the revolution, the so-called "Day of Rage." When the NDP selected a nephew of Anwar Sadat as its new leadership, Egypt's Higher Administrative Court dissolved the group four days later. What "remained" were the former members themselves, ready, many feared, to return to power by any means. Indeed, as Neil Ketchley argues in his careful account of *Egypt in a Time of Revolution* , use of the word "revolution" to describe the events of 2011-2012 tends to obscure the fact "the Mubarak-era state was never upended" because the Egyptian Army assumed control of the transition as the guarantor of Egyptian sovereignty (2017, 5). That the Army emerged as guardian of the revolution was a both strategic choice on the part of various Egyptian armed forces and protestors and an accident of the conjuncture of revolutionary forces (Skocpol 1979). After overwhelming and disgracing police forces under the control of the Ministry of the Interior on January 28th, protestors turned to public fraternization with the Army in an ultimately successful effort to persuade the Egyptian Armed Forces to intervene on behalf of the people. Individual protestors took selfies with solidiers, crowds chanted "*al-geish wal-shaʿb eed wahda*," "the Army and the people are one hand," and soldiers like Maged Boules stepped forward to protect protestors from pro-regime thugs (*baltagiya*). Ketchley documents conflicting claims as to whether or not soldiers in Tahrir actually disobeyed direct orders to attack protestors, but argues military leaders would likely not have ordered attacks: their own intelligence suggested the conscripted rank and file identified with the people in the street.

Thus, the Egyptian military reoccupied its historical role as revolutionary force in the drama of the nation, announcing first that it would not harm protestors and, later, to protect them (Ibid 69). In the April after the revolution, the military pledged the Armed Forces' commitment to pursue the arrest of any *feloul* of the old regime "with all [their] might and determination" (*Resala* 34). A few years later, the military would work to mobilize protest against duly elected President Morsi in order to legitimate his removal from power—and the elevation of Mansour and al-Sisi to the presidency. Yasser and his friends would praise this turn of events as the return of the Monoufi to his rightful place at the reins of power.

Monoufiya in historical memory

Why *return*? What sort of repetition is at stake in saying the Monoufi returned to power? As I noted earlier, the Monoufi character Egyptians invoked after the revolution mobilized a range of historical references that connected the predicament of the present moment to Egypt's long history of foreign domination. In each of the iterations explored here, the Monoufi appears as a foreign Egyptian, someone whose in-betweenness threatens betrayal.

The narrative that drew on living memory diagnosed Monoufiya through the presidencies of Sadat and Mubarak. As many commentators have pointed out, the idea that the Egyptian revolution of 2011 was primarily about securing democratic freedoms is a fiction sustainable only by willful ignorance of modern Egyptian history (for example, Bush and Ayeb 2012 4-5; Schenker 2016, 14-15): in demanding that Mubarak step down, Egyptian protestors were calling for an end to the mode of neoliberal governance associated with his rule. In the United States, neoliberalism is primarily presented as an (often suspect) economic ideology, but in Egypt the advent of economic liberalization under Sadat signaled a major shift in foreign policy and a corresponding adjustment of Egypt's stature in the world. To understand how Monoufiya became a metonym for national betrayal in 2011-2012, it is necessary to examine the historical context of that rupture.

In the nationalist history of Egypt, the Free Officer's Coup of July 23rd 1952, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and a small group of junior officers, had led to an epochal achievement for Egypt: the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez canal represented full national self-determination after centuries, if not millennia, of foreign rule. Shortly after seizing power, Nasser's Revolutionary Command Council advanced another signature policy, the Agrarian Reform Law of September 1952. The new law reduced the amount of agricultural land that any individual could own to 200 *feddans*, with any surplus being redistributed to tenants possessing fewer than 5—a move that boosted the revolution's popularity among Egypt's peasants while crippling the landholding elite that had held power under the *ancien regime* (Abdel Malek 1968, 70-72). In 1955's *Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser explained his view that Egypt was "in the throes of two revolutions, not one" (24):

> Every nation on earth undergoes two revolutions: One political, in which it recovers its right of self government from an imposed despot or an army of aggression occupying its territory without its consent. The second revolution is social, in which the classes of society struggle against each other until justice for all citizens has been gained and conditions have become stable. …
>
> I realized from the very beginning that our success depended on our complete understanding of the nature of the conditions we live in as related to our national history. We were not in a position to change these conditions by a mere stroke of the pen. And we were not in a position to put back or put forward the hands of the clock and dominate time. We could not act, along the route of history, as the traffic constable does on the road; we could not stop the passage of one revolution to let through another, and therefore avoid a collision. The best thing to do was to act as best we could, and escape being crushed between the two mill-stones.

> It was imperative that we should proceed with the two revolutions together. The day we marched along the path of political revolution and dethroned Farouk we took a similar step along the path of social revolution by limiting the ownership of agricultural land. I still believe until today that the revolution of July 23rd should retain its capacity for swift action and initiative in order that it may fulfill the miracle of proceeding with the two revolutions simultaneously, contradictory as our action may appear to be sometimes. (24, 26-27)

Indeed, in the years that followed, Nasser would frequently be accused of inconsistency—particularly with respect to his espoused socialism—but his words here both capture the grandness of his vision for Egypt and the basic principles that guided his leadership until his death in 1969. The army necessarily played a key role in this vision, and not just as a "vanguard," as Nasser claims to have hoped before the revolution (Ibid).

Consider the words of Anwar Sadat on July 23rd, 1952, announcing the Free Officer's Coup to Egypt and the world:

> Egypt has passed through a critical period in her recent history characterized by bribery, mischief, and the absence of governmental stability. All of these were factors that had a large influence on the army. Those who accepted bribes and were thus influenced caused our defeat in the Palestine War [1948]. As for the period following the war, the mischief-making elements have been assisting one another, and traitors have been commanding the army. They appointed a commander who is either ignorant or corrupt. Egypt has reached the point, therefore, of having no army to defend it. Accordingly, we have undertaken to clean ourselves up and have appointed to command us men from within the army whom we trust in their ability, their character, and their patriotism. It is certain that all Egypt will meet this news with enthusiasm and will welcome it. As for those whose arrest we saw fit from among men formerly associated with the army, we will not deal harshly with them, but will release them at the appropriate time. I assure the Egyptian people that the entire army today has become capable of operating in the national interest and under the rule of the constitution apart from any interests of its own. I take this opportunity to request that the people never permit any traitors to take refuge in deeds of destruction or violence because these are not in the interest of Egypt. Should anyone behave in such ways, he will be dealt with forcefully in a manner such as has not been seen before and his deeds will meet immediately the reward for treason. The army will take charge with the assistance of the police. I assure our foreign brothers that their interests, their personal safety, and their property are safe, and that the army considers itself responsible for them. May God grant us success. (State Information Service, n.d.)

Sadat's announcement, like the American Declaration of Independence, announced a change of government by articulating a theory of the relationship between the popular will and the instruments of its realization. In the next chapter, I will discuss the role of Mohammed Ali in

constituting the Modern Egyptian nation-state through the institution of universal conscription. Here, I want to note that, in Sadat's statement, corruption and treason are flip-sides of the same coin, in as much as love of money is what has moved Egypt's leaders to betray her sovereignty. The unnamed miscreants and traitors Sadat refers to in his speech could just as easily be foreign spies or Wafd leaders or the king himself. The "social" revolution later touted by Nasser was necessary precisely because this ambiguity was possible. As the institution entrusted with the protection of Egypt from foreign enemies, it therefore became necessary for the army to protect the nation by turning its attention to domestic affairs.

The first acts of the military regime announced by Sadat aimed at disabling its domestic rivals. After the abdication and exile of King Faruq, the Revolutionary Command Council abolished the constitution, dissolved parliament, and banned all political parties (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 306). For president and prime minister, the Free Officers chose Mohammed Naguib, an officer of the older generation whose reputation had survived the war in 1948. Naguib favored cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was by far the largest organized opposition group in the country after the dissolution of the Wafd party. In part because many other Free Officers shared Naguib's view—some were even former members—the Muslim Brotherhood had been "spared" in the dissolution of political parties (Abdel Malek 1968, 94). After a Muslim Brotherhood rally at Cairo University led to riots in January 1954, the RCC banned the group, driving it underground. Naguib became the only voice left moderating Nasser's military revolution, metamorphosed by the shifting political landscape from figurehead to opposition leader (Ibid. 94-95). After maneuvering over control of the army, Nasser succeeded in deposing Naguib on March 28, 1954. Anouar Abdel-Malek captures the scale and scope of the crackdown that followed:

> Between December 1953 and January 1954, the Revolutionary Court, in permanent session, had already sentenced a great number of leaders of the old government to long terms in prison or at hard labor. Beginning in April 1954, it was the press that was brought to heel: on May 4 the government banned al-Misri, whose directors had already left Egypt, and thus it got rid of the most powerful Egyptian organ, which was also the spokesman for the whole of democratic sentiment; Ehsan Abdel Koddus, editor in Chief of Rose el-Yussef, was brought back into line by a few days in prison.
>
> On October 26 a terrorist belonging to the secret organization of the Moslem Brotherhood fired eight revolver shots at Gamal Abdel Nasser during a rally in Alexandria. At once, the police, led by Lieutenant Colonel Zakaria Mohieddine, pounced on the MB [Muslim Brotherhood]: several thousand members—the figure was put later at seven thousand—were arrested by the secret and military police. The military tribunals condemned 867 of them. Broken by torture, their leaders appeared before the People's Court … Of the seven condemned to death, six were executed on December 8, 1954; only the Supreme Guide [Sayyid Qutb] was spared. Earlier, stripped of his functions as President of the Republic, General Naguib had been seized and placed under house arrest on November 14. (1968, 95-96)

As Abdel-Malek and many other commentators have noted, Nasser's repression of potential opponents recognized no division between the political left or the political right; though Nasser occasionally professed democratic ideals both before and after the coup, these ideals were subordinated to the exigencies of empowering the military regime to protect Egyptian national sovereignty.

Given the centrality of the armed forces to Nasser's vision for a strong, independent Egypt, Nasser moved quickly to replace the aging weaponry that had failed Egypt in the 1948 war in Palestine. In September 1955, Nasser finalized a $200 million deal with Czechoslovakia to purchase Soviet weapons with Egyptian cotton, a move that alarmed Western leaders but delighted the Arab Press (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 310). After the United States backed out of a World Bank loan to finance the Aswan Dam in July 1956, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the revenues from which would be used for national development projects. Though the Egyptian army lost control of nearly all of the Sinai Peninsula in the joint French-British-Israeli invasion that followed, the United States and the Soviet Union intervened to end the attack. With the successful nationalization of the canal, Nasser seemed to have vindicated his vision of a twinned revolution in domestic and foreign policy. In Nasser, Egyptians found a leader whose unwillingness accept the either/or proposition of the two superpowers projected an example of strength to the rest of the so-called "third" world. Nasser capitalized on his increased prestige by nationalizing significant sectors of the domestic economy and embarking on a series of military adventures in the affairs of neighboring Arab states.

A decade after the nationalization of the Suez canal, the image of Nasser triumphant would be shattered by Egypt's loss of the Sinai in the embarrassingly short Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Nasser resigned on a public broadcast in June 10th, 1967 and, following mass demonstrations of support that night, resumed the presidency the next day. Still, the blow to the mystique of Nasser and Nasserism had been enormous, rippling through-out the Arab world.

After Nasser's death in 1970, his vice-president and one of the original Free Officers, Anwar Sadat, assumed power, vowing to continue in the footsteps of his predecessor. In truth, Sadat would move to purge leftists and Nasser allies from the government as early as 1971, and he would begin to reverse Nasser's economic policies in earnest after the 1973 6th of October War earned him his own political capital to spend. Inaugurated with the publication of the October Paper in April 1974 (being named for the war), Sadat's "open-door" (*intifah*) economic policy aimed at dismantling the public sector and encouraging foreign investment in the economy. The settlement of peace with Israel at Camp David in 1978 restored the Sinai and made Egypt the beneficiary of over $58 billion dollars of American military aid over the next 33 years (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

Though Sadat was assassinated in 1982 for the betrayal this peace represented, his successor Hosni Mubarak would be a more faithful champion of his policies than Sadat had been for Nasser's. Indeed, it is partly in light of this continuity between the domestic and foreign policies of Sadat and Mubarak that Sadat's break with Nasserism acquires its particular historical weight.[8] Sadat and Mubarak, the Monoufi presidents, had betrayed the nationalist dream of Nasser.

[8] Marxian scholars like Goldberg and Beinin (1982) have questioned the degree to which the intifah represented a real break with the economic policies of Nasser: the public sector under Nasser had never been that large a

The elegiac tone of Egyptian cultural production about Egypt after the *intifah* had reached such a pitch by the 1990s that it is a central theme of Walter Ambrurst's masterful 1996 study of *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*. In his satirical novel, *Zaat* (1992), Sonallah Ibrahim uses montages of news stories, advertisements, and public statements convey the dizzying effect of Mubarak's neoliberal 1980s on Egyptian self-image. The first of these chapters opens on the figure of Sadat as a martyr for Israel:

> The name of **Anwar El Sadat** is added to the memorial erected by Israel commemorating the "victims of the secret war."
>
> The Cairo daily **El Akhbar**: "Only a complete recovery of moral standards will pull Egypt out of its economic crisis."
>
> **Osman Ahmed Osman**, president of the Engineers Union, chairman of the committee for popular development of the ruling National Party and former Minister of Housing and Popular Development, in response to allegations by the assistant of the Socialist Prosecutor General that a senior official expediated the embezzlement of the Suez Canal Bank: "So what? It's our money. We can do what we want with it."
>
> **Sheikh Sharawi**: "If you see a building, for example, which earns its owner a lot of money, you shouldn't envy the man. Rather you should pray for him because he has earned his money honestly. He hasn't exploited anyone bcause he has put food in the bellies and clothes on the backs of the poorest workers."
>
> **Midhat El Tonsy** sets up the Intraco Import Export Company with **Omar Hamed El Sayeh**, 29, son of the Minister of Finance and manager of the American Citibank, and the children of a senior journalist who were still minors. (2001, 21-22, bold type in original)

These kaleidoscopic visions of national decay serve as interstitial chapters in the life story of the novel's titular heroine, whose name is itself a dark joke about the state Egypt after Sadat. The name *Zaat* is one of the Arabic words that can be translated as "self," and it is often used in collocations like "*sira zaatiya*," meaning "autobiography." Ibrahim's choice of this word echoes the title of Sadat's 1979 autobiography, *In Search of Identity* (Fi Bahth al-Zaat) (1978), suggesting through his protagonist's increasingly absurd frustrations at home and at work that an Egyptian identity after Sadat can no longer be found.

By 2007, with no end to Mubarak's presidency in sight, Egyptian nationalist historian Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot diagnosed the effect of the neoliberal era of Egyptian politics bluntly

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proportion of the economy, and the beneficiaries of liberalization tended to be the same officers, technocrats, and petit bourgeoisie who advanced most in the Nasser years. Zeinab Abul-Magd (2018) argues that crucial rupture between the old army and the new army in fact happened in the 80s, under Mubarak. "Whereas the old army was led by lower- to middle-class soldiers who rose into an affluent ruling elite and militarized society through war and socialism, the new army is controlled by a class of managers of military business enterprises, or 'neoliberal officers,' and militarizes society through market hegemony" (Ibid. 6).

(2007). The *intfiah* had once again aligned the interests of Egyptian leadership with foreign capital, and in the absence of contested elections, "the basic issue in Egypt is that the channels of communication between the rulers and the ruled are practically nonexistent. … The only reason for the government to listen is if violence is threatened by some elements of the population" (Ibid. 172) Though Marsot identified elections as a potential remedy, it was ultimately the army that stepped in to exercise popular will in both 2011 and 2013, echoing the very arguments enunciated by Sadat in his announcement that the Free Officers had seized power 60 years earlier. The difference was that now the foreign power that had propped up the corrupt *ancien regime* was the United States.

The frequent citation of the Dinshaway incident in explanations of the Monoufi character points more directly to the prior moment in Egyptian experiences with foreign domination, the British cccupation from 1882-1956, and it illustrates similar themes. Dinshaway is a village in the Northwest of Monoufiya, near the Rosetta branch of the Nile, where, in on June 13, 1906, five British officers left their camp to go pigeon hunting in the countryside. Pigeon, however, are not game animals in Egypt; even when I lived there, people in rural and urban Egypt alike husbanded pigeons for food and easy conversion to cash. A peasant warned the soldiers against hunting village flocks, but the soldiers persisted. When one of the gunshots lit a field on fire, the villagers reacted with anger and a fight broke out that wounded several villagers and four of the soldiers, one of whom died from heat exposure due his sprint back to camp in the midday June sun. The British authorities interpreted any attack on occupation soldiers as a threat to their rule and moved swiftly to make an example of the villagers, referring 52 of them to a special khedival tribunal for accelerated prosecution of crimes against occupation forces (Esmeir 2012, 254).

Only eleven days later, on June 24th, the tribunal convened. The distinguished Coptic jurist and interim minister of justice, Butrus Ghali, presided as Chief Justice alongside Ahmed Fathi Zaghloul, a nationalist lawyer and brother of future prime minister Saad Zaghloul, and a slate of British judges. Public prosecutor Ibrahim el-Hilbawi presented the case against the villagers. Despite the testimony of the British medical examiner that the soldier's death had been due to heatstroke and was therefore accidental, it took three days for the tribunal to convict the villagers of premeditated murder. In accordance with the extraordinary legal nature of the special tribunal, there was no possibility for appeal. The sentences were executed one day later in Dinshaway, in front of the community. "Four villagers were publicly hanged; four were sentenced to penal servitude—one to fifteen years of hard labor and six to seven years of hard labor; three received fifty lashes in addition to a year of penal servitude; and five received fifty lashes. The remaining thirty-one defendants were acquitted" (Esmeir 2012, 255).

Though initial response to the incident in the press had been muted (Selim 2004, 74), the summary trial and execution ignited a firestorm of controversy in Egypt and Britain. The speed and viciousness of this supposed act of justice made it impossible sustain the political distinction between the sovereign power of the khedive and the advisory role of the British occupiers. As Samera Esmeir shows in her analysis of the Dinshaway case, British colonial rule in Egypt depended on a "split formation" of the law, in which Egyptian authorities actually administered the law while British authorities assumed the role of advising how to do so in a humane manner (2012, 243). Though this strategy had been used successfully since with prosecution of Ahmed ʾOrabi and his collaborators at the beginning of the British occupation, the sentence carried out

at Dinshaway threatened the regime by perceptibly merging the interests of the "dual state." The British governor, Lord Cromer, resigned in April 1907 due to the international controversy (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 108)

If the British could no longer deny the Egyptian blood on their hands, neither could many prominent Egyptians: the nationalist press questioned how so many of Egypt's "best and brightest" could "sid[e] with the occupiers against their fellow countrymen" (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 100). Qasim Amin, in a volume of *The New Woman* published before his death in 1908, discussed Ibrahim el-Hilbawi, the prosecutor at Dinshaway, an example of poor moral education on the part of Egyptian mothers. By el-Hilbawi's own account of his return to Egypt from Europe at the age of 24, directly after the failure of the ʿOrabi rebellion in 1882, he passed by the great battlefields of the conflict with the British and felt nothing in his heart for the spilled blood of his countrymen. Amin had himself witnessed ten-year olds in France who had already been well-trained to exhibit reverence for the French flag. To Amin, al-Hilbawi's failure of feeling revealed the need for a new kind of Egyptian woman, one who would rear a new generation of active participants in the Egyptian nation (Pollard 2005, 152-161).

After Dinshaway, Egypt witnessed an efflorescence of nationalist parties and newspapers advocating a range of paths to self-determination: the Constitutional Reform Party led by Sheykh Ali Yusuf espoused Egyptian independence within an Islamic framework; the People's Party of Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyid imagined a secular liberal government cautiously taking steps toward full independence; Mostafa Kamil, the firebrand orator at the head of the National Party, demanded nothing less than immediate evacuation by the British (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 109). In February 1910, a member of a nationalist secret society founded in the wake of Dinshaway assassinated Butrus Ghali in part for his role in the trial there, and none other than Ibrahim el-Hilbawi defended the assassin at his trial. The regime reacted to the assassination with new laws to curb speech and political association (Di-Capua 2009, 69), but nationalist organizing against British rule continued underground. By the end of World War I, nationalist forces in Egypt were strong enough to lead the Revolution of 1919, winning significant concessions to Egypt's right to self-determination.

As Salim shows, Dinshaway also inspired a major shift in the way literate Egyptians represented the peasant classes who had been the victims of British vengeance there. Though stereotyped image of the stupid, lazy, and shiftless *fellah* is already attested in Yusuf al-Shirbini's mid-seventeenth century satire, *Hazz al-Quhuf* (Baer 1982), the fellahin were generally deemed beneath comment in the literature of the Ottoman era. By the time of the 'Urabi rebellion, early nationalist writers Yaʿqub Sannuʿ and Abdallah al-Nadim had partially recuperated the backwards *fellah* as the victim of corrupt ruling elites. Sannuʿ goes farther than al-Nadim in portraying the *fellah* as a character with agency of his own, but it wasn't until after Dinshaway that nationalist writers began to write the *fellah* as the true protagonist of Egyptian literature (Selim 2004, 74). The characteristic faults of the *fellah*—stupid, shiftless, and deceitful—were reinterpreted as forms of resistance to foreign rule. The so-called "cunning (*lu'm*) of the *fellah"* now consisted in his skillful ability to play dumb.

When Saad's friend Osama cited the historical influence of Dinshaway in a conversation at a wedding we attended in late 2013, it was in response to a question about why so many Monoufis entered the officer corps of the military. By Osama's reckoning, the events of Dinshaway demonstrated to local peasants that British officers were essentially immune to

punishment for wrongdoing, and that, therefore, the true locus of power lay in command of the military. Once Monoufis found themselves in a position to command, he reckoned, they began to use that power in their own interests (*maslaha*) rather than the interests of all Egyptians. Like the characterization of the Monoufi through presidencies of Sadat and Mubarak, this version of Monoufi history emphasizes the difficulty of distinguishing friend and enemy, Egyptian from occupier.

A third argument made by my interlocutors, that the Hyksos represent Egypt's first experiences with colonialism, mobilized Pharaonic history to arrive at similar conclusions. Until the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822, the only source on this episode in Egyptian history was the chronicle of a Grecophone Egyptian priest named Manetho writing in the first hundred years after the conquest of Alexander (under either Ptolemy I Soter 323–283 BCE or Ptolemy II Philadelphus 285–246 BC). Unlike other sources that touch on the history of ancient Egypt like *The Histories* of Herodotus, the original text of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* did not survive late antiquity. What remains of his work are the citations of a handful of Grecophone Jewish and Christian scholars who sought independent sources to verify the historical traditions of the Israelites. The most important of these is a Jewish historian known in English as Josephus, who cited multiple versions of Manetho's account of the Hyksos in a defense of the historical memory of the Jews.

The Hyksos narrative did not survive the epitomization of Josephus into Hebrew and Arabic, but with the pioneering efforts of al-Tahtawi to translate European Egyptology into Arabic in the mid-1800s, the story of the Hyksos began to reach a new Egyptian audience. As al-Tahtawi's student Abdullah Abu al-Suud explained to Arthur Rhoné, the Khedive Ismail had commissioned a translation of Mariette's brief history of ancient Egypt because he "want[ed] to waken us from this torpor by the study of the history of our ancestors so that we can revive their glorious virtues and follow their example in working together as true Egyptians and true patriots, for the renaissance of Egypt" (quoted in Reid 2002, 109).

The advent of British occupation in 1882 heightened the stakes of this project for the generation of scholars that followed al-Tahtawi, which included ʾAli Mubarak (1823-1893) and Ahmed Kamal (1851-1923). Egyptians under British occupation reading the remnants of Manetho could not have failed to connect his narrative to their own time. Josephus quotes Manetho directly in the first book of *Contra Apion*, "just as if I had brought forward the man himself as a witness":

> Tutimaeus. In his reign, for what cause I know not, a blast of God smote us; and unexpectedly, from the regions of the East, invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land. By main force they easily seized it without striking a blow; and having overpowered the rulers of the land, they then burned our cities ruthlessly, razed to the ground the temples of the gods, and treated all the natives with a cruel hostility, massacring some and leading into slavery the wives and children of others. Finally, they appointed as king one of their number whose name was Salitis. He had his seat at Memphis, levying tribute from Upper and Lower Egypt, and always leaving garrisons behind in the most advantageous positions. Above all, he fortified the district to the east, foreseeing that the Assyrians, as they grew stronger, would one day covet and attack his kingdom.

> In the Saïte [Sethroïte] nome he found a city very favourably situated on the east of the Bubastite branch of the Nile, and called Auaris after an ancient religious tradition. This place he rebuilt and fortified with massive walls, planting there a garrison of as many as 240,000 heavy-armed men to guard his frontier. Here he would come in summer-time, partly to serve out rations and pay his troops, partly to train them carefully in manoeuvres and so strike terror into foreign tribes. After reigning for 19 years, Salitis died; and a second king, named Bnôn, succeeded and reigned for 44 years. Next to him came Apachnan, who ruled for 36 years and 7 months; then Apôphis for 61, and Iannas for 50 years and 1 month; then finally Assis for 49 years and 2 months. These six kings, their first rulers, were ever more and more eager to extirpate the Egyptian stock [*rizan*, "root"]. Their race [*ethnos*] as a whole was called Hyksôs, that is 'king-shepherds': for *hyk* in the sacred language means 'king', and *sôs* in common speech is 'shepherd' or 'shepherds'; hence the compound word 'Hyksôs'. Some say that they were Arabs. (Waddell 1940, 85)

The polemical tone of Manetho's treatment of the Hyksos receives immediate and sustained comment from Josephus, who cites another version of Manetho for a translation of *hyk* as "servant" to argue that these supposed conquerors were in fact the enslaved Israelites of Exodus. Responding to Manetho's characterization of the Hyksos as genocidal leper-kings, Josephus argues that Manetho has clearly departed from his earlier fidelity to the sacred histories, taking "the liberty of interpolating improbable tales" in an effort to defame the Jews. By attempting to parochialize Manetho's account of the Hyksos, Josephus invites his readers to reflect on Manetho's identification with Egyptian history.

> About the scholar 500 years his elder, Josephus writes:
> …in Manetho we have a native Egyptian who which was manifestly imbued with Greek culture. He wrote in Greek the history of his nation [*ethnos*], translated, as he himself tells us, from sacred tablets; and on many points of Egyptian history he convicts Herodotus of having erred through ignorance. (Waddell 1940, 77-78)

Whereas Josephus sees Manetho as writing from the perspective of his *ethnos*, in Manetho, it is the conquering Hyksos who are described as an *ethnos*. He uses this term in a text that translates the sacred history of his people from his native language into Greek, by then the *lingua franca* of a world order in place for less than a century. The translation of the word as "race" recalls Foucault's genealogy of the trope of "race war" in medieval Europe, where the history of race struggle first appears as in anti-Roman history, that is, in histories of conquered people.

> Not only does this counterhistory break up the unity of the sovereign law that imposes obligations; it also breaks the continuity of glory, into the bargain. It reveals that the light—the famous dazzling effect of power—is not something that petrifies, solidifies, and immobilizes the entire social body, and thus keeps it in order; it is in fact a divisive light that illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness. And the history or counterhistory that is born of the story of the race struggle will of course speak

> from the side that is in the darkness, from within the shadows. It will be the discourse of those who have no glory, or of those who have lost it and who now find themselves, perhaps for a time—but probably for a long time—in darkness and silence. Which means that this discourse—unlike the uninterrupted ode in which power perpetuated itself, and grew stronger by displaying its antiquity and its genealogy—will be a disruptive speech, an appeal: 'We do not have any continuity behind us; we do not have the great and glorious genealogy in which the law and power flaunt themselves in their power and their glory. We came out of the shadows, we had no glory and we had no rights, and that is why we are beginning to speak and tell of our history.' (2003, 70)

Modern scholarship on the origin of the Hyksos has revealed that Manetho's account of their reign is indeed shaped by the historical revisions of their enemies. Archaeological evidence from the Hyksos capital of Avaris, including DNA sequencing of human remains, has revealed that the Hyksos settled in the Nile Delta over the course of decades, not by sudden invasion (Candelora 2018).

In fact, by the third century BCE when Manetho wrote, narratives of the occupation of Lower Egypt and its liberation by Upper Egypt were already a well-established trope: "hostile forces invade or otherwise establish themselves in the north of Egypt; conflict ensues with the 'loyal' elements in the country; king and court derive assistance from or seek asylum in Kush; liberating forces move out of the south, advancing northward, and drive out the enemy" (Redford 1970, 4). Given the attention Manetho spent on correcting the errors of Herodotus, his inaccuracy with respect to the Hyksos invasion seems to confirm the polemical bent of his narrative. Though Egyptologists have recently taken up the task of de-racializing their historical accounts of the Hyksos (Candelora 2018), our concern here is not with the accuracy of the story but with the power of its rhetoric. What survives of Manetho is a text that compels its reader to consider the relationship between *ethnos* and conquest.

The story of the Hyksos received new attention in Egypt after Labib Hibachi excavated the ancient city of Avaris at Tell Dab'a in 1941 (Kamil 2007); three years later, Naguib Mahfouz published his version of the Hyksos narrative, a veiled criticism of ongoing British interference in Egypt (2005). The story recurs in Gamal Hamdan's *The Egyptian Personality*, published just one month after the devastating defeat of the 1967 war, as one of the historical factors contributing to a supposedly homogenous Egyptian character. For my interlocutors who cited the Hyksos as contributing to the Monoufi character, there were a wealth of resources to draw upon.

Where some of my interlocutors differed from the standard narrative, it was in the accounting for a difference between the people of the coast from the people of Upper Egypt. Lower Egypt's repeated experience with occupation led to the development of two complementary characteristics: on the one hand, sympathy for the conquerors; on the other, habitual lying, laziness, and theft, the usual character flaws attributed to slaves. In this version of history, the role of Monoufis in contemporary Egyptian politics simply reflected thousands of years of occupation. Protected by its distance from the Mediterranean, Upper Egypt became the perpetual wellspring of resistance to invaders, and the Sa'idis of 2011 retained a corresponding reputation for being *haqqani*, or "righteous," and culturally conservative. Though rural Egyptians from Lower and Upper Egypt alike featured as the butt of jokes about backwards peasants,

Monoufis in particular had become the subject of a certain type of moral degeneracy through its association with collaboration and treachery. What remains implicit, here, is the connection of the Monoufi to political economy or personal interest—that is, the question of exactly *how* the Monoufi comes to identify with foreign invaders.

The Monoufi and the gift

"The Monoufi makes no friends even if his food is the meat of my shoulder" (*al-Monoufi la yalofi wa law 'aklu lahmat katoufi*). Nearly every Egyptian I asked about Monoufiya recited this bit of rhyming folk wisdom—sometimes before any other comment, as if it were the most important thing to be said. Even without context, the scene of feeding another one's flesh makes the image perverse, but it is not cannibalism[9] for which the Monoufi is condemned. Rather, the Monoufi's offense is that even after you feed him from your own body, he remains a stranger to you. By way of contrast, Egyptians often repeat another folk saying that points to sharing bread and salt (*'ish wa malh*) as the first act of friendship. In his famous *Essay on the Gift*, Marcel Mauss theorizes what most Egyptians already know, namely, that creating and maintaining relationships involves establishing circuits of "prestation" and "counterprestation," of gifts and their reciprocation. Such circuits of reciprocity constitute essential economic resources without which survival becomes impossible, making, as Julia Elyachar shows, the maintenance of these networks a form of breadwinning labor. From within this logic, the Monoufi of the rhyme contravenes a basic social expectation by not participating in circuits of reciprocity: the Monoufi does not give back as he should. More specifically, "*la yalufi*," he does not get close, become intimate. This conception of the Monoufi contrasts sharply with the image that appears in the historical narratives considered above, in as much one imagines collaboration to require such an exchange of resources for allegiance. Perhaps what is at stake in these portrayals is not just whether or not the Monoufi exchanges, but with whom. Indeed, when I responded to warnings about Monoufiya by averring that Monoufis had always been very generous to me*, But, of course*, came the answer. *A Monoufi* would *be generous to an American.*

Nonetheless, I was telling the truth. My friend Yasser and his wife, Reem, overwhelmed me with generosity whenever I came to their house, principally by stuffing me so full that I could pop, but also by offering a place to spend the night should I want. Though I occasionally tutored their children in English, this was poor repayment for the sheer scale of their generosity. When I visited Saad's village near al-Bagour, every resident we passed invited us into their homes, and in any homes we did enter, our hosts would furnish us with tea, soda, fruit, cigarettes, a meal, or even a place to rest if we needed. For the first two years I visited Monoufiya, before I moved

[9] Allegations of cannibalism are an inaugural feature of colonial discourses: in the diary of his first voyage to the Americas, Christopher Columbus draws on Greek and Roman sources to identify some of the indigenous people he encountered as war-like, people-eating "Caniba," or denizens of the mythical city of the Grand Khan (Keegan 2015). In subsequent centuries, the image of the cannibal helps to define what Ralph Truoillot calls "the savage slot," that is, a position of uncivilized otherness necessary to the articulation of European anthropological discourse (2003). In recent decades, some anthropologists have suggested that accusations of cannibalism are (almost) always libelous claims that speakers use to justify violence against supposedly less civilized peoples. In this example of cannibalism discourse from Egypt, the rhetorical aim is much the same—to paint the other as alien—but the designation is decidedly figurative, not literal. My interlocutors tended to acknowledge that the saying about Monoufi character involved cannibalism (*'akl lohoom al-bashar*) but did not emphasize this element of the image in their interpretations; they identified unwillingness to reciprocate as the Monoufi's defining feature.

there briefly and disastrously in 2013, I was not allowed to pay for any of my food or drink at all. By this description I do not mean that Monoufis are extraordinarily generous, but the opposite: that Monoufis are about as generous as Egyptians pride themselves as being. These experiences led me to regard the claim that Monoufis violate norms of generosity not as a statement of fact but as act of abjection. Mocking and rejecting the Monoufi's lack of proper affection helped to shape an inverse image of what an Egyptian should be.

As Saad's sister Bassant would explain to me, the kind of generosity shown to me as a guest was *wagib*, "obligatory," and, indeed, much gossip in the village revolved around acquaintances falling short of this bare minimum. The word "*wagib*" has a religious valence, being one of the *ahkam al-khamsa*, or five possible rulings on the merit of an action in Islamic jurisprudence. In religious contexts, an act that is *wagib* is a duty, something either the individual or the community must perform. Certain acts are clearly obligatory, like the individual obligation to pray, while scholars debate the disposition of other acts, like whether growing a beard is *wagib* or merely strongly recommended. Whether or not a particular act of giving belonged to one ruling or another, the people I knew in Saad's village clearly understood generosity to be a duty, something that showed their investment in a kind of moral kindness, a being-good-for-others.

Egyptian generosity, particularly with kin or intimate friends, often struck me as excessive. Diyaa and Mostafa were two friends, *teezayn fi bas*, "two asses in one pair of pants," who would borrow and destroy each others' things (clothes, motorcycles) without asking, calling it *'akhaweya*, or "brotherhood." Often, when Seif's sister needed to travel from Cairo to Monoufiya and her husband couldn't go with her, Seif would leave work in Maadi or Mohandiseen, pick up his sister in Ain Shams, drop her off in Monoufiya, and then return to work in Cairo—a round trip that could take around six hours. Stated maximally, if one could help a loved one, one should. In other words, what my interlocutors emphasized in these intimate relationships was not the obligation to reciprocate, but the obligation to give.

My argument here is that *wasta*, the type of corruption associated with the *intifah* and Monoufis, was animated by the same exemplary types of affection and loyalty Monoufis are said to lack. I generally translate *wasta* as "connections" or "nepotistic connections" to emphasize the way it related to debates about corruption during my research after the 2011 revolution. According to my interlocutors, *wasta* was one of many overlapping forms of corruption endemic in Egypt at that time, albeit one that became particularly noxious following the *intifah*. The word *kosa*, literally "zucchini," could be used to refer to either bribery (*rashwa*), an explicit quid pro quo, or *wasta*, the doing of favors; according to Saad, *kosa* was when someone got something they didn't have a right to.

One example of *wasta* cited by a Cairene lawyer friend of mine helps to illustrate the fine line between the *wasta* and bribery. My friend recalled a client who owned a large furniture company that he wanted to expand, but bureaucratic entanglements prevented this businessman from getting the necessary paperwork to do so. He arranged to donate fans and rugs to the government office in question, a gift to make working there more comfortable in extreme hot or cold. The official in charge thanked my friend's client profusely for his generosity, and within a few weeks he found his permit request had been approved. An American might describe this situation as a "conflict of interest," but, for my friend, what made this *wasta* rather than bribery was that no money had changed hands and no agreement had been made. It was a donation, not a payment.

Lexically, however, *wasta* does not denote gift giving. Its root gathers the concept of the middle, radiating forms like: *wust*, meaning both "middle" and "waist"; *waseet*, "medium," "vehicle," and "agent"; and *mutawasit*, "middling" and "intermediate." The word "wasta" itself can be used in a variety of ways, sometimes meaning something closer to "recommendation," while, in other contexts, *wasta* is personalized as *wastit kheyr*, an "agent of good," someone sent to negotiate the end to a disagreement. This last version of *wasta* references Bedouin culture, in which sheikhs mediate between opposing tribes or subgroups but do not possess the right to punitive violence (Doughan 2019). Though not attested in the Qur'an, *wasta* plays a key role in Medieval and modern exegeses of God's revelation to Moses as being "without intermediary," *bilaa wasita*. CITE The most common use of *wasta* is in the phrase *biwastit*, "by means of"—making it one choice in the translation of the famous phrase wrongly attributed to Machiavelli, "the ends justify the means," *al-ghaya tubarrir al-wasta*. This latter use does not indicate an isometrism between the Western philosophical concept of "means" and *wasta* (the preferred term for translating Kant's prescription to treat humanity as an end rather as a means is *waseela*, derived from the concept of a "path" or "way"). Rather, my point here is that my translation of *wasta* as "connections" as captures both the in-betweenness of *wasta* and the air of corruption associated with it while potentially obscuring its relationship to human agency: a large part of what is at stake in *wasta* is *how one gets what one needs*. In the case cited by my lawyer friend above, a donation generates the good will necessary for his permit requests to be considered expeditiously, but this iteration must be understood as illustrating the outer limits of the concept because, normally, it is kinship or fictive kinship generates the affect necessary to break the rules.

It took some time before I had a sense of how that actually happened. As curious as I was about *wasta*, it was a difficult thing for me to bring up in conversation in the village, let alone to investigate in any systematic kind of way. As I wrote in the introduction, one way I dealt with this difficulty was to be patient, waiting until the topic came up in conversation so that my interest didn't seem like prying. The depth and length of my friendship with Saad and other men from his village also meant that I was present more often in the everyday, often intimate situations in which *wasta* arises.

The following anecdote, however, comes from time Saad spent with me and my foreign friends in Cairo. While I could not offer him much more than information about getting a visa to leave Egypt, I could open social circles previously closed to him as he had done for me. I set him up with foreign friends of mine for language exchange and invited him to the Thanksgivings and Christmases I celebrated in Egypt. Over time he developed his own relationships with people in my social circle, often bridging language barriers by dint of his formidable charm alone. My attempts to include Saad in my social life in Cairo did not always go smoothly, however, as his encounter with my bowwab showed. Many restaurants and clubs in Cairo treated young Egyptian men as a blight to be avoided at all costs: the famed Cairo Jazz Club, for example, used a requirement that every man enter with a woman to exclude men like Saad, who, before meeting me, did not know women who would be interested in going to a night club; at restaurants like Sequoia and La Bodega, doormen used Saad's weak English or the cut of his clothes to question his right to enter; even at social events organized by our mutual friends, Saad would sometimes encounter upper-middle class Egyptians who would tell him directly that he did not belong. Over time, thankfully, the strength of Saad's friendships and his growing confidence made these efforts at exclusion easier to ignore.

In 2015, when Saad moved into an apartment in Mounira with a group our mutual friends, he volunteered to take on the ordeal of getting the internet connected as a means of generating his own good will in a new situation. The internet service provider, however, would not connect service because the phone line was registered under the name of the previous tenant. At the local branch of the phone company, he presented the rental agreement and his ID, but was sent home to get a receipt from the electric bill. He returned, only to discover once again that this documentation was not enough, now because his ID listed Monoufiya as his domicile. Seeing his frustration, the older woman who had delivered this news reconsidered her position. *Wallahi inta shabah ibni qawy. Inta bitfakarni bibni* qawy. she announced. "I swear, you look just like my son. You remind me *so much* of my son." She would help him by recording him as the son of his landlady, and therefore as a legal agent of the property owner. The only thing, she cautioned, was that he had to get the address on his ID card changed as soon as possible, so that nobody doing an audit would see anything to question. Over the next four years, Saad lived in a string of shared apartments in the same neighborhood, and each time he moved he returned to this mother figure for help in connecting internet service expeditiously. Though Saad's family was distinctly bereft of useful connections compared to his friends and neighbors in the village, he was nonetheless able to make the affective connections that authorized exceptions to the rules.

Mobilizing affection through *wasta* was one solution—often the most effective—to problems like finding employment, avoiding military service or jail time, and gaining timely access to any number of government services. For this reason, *wasta* is in tension with the concept of right, or *haqq*. For example, one might deserve (*yistahaqq*) a job because one is the best candidate for the position, but such desert (*haqq*) is often a secondary factor in decisions about how resources like employment get distributed. A clever job applicant, therefore, will seek *wasta* before applying to make sure s/he is considered. Similarly, while there are orderly, formal processes for applying for building permits with the government, only fools rely entirely on these processes to get what is one's right by law.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to understand *wasta* purely in terms of means-ends calculation. If, borrowing Weber's useful schema, such pragmatic rationality aims at discovering the most efficient means of achieving a particular end "without regard to persons," then *wasta* does not qualify as purely pragmatic: in *wasta*, it is precisely a personal relationship that mediates the fulfillment of needs. Indeed, I argue, it is through appeal to familial affection and loyalty that *wasta* introduces an element of what Weber calls "substantive," or value-oriented rationality. By my reckoning, it is this precisely this affective element of *wasta* that makes it so durable, in as much as it renders following the law excruciating to the point of impossibility.

In his *Essay*, Mauss distinguishes the obligation to reciprocate from the obligation to give and the obligation to receive. Mauss focuses on the spiritual and legal mechanisms that compel reciprocity[10]—paradigmatically, on the case of the Maori *hau* ("spirit") of the gift that haunts a

[10] "…among all these principles we shall nevertheless study only one in depth. *What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type,compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated?What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?* This is the problem on which we shall fasten more particularly, whilst indicating others" (4).

recipient until he or she returns the spirit home through a gifted object (2002, 14-16). Here, as elsewhere (Ibid, 61-62), Mauss reads the gift as something in which persons and things merge, in which things become animate, gain force, and impose their law upon us. In as much as the personality of the giver fuses with the object, the Mauss' *hau* represents the opposite of Marx's commodity fetish—it is the recognition of the human in things. And, as Mauss shows in his discussion of the *kula* ring of the Trobriand Islands, the obligation to reciprocate draws givers and receivers together and binds them into institutions that exceed individual needs and desires. Inexorably, all under the sway of this legal ghost enter a totality, a system of total services in which human needs are met.

If *hau* and *kula* are Mauss' paradigms for the obligation to reciprocate, then "*the obligation to give is the essence of the potlatch*" (italicized in original, 50), a festival of giving among the Kwakwaka'wakw of North America. The word "potlach," Mauss tells us, "means 'to feed,' 'to consume" (7). The tribes that practice potlatch "are very rich, and … spend winter in a continual festival of feasts, fairs, and markets, which also constitute the solemn assembly of the tribe" (ibid, 7). This festival is the potlach proper, which brings together "clans, marriages, initiations, Shamanist seances and meetings for the worship of the great gods, the totems or the collective individual ancestors of the clan" in rites of giving. Importantly, Mauss notes, these rites have political consequences, which can sometimes provoke violence. "They even go so far as the purely sumptuary destruction of wealth that has been accumulated in order to outdo the rival chief as well as his associate." In other words, Mauss says, this form of gift giving is *agonistic*, it is a type of combat and a mode of domination. To give without reciprocating is to retain the power of the *hau*, of the debt, over the donee—for which reason, Rosalind Morris points out, the refusal of reciprocity is the privilege of the sovereign (2007, 365). In polities organized around the obligation to give, who gives most, rules. So, it might seem, in the Egyptian imaginary of Monoufiya: the Monoufi gives without reciprocating and thereby wins dominion over others.

Yet this theoretical point demands an analytical caution. A focus on the transactional elements of phenomenon of *wasta* might emphasize the indebtedness felt by the donee and that person's desire to erase their debt by doing service to the donor. Indeed, that appears to be the analytical lens adopted by theorists of clientelism like Ernest Gellner and anti-corruption organizations like Transparency International: clients are bound to their patrons by debt; the paradigm for corrupt behavior is bribery, in which debts are immediately discharged by payment.

The paradigm of *wasta* suggests a somewhat different approach to understanding corruption. As Derrida emphasizes in *Given Time*, a pure gift—a gift without expectation of reciprocation—is "impossible":

> For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt. If the other *gives* me *back* or *owes* me or has to give me back what I give him or her, there will not have been a gift, whether this restitution is immediate or whether it is programmed by a complex calculation of a long-term deferral or differance (12).

By definition, a gift must be given freely, while an exchange involves obligation. If the phrase "gift exchange" is therefore oxymoronic, he argues, then we only encounter gifts in our social lives under some degree of (self-)deception. This deception relies on procedures of "temporization"—on a waiting period before giving back a counter-gift. Indeed, he points out, to exchange gifts

simultaneously can foreground economies of self-interest, making gift exchange seem like mere payment. Thus, even if a donor ultimately sees repayment in kind, the very concept of the gift demands that she comport with the discourse of the free gift. The manner in which a polity invests in and organizes an obligation to give would therefore seem to structure that community in a way that demands its own analysis. In other words, an analysis of *wasta* focused on debt would miss the force exerted by the obligation to give without receiving.

Though my interlocutors in al-Bagour and in Saad's village would never have said that sharing *wasta* is *wagib*, I argue that an obligation to give also animates the solicitation of favors through personal connections. Perhaps one needs a job, a good post during military service, a retake of an exam, release from jail, or a change of address on the national ID card. Not meeting these needs has concrete, immediate consequences, but bureaucratic order, public or private, impedes. The applicant needs someone to make an exception to the rules. To get the necessary service from the institution, she appeals to personal connection, preferably to a close family member who will feel particularly compelled to help. Or, kin can be invented, fictive and fleeting: a young man becoming a son, or an older woman, a *tante.*[11] In any case, the donor recognizes the applicant as family and therefore subject to extralegal obligations to give. And if kin or friend of the applicant does not give when they can, that person is understood to have caused the applicant harm and faces conflict or ostracization. Thus, while *wagib* gifts must be offered to all, the obligatory force of *wasta* works through kinship and is an expression of love and partiality.

To illustrate the positive moral values that can be associated with corruption, I turn to an example of bribery from my fieldwork. Though bribery and *wasta* are not the same, the episode I describe demonstrates how the obligation to give, rather than to reciprocate, might animate corruption. After my first month in Egypt, the tourist visa I bought when I entered the airport expired. Knowing my Arabic was not strong enough to manage an encounter with Egyptian bureaucracy, I enlisted the help of a language exchange partner I had met at the hotel where I stayed when I first arrived. Ashraf's uncle worked at the hotel, where he had secured a job for his nephew in the souvenir shop on the first floor. Ideally, Ashraf would use his English-language skills to act as an informal concierge to tourists staying in the hotel, arranging trips to the pyramids or old Cairo, but at the time I met him, no such business was available. After the revolution, tourists had stopped visiting Egypt; Ashraf spent most of his days alone in the gift shop, regretting his choice of a college degree in hospitality. It was with some satisfaction, then, that Ashraf agreed to close the shop and accompany me to the police station to renew my visa. At least, he said, he would be doing something related to his chosen profession.

When we arrived at the police station in Agouza, we found a small crowd pushing about in front of a bank of plastic teller windows, none of which were signed in a way that indicated where we should go. Questioning some of the other petitioners, Ashraf found our window and we settled in to wait our turn in the queue. After about thirty minutes—a short wait, Ashraf assured me—we made our way to the teller window. A pair of harried women came into view. The older of the two, old enough to be our mother, barely glanced at the crowd as she processed the requests presented to her; with an air of great annoyance, she flitted from the window to stacks of enormous ledgers, speaking mainly to point out faults in the paperwork of petitioners. Ashraf and I had drawn her partner, a trainee in her twenties who had yet to perfect the

[11] Middle- to upper-class Egyptians prefer the French word for "aunt" as a mark of social position.

disapproving mien of the older woman, though she tried. The trainee consulted with her elder, who rolled her eyes and set us downstairs to make copies of my visa application. When we returned, the trainee then sent us to the presiding police officer in an adjacent office for a signature. When my paperwork finally ready to submit, the young woman told us to return in three days to check on the visa. Sensing the coldness of the women whose help we depended on, Ashraf hesitated and then quietly directed me to offer twenty pounds as a tip. Under the dictum "when in Rome," I complied. To Ashraf's great surprise, the young woman stepped back from my outstretched hand, glancing at her elder. "We don't do that anymore." The older woman smirked, Ashraf beamed, and the young woman chanced an embarrassed smile in return. "That's good," he pronounced when we returned to the street. Maybe things really were changing after the revolution.

This encounter highlights a meaning of "corruption" that I frequently heard invoked in these revolutionary days before the advent of al-Sisi. In the previous chapter, I noted that Morad had defined corruption as rot, the waste of talent that ensues from nepotism. The revolutionaries seemed to understand corruption after the manner of international organizations dedicated to fighting it, namely, as the abuse of official power. I often heard Egyptian friends discuss corruption in a third way, as a moral fault of the Egyptian people themselves. According to this understanding, part of the problem was that Egyptians refused to obey even good laws, like traffic regulations. As one Coptic friend of mine from Cairo put it, everyone thinks he's the exception to the rule. Years later, in an English class in San Francisco, I would hear a Brazilian woman describe corruption in her country in strikingly similar terms, that is, as rooted in a feeling that laws are nuisances which one has every right to avoid. She, like many of the Egyptians I knew, blamed herself and her fellow citizens for corruption at least as much as the government.

Ashraf's and my encounter with the young woman at the police station illustrates the kind of moral knot that arises from fighting this kind of corruption, corruption that arises from oneself. The teller had not solicited a bribe in exchange for better service. As I learned later, this often takes the form of a request for tea—*shay wi ikramiya,* "tea and munificence[12]"—but the teller had kept her conversation with us strictly to instructions in official procedure. It was Ashraf who had suggested I offer money to the woman, and she who had refused. As he explained later, he hesitated over the bribe because he really didn't mind the hassle himself, but he figured that *I* would have less trouble if I just offered the cash up front. I was foreign and an easy target. In this way, his solicitousness to me pressed me to solicit favor. Still, Ashraf was happy about the outcome—it was a flash of hope in an otherwise anxious week at the souvenir shop. In hindsight, I see the scenario as pointing to the kind of care that could make one break a law that one knows to be right. In other words, yes, Ashraf made an exception, but he made it *for* me (and I for him). Breaking the law could be a kind of generosity.

Another situation illustrated what it meant to live without *wasta*, showing how families could become involved in providing state services in the absence of direct connections within bureaucracies. Mostafa called me late on a Wednesday night in early 2014 to tell me his brother,

[12] I've struggled with the translation of "ikramiyya," which can just as easily be translated as "gratuity." I've foregone the more direct translation because I want the reader to get a sense of the semantic weight of the root kaf-ra-mim in Arabic. If I were perform the same operation on "gratuity," I might end up with "graciousness," but this would stretch the translation too far from the concept of donation.

Wael, had been arrested. A couple nights before, a toktok driver had been robbed and stabbed on the main road through his village. The driver had not been badly injured, but now he was liable for the *toktok* to the rich and unforgiving neighbor from whom he rented it. The driver had gone to the police, and the police, apparently, decided Wael fit the bill for the crime. The problem was, Mostafa explained, Wael had been at work at the time of the robbery, and his boss was willing to say as much to anyone who would listen. But probably more important to the police than Wael's guilt, Mostafa's family was not well connected—they didn't have *wasta*—so they could not simply make a few calls and expect Wael to walk free within a couple of days—as had occurred when police arrested Mostafa's well-connected neighbor for an assault a year earlier.

The police arrived in the wee hours of the morning after the attack, Mostafa explained, pounding on the door of the family home to pull Wael out of bed. His first day in jail, the other prisoners staged a protest against conditions by taking off their clothes and burning them in a pile by the door. By the time Mostafa was able to visit his brother, Wael was hoarse. Mostafa told me he and his family would go to the court appearance scheduled for the next morning, but he wasn't sure Wael would be released. He wanted me to come up to the village after court to visit the family and witness the proceedings, and I agreed to speak to a journalist friend in case the family decided they wanted press.

The next day I came up to Monoufiya after work, and Mostafa directed me to his maternal uncle's house, where a war council of sorts convened. Arriving at Abd al-Hamid's newly tiled second floor apartment, I greeted two of Mostafa's uncles, three of their older children, Mostafa's sister, Hanaa, and a man I assumed to be a friend of the family. Everyone had just eaten. Hanaa served me a plate of still warm food and Mostafa got me caught up.

Wael's boss had accompanied the family to court and pled their case before the judge, but the judge was unsympathetic. Unless the *toktok* driver or the police were willing to drop the charges, Wael would stay in jail. The driver repeated his claim that Wael had been one of the men who had assaulted him, so the judge set a date for the next hearing preliminary to trial.

Outside court, Mostafa's family had confronted the driver and his. A paternal uncle of the driver emerged as a negotiator and explained the driver's financial situation to Mostafa's maternal uncle. He acknowledged that Wael couldn't have been one of the robbers, but unless Mostafa's family could pay the cost of the *toktok*, the charges would remain. (The cost of the *toktok* was the subject of the conversation around me as I ate—*Could a replacement be got for 10,000 pounds? Who has money?*)

The family then returned to the police station to try their luck there and fought their way to the attention of the officer in charge. They again asked the boss to explain that Wael had been with him, again to no avail. The officer pointed out that the victim said Wael did it. The case was closed as far as he was concerned.

At this point in his narrative, Mostafa explained that the man I had assumed to be a family friend was actually a plainclothes police officer. He had stopped the family on the way out of the station because he had overheard their conversation. He wanted to help, offering to help them find the real culprit. The family would carry out many of the functions of the investigations while the police officer, now treated like a member of the family, directed their efforts.

As Mostafa finished his story and I, my meal, the officer and 'Atef, one of Mostafa's cousins, got ready to leave. The older men had decided to send the policeman out to interview

the driver. Mostafa conferred with his uncle and they agreed that he could come with the officer and his cousin. Soon after they left, the power cut out.

A year earlier, constant blackouts had been one of the forces that precipitated the mass demonstrations against President Morsi, justifying the military coup. In the months leading up to the Tamarrod demonstrations in late June, it had become common for businesses to conduct transactions in the dark, and for drivers to have to line up all night outside gas stations for a chance to fill their tank. Defenders of Morsi had argued that the bureaucrats in charge of regulating energy supplies were part of a deep state conspiracy against Egypt's first democratically elected government, that, following the example of the police after the fall of Mubarak, these bureaucrats were simply refusing to do their jobs. Indeed, after intentionally releasing xx prisoners from xx prison on xx 2011, the police had made themselves conspicuously scare, leading to a wave of bank robberies and hijakings throughout 2012 and early 2013. Though the Tamarrod campaign presented itself as a grassroots movement opposing the disfunction and overreach of the Morsi government, journalists would reveal that its founding members had indeed collaborated with Egypt's military establishment to build legitimacy for the coup. Strangely enough, the return of military rule had not been enough to end the blackouts—though they did ease significantly. All of us gathered that night at Mostafa's home had long adapted to these unpredictable interludes of darkness and disability, but that night I was unnerved by the way they mirrored Wael's abandonment by his state. Was the power outage a bad pun or a cruel joke?

After about an hour and a half, the interview party returned. The policeman announced that the driver had no names but had given him a description, and Seif added that the driver priced the *toktok* at 16,000 pounds, which everyone agreed was ludicrous. The lights came on briefly as the elder men decided to send the group back out to talk to a fence the policeman knew. If someone was trying to sell a stolen *toktok*, a fence the officer knew might have heard of it. Mostafa decided to stay, and the lights cut as the policemen and Mostafa's cousin left again. The family discussed the price of the *toktok* in earnest now, one cousin swearing that even 10,000 was too much, you could get it for 8, easy. Hanaa was in a *gamaʾiya* but her turn wasn't up for a couple of months, and Abd el-Hameed said he'd look into what he could scrape together.

Eventually the investigators came back with a tip from the fence. The culprit was definitely a well-known hoodlum from two towns over. Problem was, the hood knew the police officer. The policeman wouldn't get near him even in plainclothes. 'Atef knew their suspect as an acquaintance, so he and Mostafa were chosen to go out and pay a "social visit," ask some questions and look around.

The officer took the middle seat in the array of couches the rest of us sat in and asked Hanaa to bring him one of the battery-operated, long fluorescent bulbs and a plate from the kitchen. So appointed, he pulled out a branch of *bango* (dry, roadside grown Egyptian cannabis) picked it apart, carefully removing seeds and stems, and rolled several joints. The officer, Abd al-Hameed, and Ibrahim smoked while I demurred, knowing that Mostafa would never smoke in front of his sister. As the smoke thickened and I grew sleepy, it became harder for me to follow the stories and jokes exchanged between the men. By the time Mostafa and 'Atef got back, I was exhausted, but luckily, so was everyone else. The guys had managed to visit with their suspect, but they hadn't seen a *toktok*. We called it a night, and the next morning I went back to Cairo for work.

Wael was finally released almost three weeks after the arrest, when the "volunteer" policeman was able to prove the case against the hood he had identified. Abd el-Hameed gave him a gift—Mostafa thought thousands of pounds—as thanks.

The predicament of Mostafa and his family in this narrative illustrates the particular way *wasta* mediated the relationship between the state and the family in the unsettled years of the revolution and counterrevolution. *Wasta* involved a double movement: a prior exclusion from rights by (often strategic) bureaucratic indifference; and then a recuperation of one's rights by means of the inclusion of the family in the functions of the state. It is important to recognize that this double movement is not an exchange but an inclusion; it is not justice that generates rights here, but love.

The misrecognition of *wasta* for mere self-interest may partially account for the failure of the 2011 revolution to root out corruption in Egypt. The liminal character of the Monoufi, woven into a history of the present by Egyptians after the revolution, enabled revolutionary Egypt to exteriorize and pathologize the form of corruption he embodied. In the narratives recounted here, the Monoufi was both liminal and abject, a spectral figure who haunted the formation of the Egyptian nation at every turn of its history. But like any abject figure, the Monoufi could not be made to disappear through disavowal, because the desires that motivated this specter were the subject's own. The danger he personified was not just counterrevolutionary but existential.

Chapter 2

What the Army Tells You: Mohammed Ali Basha, Conscription, and the Egyptian Nation-State

The army as education

When I last visited Egypt, during the winter of 2018, Saad had just left the army and was eager to talk about his experiences. Some of what he told me confirmed stories I had already heard—for example, that soldiers regularly had to eat rice infested with weevils—while others stretched the limits of my imagination. In one story, Saad and a coworker in the officer's mess had angered one of their supervising officers with their bickering, and as punishment had been ordered to stand in front of the company, hatless and unmoving, in the noonday sun of the Sinai desert in summer. Already, I was surprised. "He could have killed you," I told Saad.

"I know, but listen!"

When Saad dared wipe the sweat off his brow, the officer ordered him to "walk on his elbows," bare-armed, across a rocky field. "What do you mean, walk on your elbows?" I asked him. "You mean crawl?" No, his weight was supposed to be on his elbows: Saad was supposed to bleed. After walking several meters this way, Saad had begun to weep, and, enraged, the officer began to berate him for his tattoos, calling him a *kafir*. English-speakers often see this word translated as "infidel" or "unbeliever," but being a *kafir* is more than a matter of private disbelief, instead implying an act of deception through denial; the evil of the *kafir* arises from the way he actively dissuades others from recognizing the truth of God's existence and singularity. No longer able to stay quiet, Saad snapped. "Why are you calling me a *kafir*? What you're doing to me, that's the sacrilege." ("*Bitkaffarni lieh? Illy inta bit'amiluli da, howa da al-kufr*.") The officer told him to shut up ("*iskut, ya-la',*" short for "*ya walad,*"), then, after a moment, ordered him to get up and follow. He led Saad away from the company, behind the officers' dormitory where no one could see them. There, the officer started to talk about his family, how his father had been an officer, how his father had forced him to enter the army. He asked about the meaning of Saad's tattoos, in particular one that read "*maktoub*," "it is written," an Islamic expression implying the acceptance of fate. Then he asked where he could get a tattoo if he wanted one. After Saad told him where he'd gotten the tattoo in the posh Cairo neighborhood of Maadi, the officer dismissed him with a pat on the back and an admonition to keep his head down.

This story still makes my head spin, and I confessed to Saad that I had a hard time believing it when he told me. Maybe it was the resemblance of his story to Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" that made me feel it was exaggerated; only a work of fiction could so seamlessly blend horror with social farce. Not only is Saad's story an account of military discipline passing over into torture, it also relates a conflict over the sacredness of the body—over whether it is more sacrilegious to scar oneself or to wound another. Saad and the officer publicly accuse each other of injury to the conscience of others through acts that make Saad bleed. Saad is treated as less than human, but treating Saad in this way seems to reveal the officer, too, as less than human. Saad's accusation strikes a blow hard enough to stop his torture. The officer then improvises a

moment of hidden familiarity to repair the dignity he has wounded, compares himself to his own aggressive father and Saad to his younger self. He even goes so far as to confess desire for the very thing that had let him to publicly denounce Saad as a villain. After degrading Saad, the officer identifies with him in his degradation. Brutal violence is joined to brutalized intimacy.

A few weeks after he told me this story, Saad set up an audience for me with his village's French teacher, ʾAmm Salim, a self-proclaimed intellectual with whom I'd wanted to chat for years. Sitting in a semi-private corner of a riverside café with Saad and me, ʾAmm Salim started our conversation by asking Saad about his experience in the army, and I suggested to Saad that he tell the older man his story about the officer. When he finished, I confessed my difficulty wrapping my head around Saad's account, to which ʾAmm Salim leaned forward, looking me in the eyes, and said, "Believe him. That's what the army does. It takes away all your rights. It turns you into an animal—less than an animal!" ʾAmm Salim's voice rose as he warmed to his subject. "The village is run on respect, on love even. Look at the way the *qʾadat al-ʾarab* (customary arbitration councils) work: the police don't have to get involved. No one has to get hurt. But that's the opposite of the way it is in the army. In the army, you have no rights, not even to speak. Look at what they make you eat—you don't even deserve real food! They want you to know that you are less than an animal, because if you are not human, then your life doesn't matter. You're just a body. The army, by contrast, is a predator. Look at how many businesses the army owns, how much of the economy is tied up in the army."

Encouraged by our attention, ʾAmm Salim held forth on the villainy of the army for over an hour before excusing himself for dinner and making an appointment to meet with us the next day.

Leaving the café, Saad and I wandered back to his father's house, catching up with friends in the street as dusk swelled to black. By the time we arrived home, his brother had already gathered with his friends upstairs. They were half-watching a bad American action movie and raucously making fun of each other, and we joined them. Soon, someone went downstairs to let in more guests, among them a young man in his early twenties who, after greeting everyone, sat down next to me. He introduced himself as Mohammed—I knew his brother, he told me. He had heard that I had been talking with Salim about the army at the café.

The young man told me that he was a non-commissioned officer and he wanted to know what Salim had to say. Sneaking a glance at Saad, I omitted his story and repeated a tactful version of what Salim had already shouted in public. Okay, but what did *I* think of the army? What was I going to write in my research? I told him I had learned that the army was a central institution of Egyptian life, in part because of Mohammed ʾAli's conscription of peasants. He agreed, then paused. Okay, but did I think the army was good? The young officer didn't seem angry or threatening. He looked personally concerned that the institution he was a part of be absolved. Not wanting to lie, I balanced good against bad. Without the army, Egypt wouldn't be independent, but it doesn't seem like we can deny what ʾAmm Salim said, either. Everyone has stories about how bad it is in the army.

Mohammed leapt out of his seat, but Saad and several others intervened, shouting over him to share their own examples. My attention ping-ponged around the room as I tried to snatch meaning out of the crosstalk. Eventually Saad summed up the consensus: "That's why ʾAmm Salim says the army takes away your rights."

"But it's not like that!" The young officer looked wounded. Saad, conciliatory, asked what he meant. "By treating you like that, the army teaches you how to *yithaqqaq haqqak."* Saad and I both flinched at this awkward pun. Literally, Mohammed was saying that the army teaches you how to "realize your right," but to better capture his double entendre we might say "enrighten your right" or "realize your reality."

As Samera Esmeir notes in her account of the development of jurisprudence in Colonial Egypt, the singular form "*haqq*" often means "right" but can also be used as "justice" or "truth," while the plural "*hoqooq*" (the form Saad had been using) indexes legal rights in particular (26). Some other commonly used words with the same root are *haqiqa*, or "fact," and *yastahaqq*, "to deserve." Using more everyday language, Egyptians might speak of "getting" (*yigeeb*), "taking" (*yakhud*), or even "leaving" (*yiseeb*) one's right, but Mohammed chose the verb "*yithaqqaq*," "to actualize" or "realize," to emphasize this polysemy in the root *h-q-q*. More importantly, "*yithaqqaq*" is a reflexive verb, suggesting that *right* is something that one does to one's self. In other words, one does not *have* rights so much as one makes them real. The army, it would seem, makes this achievement possible through its maltreatment of soldiers.

Saad paused for a moment before conceding, "Yes, that's true. But it's different for the regular soldiers. You're a non-commissioned officer" (*saff al-zubat*). Mohammed objected and again was shouted down. Exasperated, he gave up and we collectively turned our attention to the TV. Mohammed sat down next to me, holding his silence a few minutes before getting out his phone. He told me he wanted to show me a video, to show me what the army does for Egypt. A blurry clip, shot on a smart phone, depicted a group of soldiers in the desert guarding five bound, kneeling men. "This is in Sinai," he said. "Those are terrorists." As the camera approached the group, the soldiers pointed their guns to the backs of their prisoners and shot them. Mohammed seemed at once pained and thrilled by my horror. "You don't like that? Why don't you like that?" It was both an accusation and a real question. I told him I thought those people had the right to a trial, to which he reacted incredulously, again turning to the room for support. At this point Saad's brother, Diyaa', grabbed Mohammed's arm and sat him down beside him. They talked quietly for about five minutes before Mohammed got up, said goodbye to the group, and left, his brow still furrowed in bemusement.

This young officer had been so disturbed by the possibility that I would write something critical about the army that he rushed to Saad's house to set the record straight. The moment underscores the danger of talking about army violence openly in Egypt. Though I could have been reported to the authorities, I no longer lived in Egypt and would likely emerge from such an encounter deeply shaken but intact. Saad and his family, on the other hand, were much more exposed to retribution. If the Egyptian government had decided I was a spy, every kindness Saad had shown me, every story he had told, could be used to confirm his own treason. Part of what kept him safe was the relative publicity of what had taken place, as was the fact that anything Saad had said was ratified by dozens of other examples. These were safeguards against surveillance Saad and I had made use of quite consciously throughout my fieldwork, as was my availability to answer hard questions. Diyaa and his friends enjoyed asking me questions, which was part of what he had reminded Mohammed about my presence before the young officer had left. Mohammed was both curious about what I thought and confused by some of my answers to his questions. Though the proposition that a government should not have the absolute right to kill seemed to strike him as bizarre and pathetic—suspect, even—he had also wanted to clarify

that the violence visited on conscripts was education, not cruelty. In his view, the army does not guarantee rights so much as potentiate them.

In this chapter, I consider what the army teaches the conscript. If the experience of being a conscript teaches something, what does it teach? How could Saad pass through the violence he had endured and still agree that the army had taught him to realize his right? To answer these questions, I elaborate on one of my answers to Mohammed, namely, my point that the reign of Mohammed ʾAli Basha (1805-1849) had established the army at the center of the Egyptian state.

Conscription as constitution

In recent decades, the origin of Egyptian nationalism has been a matter of some debate. Egyptian nationalist historians, the Egyptian government, and most of the Egyptian people with whom I spoke trace the origin of the Egyptian nation-state to the rule of Ottoman governor Mohammed ʾAli Basha (1769-1849), whose combative posture toward the Ottoman empire earned his descendants a hereditary right to rule the province of Egypt until 1914. An ethnic Albanian born in 1769 in a Balkan province of the Ottoman Empire, ʾAli arrived in Egypt in 1801 as the second-ranked commander of a mercenary force sent by the Sultan to reclaim the Nile province from Napoleon's occupying *Armée d'Orient*. In the ten years following French withdrawal, ʾAli carefully out-maneuvered competitors for control of Egypt; though he earned the title of *wali* (governor) from the Sultan in 1805, ʾAli did not consolidate power until his infamous 1811 massacre of over 450 of Egypt's *mamluk* princes, those Turkic slave-soldiers who had constituted the core of every state ruling Egypt since the end of the Crusades, and whom he had invited to feast at his citadel. Once his position was secure, ʾAli moved quickly to reorganize his armed forces into a modern infantry army of the kind that Napoleon had so successfully deployed in Egypt, efforts that eventually required both the development of a strong central bureaucracy and the creation of a new conscript army drawn from the Egyptian peasantry. By the 1830s, ʾAli's military might enabled him to launch a series of offensive military campaigns against the Sultan, leading to his occupation of large parts of the Ottoman empire. Nationalists and nationalist historians interpret these conflicts as evidence of ʾAli's desire to establish an independent nation-state—leading them to imagine him as the "Founder of Modern Egypt."

On the centenary of ʾAli's death in 1949, the novelist Mahmoud Taymur wrote about ʾAli from the perspective of the Sphinx, as it surveys the rise and fall of dynasties:

> My heart was bleeding for you, and how could I remain still, seeing you suffering under the tutelage of this Mamluk eyeing you like a tiger eyes his prey? Yet even in your difficulty and frailty you were noble, and in due time the power of this tyrant was eclipsed and you came out Victorious [*al-Qahira*] again. And how couldn't you when God has sent this genius, the son of Kavala [i.e., the birthplace of Mohammed ʾAli]? I could see him in his distant place of origin sitting for long hours fixing his eye on you, penetrating with his piercing insight the layers of time, … and listening to your imploring plea. He then could not but jump to your rescue, saying, "Here I come, here I come." I saw him descending on you, stretching his arms wide open, and you threw yourself into his embrace, with a trembling heart and overflowing yearning, as if this embrace would last forever. He disappeared in you and you in him, and together you became one indivisible person. (Quoted from Fahmy 2003, 15, with added punctuation for clarity)

Though not the earliest example of nationalist feeling attached to ʾAli, it demonstrates a few characteristic features of that reading of Egypt's history. First, ʾAli's reign is opposed to the predatory power of the Mamluks. What makes ʾAli different is that he hears Egypt's call, recognizes the pain of a nation and acts on its behalf. Then, in a moment of romantic reverie, ʾAli and the Egyptian nation merge and he becomes the vehicle for the will of the people. Like Hobbes' Leviathan, they are "one indivisible person," but what appears to bring them together is love.

As Khaled Fahmy shows in his masterful account of the pasha's army, however, ʾAli did not conceive of himself as acting on behalf of some as yet inchoate Egyptian nation, an argument with which Timothy Mitchell agrees: "Until the late nineteenth century, those in power in Cairo did not consider themselves to be ruling over an object that corresponds to the twentieth-century nation-state known by the name of Egypt" (Mitchell 180). By ʾAli's own telling, he fought wars against the empire to establish the right of dynastic rule over Egypt by his descendants. The "founder paradigm" we see in Taymur's panegyric emerged through the work of late 19th-century historians, who, reading the nationalist history emerging in Europe, initiated a search for Egypt as an historical subject. According historian Yoav Di-Capua,

> History … must have a subject on which [civilizational] development can be charted. The true subject of development is not merely a series of abstract changes but a certain entity. Any change in agriculture, industry, and economy is necessarily an expression of the development of this entity. This is how Egypt was forged as the true and ultimate subject of history. Consequently, because Egypt became the subject of history, the reforms of Muhammed ʾAli were grasped as the means by which we can measure the nation's development. (62)

Though "nation" is a modern concept, by the 1848 explosion of revolt and revolution in Europe, nationhood had become the conceptual foundation of theories of right elaborated by Europeans. By the 1870s, even before the infamous Berlin conference of 1884 where Europe formalized its plans for global colonization, Egyptians had begun using a nationalist idiom to agitate against foreign control in media like Yaqub Sanu's *Abu Naddara Zarqa*. According to Di-Capua's analysis, Mohammed ʾAli enabled these early nationalist writers to narrate the self-recognition of Egypt as a distinct polity, and they accordingly celebrated his utterances about Egypt and the Egyptian people. For example, the renowned archivist Amin Sami Basha, in his landmark collection of documents *Taqwim al-Nil* (1929), highlighted a letter of ʾAli's in which the governor names "Sultan Mahmud and the fellah" the "sources of [his] benefaction" as proof of ʾAli's special relationship with the Egyptian nation.

In the context of ʾAli's correspondence, however, Fahmy shows that the Basha was at least ambivalent and possibly sarcastic in this characterization. ʾAli "despised" the Egyptian fellah, characterizing them as "'wild beasts'" who could not follow European law (282). "'The inhabitants of our province, Egypt,'" the pasha wrote, "'are of three kinds. The first does not care except about themselves. The second, although they can be loyal and kind, are devoid of any sense of discretion. The third are in the same position as animals'" (282). Reading these words, one struggles to imagine ʾAli in a tender embrace with the Egyptian nation, becoming one with it and championing its cause. Clearly, popular sovereignty was far from ʾAli's mind.

Indeed, when he finally demanded independence from the Ottomans in 1838, he justified the demand in terms of his family's right to Egypt. With his wars against the Sultan, "he repeatedly said that what he was seeking to do was to foil the intrigues directed against 'our family,' and hoped for nothing more than to 'strengthen the foundations of my dynasty," and to 'carve a place for my family and my dynasty's families in history to be remembered in four or five centuries'" (Fahmy 284). The British Consul-General of the time reported the same:

> '[H]e cannot…ever permit all [the] establishments [that he founded in Egypt over thirty years] to revert to the Porte and be lost at his death, and that he should have the pang of feeling that all his labours should merely have been for the Porte which would allow them to go to ruin, whilst his own family and children would be exposed to want and death.' (284)

In other words, ʾAli's military campaigns against his Ottoman sovereign aimed at earning the right to pass on the position of *khedive*, or "viceroy," within his family line—a right ʾAli won in 1840 and which his descendants enjoyed until 1953. Fahmy shows that, rather than being a proto-nationalist fighting for the self-assertion of the Egyptian people, ʾAli focused on creating a military apparatus capable of aggrandizing the dynastic claims of his own family.

That said, reading the nationalist history of Mohammed ʾAli against its critics reveals much about the imagination of the Egyptian nation, particularly in the way that both narratives connect the violence of conscription with the emergence of the Egyptian people's national self-consciousness. In her preface to *A History of Egypt*, the venerable historian of Egypt (and Fahmy's own antagonist) Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot offers a nationalist reading of Egypt's history that frames her subsequent analysis: Having suffered foreign occupations of various kinds—from the Arab conquest in 639 AD to the British occupation in 1882 which lasted until 1954—Egyptians through

> the ages have had to cope with allien rulers, or with rulers who were dominated by ʾAliens so that a truly national government could be said to exist only after 1952. Yet throughout the eras of ʾAlien rule the native Egyptian recognized the existence of a fixed and unchanging territory that was Egypt, which had fixed natural boundaries, and which was separate as a territory even when it was the centre of an empire or amalgamated into an empire as a mere province. Thus the native Egyptian, while coping with ʾAlien rulers, also clung to the fixed piece of territory that he identified and knew as Egypt. Even before the age of nationalism made people conscious of national affinities Egyptians were conscious of living in a land called Egypt. (ix)

As nationalists must, Marsot naturalizes the boundaries of modern Egypt, though its southern and western borders are largely defined by longitudes and latitudes set by agreements with British and Italian colonial powers, respectively. Marsot draws false lines in her chronology as well. Before the Arab invasion, Egypt had been a colony of Achaemenid, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Sassanid empires respectively, potentially marking the start of "ʾAlien" rule in 343 BCE. Though her timeline is questionable, by identifying the beginning of colonization in Arab antiquity, Marsot nonetheless highlights the important fact that the Egyptian experience of imperial power begins long before French or British occupation. Whether the foreign interlopers

named are Arab, Ottoman, or Greek, Egypt's extended history of occupation aggrandizes its liberation in 1952: the Free Officers Coup marks the end of hundreds of years, if not millennia, of occupation. Egypt's emergence as a major Arab power under Nasser signals the beginning of a new epoch, one in which Egyptians finally determine their own future and thereby return to a greatness long denied to them.

From this understanding of Egypt's role in world history, Marsot analyzes regimes prior to 1952 in terms of the way they distributed the right to violence among foreign fighting forces. As she notes during an account of the Mamluk dynasties (1250-1516), "common people … were not conscripted into armies until the nineteenth century. The military profession was therefore one reserved to a specific group of people: Turk, Kurd, or various other minorities within the Muslim world who were not native speakers of Arabic" (32). Depending on the era, imperial forces occupying Egypt came from different regions and had different sources of income and relationships with rulers.

Mohammed ʾAli's great nationalist innovation, therefore, was not to imagine Egypt as an independent polity but to create the institution of the conscript army—an institution that, in the 'Orabi revolt and the Free Officer's coup, would prove essential to the struggle for the establishment of an "Egypt for Egyptians," the nationalist slogan first articulated by Marsot's uncle Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyid. It is by this standard that Marsot judges the Sadat and Mubarak presidencies to have failed: decades of political repression have severed communication between the country and its rulers, while neoliberal economic policies have increased the gulf between poor and rich. In the current state of politics, she laments, it is impossible to say that Egypt is for Egyptians.

Though his entire book is dedicated to undoing nationalist narratives like Marsot's[13], Fahmy does not disagree with Marsot's identification of conscription as the moment in which an Egyptian nation comes to participate in an Egyptian state. What he documents—meticulously—is that this marriage was not a happy one. After deposing his main military rivals in the massacre at his citadel in 1811, ʾAli struggled to discipline the Albanian soldiers who were the backbone of his forces.[14] Over the course of the wars in Arabia ʾAli fought on behalf of the Sultan (1811-1818), the numbers of Albanian soldiers dwindled, leading ʾAli, in 1820, to send two military expeditions to Sudan to capture inhabitants to be brought north and trained as slave-soldiers. As attempts at building an army, these campaigns failed: Revolts in the Sudan limited the number of Sudanese who could be captured, and those who were brought north died "'like sheep with the rot'" (88-89). Though reluctant to sap the workforce whose labor accounted for his wealth, ʾAli finally turned in 1823 to conscripting and training Egyptian peasants, sending a regiment including 2,500 Egyptians to fight Wahhabis in the Hijaz. Despite only a few months of training, these troops impressed ʾAli by "defeating a Wahhabi force ten times its size" through sheer discipline (94). It was their success in putting down an anti-conscription rebellion in their own upper Egyptian home provinces, however, that convinced the Basha of their loyalty (95).

[13] Fahmy addresses his critique to a more scholarly work of Marsot's, *Egypt in the Reign of Mohammed Ali*. I've chosen to work from her argument in *A History of Egypt* because it synthesizes her reading of ʾAli with a broader view of Egyptian history.

[14] Like Ottoman Sultan Selim III in his attempt to build the New Order Army, ʾAli faced stiff opposition from the existing professional soldier class in pursuing any kind of military reform—though in ʾAli's case, the assassination attempt against him failed (85-86).

> In one incident it was reported that one of the sergeants of Osman Bey's regiment, when attacking a certain village found his own father among the rebels, and failing to convince him to give in peacefully, proceeded to kill him. On being informed of this incident Mehmed ʾAli wrote to the Director of the War Department, Mehmed Bey Lazoglu, praising the soldier and promoting him to the rank of lieutenant. (96).

Following such proof, ʾAli began conscription of the peasantry in earnest, conscripting by the mid-1830s 130,000, about 2.6 percent of a population of five million.

This displacement upended rural life profoundly. Where corvée labor was normally timed to coincide with the summer months between harvest and planting, conscription under ʾAli was essentially indefinite, snatching up men at random (98) for as much as ten or fifteen years at a time (261-262), leading many women and children to follow conscripts from camp to camp in shanty towns with as many as 20,000 inhabitants. Sporadic armed revolt against conscription continued, but some fellahin simply deserted their villages.

> As soon as news of the approach of the recruiting party approached a village, "—and it spread over the country like wildfire—" a wave of desertion followed by masses of families fleeing their homes and villages desperately trying to evade the conscription gangs. By the late-1830s this practice was so widespread that entire villages were found completely abandoned leaving behind sad, deplorable villages "buried in their stillness…where the dwellings of the poor inhabitants … still by time, but deprived of their inhabitants [who attempted to avoid the agents of the Basha] by giving up house and home, and deserting, *en masse*, the devoted town or village." (100)

In the face of mass desertion, ʾAli innovated, enlisting local authorities in capturing fugitives. When large numbers of village sheikhs, mayors, and local directors were caught telling potential conscripts when to flee rather than capturing them, ʾAli both increased the penalties for aiding deserters (to execution by 1844) and shifted responsibility for reporting deserters away from individuals who might be swayed by personal appeal. In an army of about 130,000 men, approximately 60,000—almost half—deserted, requiring the Basha to develop an enormous bureaucratic apparatus to track individual subjects by means of census (Ibid), travel documents (Ibid), roll calls (ibid) and to surveil the Egyptian countryside for deserters (Ibid 259). As Mitchell shows, in this sense conscription was not limited to soldiers:

> In the second quarter of the nineteenth century the people of Egypt were made inmates of their own villages. A government ordinance of January 1830 confined them to their native districts, and required them to seek a permit and papers of identification if they wished to travel outside. 'It was scarcely possible', we are told, 'for a fellah to pass from one village to another without a written passport.' The village was to be run like a barracks, its inhabitants placed under the surveillance of the guards night and day, and under the supervision of inspectors as they cultivated the land—and surrendered to the government warehouse its produce. No one before had thought to organize Egypt as one would barrack and discipline an army. (34)

Some conscripts, convinced of the futility of fleeing, maimed themselves, removing eyes, front teeth, or fingers; such was the army's problem with desertion that the Basha resorted to forming whole regiments of maimed men (Fahmy 261). By making avoidance futile, ʾAli hoped to make conscription seem like fate.

The experience of soldiers once in the army, moreover, "was to be different from corvée or anything else they might have experienced so far" (Ibid. 120) in as much as it would involve the minute inspection and organization of their time and their bodies. According to Fahmy, "what prompted this shift to disciplinary power[15] was the desire to turn the 'rabble' of Egypt into [a] reliable, dependable body of troops" (Ibid. 141), to which end public execution and corporal punishment made only limited contribution. What was required, rather, was to "instill the feeling of the perpetual presence of surveillant and watchful guards" in each soldier and to "adjust the body of the soldier so finely that its movements would be reduced to stable, standardized, comparable, and combinable units" (Ibid. 141). If ʾAli achieved the former by means like informants, census data, and travel documents, discipline required the imposition of timetables and hygiene, endless drills and intrusive medical examinations, and a system of military courts that meted out punishment in proportion to crime. Like the internment required by conscription, these forms of military discipline represented a radically new demand from the state, namely, an imperative to become a man who follows orders without question, "a man robbed of his instinctive reactions, who shows no fear, feels no grief; is moved by no horror; instead he appears as a characterless, machine-like, alienated being" (164). In other words, the violence of conscription does not merely capture the body but, in training the body and rendering it docile, also "'strikes the soul'" in an effort to control it (Foucault 1995, 16).

As Fahmy points out, the innumerable ways Ali's conscripts resisted conscription show that ʾAli failed to capture the souls of all these men (157). That said, facing death with no possibility of escape did affect the psyches of Ali's conscripts. After the siege of Acre (1831-1832), many soldiers became ill with "home-sickness" (*ishtiyaq ila al-watan*):

> Anxious about their families left behind and about their lands whose productivity was certainly affected, many men found it extremely painful to be forced to leave their villages for destinations mysterious to them and for a period of unknown duration. And it was not uncommon for the men, on finally returning to their

[15] Fahmy, like Mitchell, draws on Michel Foucault's theory of disciplinary power to analyze these elements of ʾAli's regime, but disagrees with Mitchell's depiction of this form of power as totalizing (155-157). While Foucault's work also influences my analysis of ʾAli's state, I've chosen not to foreground Foucault because many scholars read him as opposing disciplinary power/biopower to sovereign power, a reading I do not wish to conjure for my own readers. With Fahmy, I note that the transition to disciplinary power in 18th- and 19th-century year described in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* owes much of its impetus to Enlightenment concepts of universal humanity, concepts clearly not at work in motivating ʾAli to deploy disciplinary power (126). Moreover, it seems to me that reverence for Enlightenment humanity accounts for the appearance of a teleology in the displacement of sovereign power by discipline in Europe, but that, absent such motive elsewhere, it should not be supposed that sovereign power and disciplinary power are opposed or that the latter replaces the former in modernity. As will become clear later in this chapter, I find Agamben's argument that biopower is intimately linked to sovereign power (1995) more useful for analyzing the Egyptian state. Inasmuch as the concept of biopower does not appear in *Discipline and Punish*, the final chapter of *Society Must be Defended* (not yet translated in English when Mitchell and Fahmy published) serves as a better reference for Foucault's distinction between sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower.

> villages, to "find the wives and daughters, whom they, perhaps, loved and cherished, irremediably lost: many families are thus entirely broken up." English travelers who could not understand this attachment that the fellahin had to their villages often saw it as a pathetic case of home-sickness from which they should be cured. "To us as Englishmen," one of them wrote, " it appears almost incredible that young men of from eighteen to twenty-five years of age should regard as hardship the being obliged to leave from home" Similarly, Dr. Bowring on visiting the troops in Syria found the numbers of persons who pined to death, sinking under the influence of this unmedicable malady…very considerable." When he discussed the matter with the physician of the camp, the doctor told him. "'I cannot keep them ʾAlive…when they begin to think and talk of home.' And long before they die, they sink into a listless, careless inanity…" (205)

Faced with an epidemic of this illness, the Chief Physician of the army wrote a manual on the disease for his organization's doctors in which he suggests the following as a treatment: "They have to be kept occupied as much as possible and to be promised their imminent return home…As much as possible soldiers have to be kept in a happy, content state and their officers have been ordered to be gentle with them…and to make them believe that the dangers they are about to encounter are not grave" (205). It is not likely that ʾAli's soldiers saw much gentleness in his army, but accounts of homesickness clearly reveal the stakes of conscription for soldiers: with the loss of family, many of them lost the will to live. Indeed, the doctors treating them seemed to have understood that the promise of being reunited with their families was the only thing that could motivate those soldiers to fight.

In light of such accounts, one hesitates to affirm ʾAli as benevolent and beloved father (or lover, if we follow Taymur's erotic depiction of this relationship) of the Egyptian nation; at the same time, Fahmy does suggest an alternate reading of ʾAli as national founder.

> Mehmed ʾAli's army was instrumental in founding the modern Egyptian nation not by enlightening its soldiers as to their true and hidden identity. It was not by fighting their supposedly foreign enemies that Egyptians came to call Egypt their own. Rather, by relying on thousands of Egyptians to man his army, and at the same time by making sure that none of these *evled-i Arab* ["sons of Arabs"] was to be promoted to senior ranks, the Pasha inadvertently helped to homogenize the experience of these thousands of Egyptians in a manner that was crucial in the founding of their 'imagined community.' The deeply felt sentiment of injustice, frustration and animosity against the Turkish-speaking military elite was a powerful ingredient in forging the rising national consciousness and was made even more potent by being echoed in the civilian society at large. … The Pasha's army was above all crucial for the rise of the modern nation-state of Egypt by introducing practices that together changed the nature of the Egyptian state and its relationship to its 'citizens' and completely transformed the very fabric of Egyptian society. By catching its deserters, punishing its criminals, educating its youth, vaccinating its children, silencing its women, interning its insane, and by doing this in a subtle, 'humane' and 'rational' manner … this is how the Egyptian nation came into being in modern times. It was by a process of violence, silence,

> and exclusion that Egyptians were taught the essential truths of the nation. (313-314)

Where Fahmy departs from Marsot and other nationalist historians, in other words, is not in the identification of the moment of conscription as the founding of the Egyptian nation-state, but in the nature of the order conscription established. The nationalist version of this narrative emphasizes a mutual identification of interests between ruler and ruled, resulting in the merger of nation and state. Fahmy, on the other hand, documents the historically antagonistic process of that union.

Doing so, he suggests the utility of theoretical tools that foreground the agonistic forces at work in the creation of constitutional orders. The social contract theories whose influence is so hegemonic in Euro-American political systems focus on the way opposing interests are harmonized when a population relinquishes their natural right to violence to a sovereign. These theories make it difficult to account for the kind of political order founded by Mohammed ʾAli, in which it is unclear what kind of exchange is being made between ruler and ruled. To the contrary, as Fahmy shows, in the founding moment of the Egyptian state what is established is not a system of mutual rights and obligations but an order for rendering human beings into resources for establishing dynastic power. If there is reciprocity here, it is in the exchange of blows.

It is for this reason that the critique of contractual political order that emerged after World War I is so important in understanding Marsot and Fahmy's consensus that ʾAli's conscription of the peasantry is the moment that constitutes the Egyptian nation-state. Though social contract theory has endured robust criticism since its first appearance, starting in the early 20th-century a series of philosophers of diverse political sympathies have attacked the concept of the social contract for concealing the antagonisms at the root of any political order. From the right, Carl Schmitt, a German Catholic jurist chosen as the favored political philosopher of the Third Reich, argued that liberal constitutional orders like the Weimar Republic necessarily collapse under the contradictions of their own theory of politics. Liberalism shares with anarchism the conviction that government intervention is bad, but argues for limiting state power rather than abolishing it. This leaves liberalism in the position of having neither "radically denied the state" *nor* "advanced a positive theory of the state nor on its own discovered how to reform the state, but [instead] has attempted only to tie the political to the ethical and to subjugate it to economics" (61). In other words, because liberal politicians imagine the social contract as a kind of exchange, they tend to practice politics as though every political conflict can be converted into an economic transaction.

Yet if the unique power of the state is its right to enact legitimate violence, argues Schmitt, then a theory of its operation would need to account for how to use this power. Neither economic reason nor ethical reflection, the means prized by humanist liberals, can fill this role:

> There exists no rational purpose, no norm, no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men killing each other for this reason. If such physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat to one's own way of life, then it cannot be justified. (49)

What is necessary to rationalize the right to violence, he argues, is the concept of the enemy and its distinction from the friend. By enemy, Schmitt does not mean "competitor" or "the private adversary whom one hates." Rather, drawing on the Latin and Greek distinction between *hostis/inimicus* and *polemios/echthros*—that is, between public and private enemies—Schmitt argues that "all political concepts, images, and terms have a *polemical* meaning" (emphasis added) in the sense that they are directed against a public enemy. Even amidst the depoliticizations and neutralizations of liberal politics, "what remains here from the original friend-enemy grouping is … some sort of antagonistic moment, which manifests itself in all sorts of tactics and practices, competitions and intrigues" (30). Even when political actors disavow the violence at the heart of politics, the very language they use to describe their actions is rife with the "concrete antagonism" of victory and defeat.

Schmitt's concept of the political encourages us to see the violence of conscription as constitutive, rather than incidental, to the Egyptian state. At the same time, it seems that the friend-enemy distinction is not quite adequate to understanding the relationship between ʾAli and the Egyptian peasantry. On the one hand, it's inaccurate to describe the peasants as ʾAli's enemy precisely because ʾAli enlists the fellahin in his war against the Sultan. Moreover, though Fahmy offers his readers countless examples of ʾAli and his officers treating the fellahin as less than fully human, ʾAli does not wish to annihilate them—quite the opposite, he takes every opportunity to avoid visiting death on conscripts before they reach the battlefield (Ibid). In other words, though conscription brings great violence upon those subjected to it, its violence necessarily stops short of annihilation and, therefore, of enmity. On the other hand, the resistance of the fellahin to conscription is enough on its own to discredit the idea that ʾAli and his subjects were somehow friends. To confirm this conclusion, we only need remember that ʾAli did not build the Egyptian state on behalf of the Egyptian nation—he built it for his family.

From the political left's reevaluation of contract theory, Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" offers an analytical language for understanding how antagonism between ruler and ruled can be codified into a constitutional order. In Benjamin's view, rights do not emerge from human nature or God—a perspective known as "natural law" and enshrined in documents like the Declaration of Independence or the Declaration of Rights of Man—but from human action and human aims—an alternative perspective called "positive law." Though theorists of positive law like Austin or Bentham sometimes depict law as a closed, logical system of rules "posited" by legislation, Benjamin emphasizes the historical dimension of law their theory exposes. Behind every law, he argues, history reveals a conflict in which one party triumphs over another and thus earns the right to legislate. In this framework, then, narratives of conquest or liberation like the American Revolutionary War illustrate the contours of just and unjust violence under the new legal regimes they create: the American Bill of Rights famously limited the powers of the new American government according to the depredations of the British colonial regime. Whatever might be written in the Declaration of Independence about inalienable rights, it is difficult to interpret the Third Amendment, which prohibits quartering soldiers in private homes, as merely revealing a right that inheres naturally to all human beings. Benjamin encourages us to see instead that this particular right earns its power from the historical circumstances that compelled its legislation.

Calling this "law-making" or "mythic" violence, he argues that its paradigmatic example is the peace ceremony. "Even in cases where the victor has established himself in invulnerable

possession, a peace ceremony is entirely necessary," he argues, because to make peace is to "sanction" victory by representing it as fated and therefore just (283). The settled peace further embodies justice in as much as 'the adversary is not simply annihilated [but] … is accorded rights even when the victor's superiority in power is complete" (295). These rights appear as equal because for "both parties to the treaty it is the same line that may not be crossed. … 'Poor and rich are equally forbidden to spend the night under the bridges" (295-296). In this way, the asymmetries of any victory are enshrined in the law that that victory justifies. Ali, however, never made a peace with his subjects, never enshrined a system of mutual obligations into law. Rather, Ali's conscription seems to establish a kind of open-ended asymmetry, one in which there is predation without peace, and from which personal connections with authority represent one of the only reliable means of escape.

It is this last point that returns us to Schmitt's argument about the foundational role of violence in political institutions. If social contract theory represses the enmity implicit in politics, Schmitt argues, then the theory of sovereignty must be revised in a way that does not misrepresent nation and state as being bound by symmetrical exchange. This he achieves by redefining the sovereign in terms of its power to decide on the state of exception, the situation in which the law must be suspended in order to preserve the public order. In any polity, crises arise in which the existence of the state itself is threatened, whether from within or without, and by naming this threat, the sovereign both designates an enemy and justifies its annihilation without need of trial. As such, the sovereign not only decides on the exception but also represents the very power of the law to exceed itself. Fahmy's account of nepotism in ʾAli's reign, which I quote at length here, shows that it was not only ʾAli as sovereign who was invested with the power to make an exception to the law:

> At the heart of the officer corps and occupying the most senior military posts were the Pasha's blood relatives, his in-laws or his personal freed slaves. Even a cursory look at the composition of the top positions in the army at any moment in time will reveal this aspect of Mehmed ʾAli's army, namely that this was a 'household army.' …
>
> As peculiar as this aspect of the army may appear, it allowed the Pasha to create a nucleus of officers which by the very nature of things were closely tied to him and stood to rise or fall with him. To cement this core of officers the Pasha appointed his own personal mamluks[16] in senior positions in the army to form the second component of the officer corps. … The problem with these mamluk officers was not lack of loyalty to the Pasha but insufficient training. (276)
>
> Given the very nature of the army, … it is not surprising to find nepotism at work whether in cases of appointments, promotions, or exemptions from punishments. Bearing in mind the composition of the officer corps of the army and in particular appointments to the senior positions, nepotism appears to have been an essential element in the army and not a mere aberration to be corrected. …

[16] The word "mamluk" means slave. The mamluks Fahmy refers to here came from other parts of the Ottoman empire and are not the slave-soldiers who had ruled Egypt for several hundred years.

> NCOs were also constantly presenting petitions to the authorities about irregularities in promotion. In 1836, for example, a certain second lieutenant in Ahmed Pasha Menilikli's Guardia Regiment presented a petition directly to the Pasha saying that he had graduated from the Giza School of Cavalry among a class of forty students. Since then his colleagues had been distributed among the various regiments and promoted to higher ranks, some having even been promoted to the ranks of captain and major, while he remained a second lieutenant for six years. The reason, he said, was that his major, Ahmed Efendi, the first Major of the Guardia Regiment, 'does not like me very much [*lays bayni wa baynahu mahabba zayida*]. The major [he added] holds drinking parties every night in his tent and invites the captains of his battalion who back him up in front of his colonel [*yasir baynahum rabita bi'annahum usaddiquhu 'ind miralay*]. In return, the major promotes these members of his entourage (*hamshariyatahu*).' He concluded by saying that the same was being done by Brigadier Salim Bey. Significantly, in his response to this petition, Mehmed ʾAli did not order an investigation into the behavior of the senior officers whose names were mentioned by the petitioner; he only ordered the Deputy Director of the War Department to investigate the matter and 'please' the man if he had a case, and 'silence' him if he did not.
>
> The problem in fact lay deeper than addressing a particular grievance or correcting a minor mistake. If these senior officers had been appointed to their positions mostly on the strength of their personal relationship to Mehmed ʾAli or some member of his household, why should they not do the same thing themselves and appoint or promote some of their own friends or members of their families? (179-180)

In these passages, Fahmy shows that by building the conscription state for the sake of his own family, ʾAli makes the family into a force that both remains outside of that state and justifies exceptions to its laws. As he argues, acts of nepotism are not aberrations in a state constituted in this way: rather, Ali's state establishes *wasta* as the means *par excellence* by which one subject to Ali's state is able to get what s/he deserves.

Benjamin pushes us yet further in this analysis by distinguishing law-making violence from law-preserving violence—that is, acts of enforcement and punishment. According to him, law-preserving violence threatens punishment but cannot guarantee it; it is violence which might be eluded, and, in not being applied evenly to every instance, it strikes the victim by mere fate. The aim of law-preserving violence is to maintain submission to the law. Capital punishment appears as a paradigmatic example: "in the exercise of violence over life and death more than in any other legal act, law reaffirms itself" (286). Pointing to the power to suspend the law in case of emergency, Benjamin, like Schmitt, argues that the state's most solemn duty is not to enforce the law but to suspend law in the name of preserving law itself. He extends this logic of the exception to the police: "In this authority the separation of lawmaking and law-preserving violence is suspended. If the first is required to prove its worth in victory, the second is subject to the restriction that it may not set itself new ends. Police violence is emancipated from both conditions" (286). In 21th-century America, we can recognize this principle at work in the

numerous situations in which police can "intervene 'for security reasons'" and even kill without punishment. Without the right to annihilate any perceived threat to itself, the institution of the police could not exist. In Egypt, ʾAli's difficulty was in convincing different actors to play this role, tapping mayors, sheikhs, Bedouin, and Turkish sapper regiments.[17] Even district and department governors "showed their loyalty to their fellow countrymen by a tightly guarded silence and a calculated pretense at ignorance of their local environment" (Fahmy 105). It is worth reiterating, then, that in the moment of conscription that gives birth to the Egyptian nation-state, we also see representatives of the law breaking the law for people whom they know personally. Eventually, the requirement that subjects carry a passport to leave their villages and the wealth of data produced by sustained surveillance made it possible to both track individuals and depersonalize the enforcement of conscription; as Fahmy documents in "The Police and the People in the Nineteenth Century" (1999), these very information networks were to become the main resource of the police as they became more involved in investigating crimes like robbery and murder.

Benjamin cites conscription as another paradigmatic example of law-preserving violence in as much as it threatens as a means of compelling citizens to participate in the violence that it reserves to itself. We see the stakes of this predicament in ʾAli's command that his new soldiers put down anti-conscription revolts in their own provinces, or in the fact that one conscript's reward for killing his own father is an increased capacity to command. For Benjamin, conscription produces this kind of circularity because of the way it organizes violence as a means to the ends of the state. He calls military violence of the kind that produces a peace treaty "predatory" because it aims at acquiring some "natural end" of human beings—land, wealth, food, labor. Conscription, by contrast, pursues "legal ends," meaning submission to the law itself. By demanding that the soldier become an agent for the very violence that compels him to fight, conscription produces the kind of situation in which one must kill his own father or mutilate himself. This relationship to power, I argue, is one facet of what Mohammed ʾAli constituted through the mythic violence of ʾAli's conscription.

Though some political philosophers use the concept of "myth" to point to the falsity of a doctrine that is nonetheless espoused as true (for example, Benjamin's fellow travelers Adorno and Horkheimer use "myth" in this way to criticize Enlightenment thought, and Schmitt devotes a chapter of *The Crisis in Parliamentary Democracy* to attacking the irrationalism of Sorel's theory of myth in politics), I think it would be a mistake to see Benjamin's primary usefulness in the disruption of false consciousness purveyed though political myth. What interests me about Benjamin's concept is that, as an example, myth accounts for the perdurance of domination through its iterability: a political myth is the reference justifying every application of the law.

My contention here is that the violence of military conscription under ʾAli serves as precisely such a foundational myth, one which establishes the legitimate relation between Egyptian subject and Egyptian state. To interpret ʾAli as a founder is to turn him into an exemplary figure, one whose violence against the Egyptian peasantry is not only forgivable but justified by

[17] *Batalci* are "sappers," combat engineers who build any fortifications prior to battle. If this Turkish word is the origin of the modern Egyptian "*baltagy,*" or "thugs," then this suggests a connection between enforcers of conscription and a willingness to violate human life. The character of the *baltagy* is one of the subjects of Chapter x.

the necessity of its end—that is, the establishment of the nation-state itself. In as much as conscription was Egypt's founding moment, the army has become its primary political institution. Indeed, both the 'Urabi revolt of 1878-1882 and the Free Officers Coup of 1952 suggest the central role of the Egyptian military in the national self-assertion of Egypt against European imperial power.

Even Fahmy's own interventions in politics would seem to corroborate this interpretation. Fahmy's 2013 endorsement of the military coup that forced Mohammed Morsi, Egypt's only democratically elected president, from power corroborates the enduring importance of the Egyptian army as the best vehicle for self-assertion of the Egyptian nation. Textually, Fahmy's short essay cites Morsi's unwillingness to confront the military and the police as what lost him legitimacy:

> What led me to rebel against Mohammed Morsi and to not consider him as the legitimate president of Egypt was his failure to achieve the goals of the revolution, and particularly, not standing up to the army and the police. We revolted so that we could subject the army to parliamentary supervision, and we were stunned to see the Brotherhood's constitution maintaining all the army's perks and privileges, allowing for military trials for civilians, exempting the army from the necessity of presenting its budget to parliamentary oversight, and ruling out the possibility of appointing a civilian as minister of defence [*sic*]. As for reforming the police, the president avoided every serious initiative to reform the interior ministry, and turned a blind eye to human rights violations still being committed by the police and did not put an end to the legal and structural environment that allowed for torture to spread across police stations. (2013)

Fahmy does not acknowledge the incongruity of this argument with the fact that it was the army that removed Morsi from power and the army that assumed power when he was gone, appointing for themselves an interim president until then-Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi could be installed in a rigged election. Rather, Fahmy presents himself as being part of a mass movement of Egyptians with an unsatisfied will to reform the military. The fact that Fahmy does not mention the coup suggests its unremarkability, its obviousness. It affirms an historical repetition whereby the Egyptian people manifest their agency through the armed forces, a repetition that can be traced back to the mythic events of ʾAli's reign.

Indeed, one of the striking features of Fahmy's account of conscription under ʾAli is the degree to which today's army conscripts characterize their service as a similar experience of degradation. The young men with whom I spoke during my ethnographic fieldwork described extreme financial hardship, earning 200 pounds per month for a year while still being expected to purchase their own uniforms and to help their families financially; they spoke of brutal punishments for minor infractions, arbitrarily imposed; they spoke of eating rotten bread and rice infested with insects, of going into debt buying unspoiled food from the cantina.

As in Mohammed ʾAli's army, the young men I knew often went to extraordinary lengths to avoid conscription. Military service is compulsory for all adult Egyptian males, with a limited set of exemptions for categories like only sons or the disabled. Before the 2011 revolution, it had been relatively easy to use *wasta* to escape the draft, but not after: *wasta* could still snag a sinecure, but it was no longer a viable means to avoid service. I knew one Cairene who gained 50

pounds to earn an obesity exemption. One young man I knew pretended to be crazy; another pretended to be gay. The gay Egyptians I knew were terrified of the rectal exam during intake and generally avoided schemes that might out them to their families. A Monoufi friend hoped to escape conscription by doing *'omra*, a lesser pilgrimage to Mecca, whereupon he planned to go Ecuador, but his university suspected foul play and denied him the necessary paperwork. Part of the popularity of (non-religious) tattoos like Saad's in Egypt after 2011 can be attributed to their supposed power to earn a dismissal from the army, though I never met someone for whom this scheme had actually worked. Whatever means they used to resist it, for many young men, conscription was inevitable.

Nonetheless, the protests of ʾAli's conscripts confirm the importance of such attempts at avoidance under a conscription state. In a scene of appropriately mythic proportion, Fahmy documents the extraordinary response of the peasantry to ʾAli's conscription:

> Ultimately, Egyptians, seeing that life had become so unbearable under the new 'enlightened' regime of Mehmed ʾAli because of corvée, taxation, monopolies, imprisonment and, above all, conscription, decided that even if they could bear these atrocities themselves, there was no reason why they should see their own children subjected to the same fate. Thus a new method of resistance developed which reflected the Egyptians' utter despair: they simply refused to marry and have children. (261)

It is difficult not to be impressed by the "eloquence" (259) of such protest. If *Lysistrata* pits abstinence against war to stage a comedy of the sexes, Egyptian conscripts under Mohammed ʾAli perform a tragedy closer kin to doomed Antigone. Here it is men who abstain, not women, but they also abstain from sex in the name of life and family. Crucially, these men are unmarried, and do not yet have children of their own: They seek not to protect their existing sons from death but to protect future sons from existence. They make a sacrifice of their children, but unlike Abraham, they follow no command and use no knife. Picking up the thread of Timothy Mitchell's argument, these abstainers appear to have understood that the power that oppressed them depended on life, that it needed them to reproduce. This passage shows again that ʾAli and conscripts engaged not just in struggle over the territory of the family, but struggle *for* the family itself: it is on behalf of their unborn children that these soldiers ceased to bear children.

As an act of protest, this abstinence forbears from what it wishes to make possible, and, in this, it resembles Benjamin's conception of the general strike: though never permanent, cessation of work or paternity interrupts the operation of normal forms of power. As acts these are precisely *not* acts, but they point to something outside the regime of power, and perhaps thereby potentiate the emergence of that alternative. Benjamin describes acts like these as "divine," rather than "mythic," violence. Contrasting the myth of Niobe to the annihilation of Korah's rebellion against Moses, Benjamin notes that Korah, though annihilated, is guaranteed a place in heaven by Hannah's prayer. Unlike Niobe, who becomes the "boundary stone on the frontier between men and gods" (295), Korah's destruction makes no threat of future divine punishment, and in this way resembles the law of Moses itself.

> For the question "May I kill?" meets its irreducible answer in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." This commandment precedes the deed, just as God was preventing the deed. But just as it may not be fear of punishment that enforces

> obedience, the injunction becomes inapplicable, incommensurable once the deed is accomplished. No judgment of the deed can be derived from the commandment. And so neither the divine judgment, nor the grounds for this judgment, can be known in advance. Those who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it. (298).

A general labor strike is like divine violence inasmuch as it does not legislate: a union strike might aim at forcing a raise in salary or improvement in work conditions, but the complete cessation of work aims at nothing less than potentiating a new way of life. Indeed, argues Benjamin, Korah's annihilation is not a punishment, but a demonstration that the life of humanity is not extinguished with the death of the body. By acting on behalf of life that is not alive, the celibacy by Egyptian conscripts qualifies as a form of divine violence.

Moreover, it is in this sphere of reproduction that we notice a peculiar confluence of aims on the part of ruler and ruled. Like ʾAli himself, these *fellahin* appear to be motivated by the interests of their families and, in particular, their children. If ʾAli waged war to establish a dynasty, these conscripts resisted war to protect their kin. Though their interests might seem to converge, these same interests also bring these groups into conflict; the relationship to family between governor and governed is asymptotic in as much as they move in the same direction but never arrive at the same point. In other words, if Mohammed Ali's conscription is a form of mythic violence that constitutes the family as a sovereign power within the Egyptian state, the peasant resistance to conscription draws upon the power of the family to enact divine violence that interrupts this union. In the Aristotelian political philosophical tradition shared by both Europe and the Middle East, the formation of a polity is supposed to involve the sublimation of family loyalties to a more universal love of nation (see for example Aristotle's *Politics*, Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddima*, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, among others), in part because cases in which family interest triumphs over those of the polis lead to civil war and the dissolution of both state and social contract (Agamben 2014 and 2015; Loraux 1997)

This does not happen in the conflict between ʾAli and his conscripts. The police apparatus devised by ʾAli successfully maintained the strength of his army, enabling him to win his right to establish a dynasty. Egyptian conscripts found themselves unable to rise above the rank equivalent to lieutenant, the highest of the "non-commissioned" officers. Still, participation in the army could lead to education and even participation in delegations sent to Europe. ʾAli's successors, somewhat less clever than he, continued his expansion of the Egyptian state, but did so by accruing massive foreign debt to both England and France and employing throngs of European military consultants in the upper ranks of the army. When the underclass of Egyptian conscripts revolted in 1879, they did so with an explicitly nationalist demand that foreigners be expelled from the upper ranks of command as a part of an end to English, French, and Turkish domination of the military and the country at large. This revolt, remembered by the name of its leader, Ahmed 'Urabi, ended in 1882 with British invasion, followed by 70 years of occupation. Though the nominal independence won after the 1918 revolution did not end British occupation, it did win Egyptians the right to become commissioned officers in their own army. When the

epochal achievement of full Egyptian independence finally arrived, then, it came not by mass protest but the Free Officer's Coup in 1952. ʾAli deserves the name "Founder of Modern Egypt" not only because his army became and remains the central institution of the Egyptian state, but because that institution also became an instrument of popular revolutionary power. As Fahmy's endorsement of the 2013 coup shows us, the army serves simultaneously as the institution that must be destroyed and the only power by which such a revolution might be achieved.

This ambiguity arises in part from the fact that conscription is a means to its own end. Unlike a war in which one army attacks another, conscription does not aim at the acquisition of land or riches but at compelling human beings to use violence. This circularity also accounts for the difficulty we have in applying the friend-enemy distinction to the relationship between ʾAli and his conscripts. In this we might join Mitchell or Fahmy in seeing conscription as producing certain kinds of disciplinary subjectivity, a subjectivity that turns on itself and becomes its own captor, but this insight does not go quite far enough. It is not just that a person's habits and dispositions are shaped by training, or that this education orders both the self and the world of the student in new and important ways. Rather, it is that conscription puts one in the position of using on another the same violent means that compelled one to violence. As we saw in the conscription of the Egyptian peasantry under ʾAli, the circularity of the position puts the conscript in a peculiar relationship not just to the self, but to life and death, thereby raising the political stakes of sex, reproduction, and family. If the conscript refuses to kill, the punishment could not be death because then the conscript could not be used to kill. If the conscript agrees to kill, he might be put in the position of having to kill his own family. One form of resistance left to the conscript, short of suicide, was to make himself useless by self-maiming or celibacy.

Another form of resistance is the form of corruption that is the subject of the rest of this dissertation, namely, the use of personal connections to secure benefits from the state. The reader will recall that *wasta* is one of the only reliable ways of getting an exemption from military service, or, failing that, a comfortable sinecure. In using the state for the sake of the family, modern Egyptians not only reiterate some of the same antagonisms present at the foundation of their nation, they do so in a way that refuses their own conversion into means to the ends of the state. In *wasta*, Egyptians do not "destroy and recreate new forms of law" but "depose" law by accepting its power over them while simultaneously asserting the priority of their families and friends (Agamben 2014, 72). The rest of my dissertation considers the position of the family as the legal exception through the words and deeds of my interlocutors in Monoufiya. I will close, here, with the story of a joke—a joke that needs a story—to show how the history of conscription continues to educate Egyptian citizens about their own power in relation to the state.

Learning the power of silence

When I knew him, Mokhtar was a bit of a golden boy: charming and easy on the eyes, he was also one of the few men of the younger generation who had attained the visible markers of success recognized in the village. Though not from a particularly wealthy or influential family, Mokhtar had been able to marry in his twenties by working four sources of income—one, a post as a bank security guard inherited from his father—and already had two children. I had first met Mokhtar in 2012 when I started coming to Monoufiya regularly with Saad, but our friendship did not develop until 2015, when, at one of the dozens of weddings I attended in Saad's village, I learned that Mokhtar was responsible for stringing the elaborate installations of party lights at

most of those celebrations. I started asking him about his work, partly because I knew from reading Julia Elyachar's "Phatic Labor" (2010) about the kind of resourcefulness required of making a living in Egypt, and he invited me to visit his work at the bank and meet his colleagues there. I liked Mokhtar because, despite his good fortune, he never treated people as though they were beneath them and, blessed as he was, he didn't seem to want much more from me than my company.

By the end of my research in 2016, Mokhtar and I saw each other at least weekly, gathering with other friends in the village every weekend to make the most of the time I had left in the country. Diyaa normally made a prior request that I bring *maya,* "water," his code word for alcohol, from Cairo, and by May I had settled into the habit of bringing a couple of bottles of the sweet sparkling wine everyone agreed was the most palatable from the choices available at Drinkies. Following dinner on Thursday nights, our little *shilla* ("clique" or "crew") would gather on the roof of a villa in mid-construction in the center of the village where, after spreading out plastic mats and removing our shoes, we would smoke and drink and talk for hours. By then, the agreement I had made with Mostafa at the beginning of my research in Monoufiya—that I could ask anything if he could do the same—had developed into an ethos shared by the group. Mokhtar often treated our meetings like symposia, inviting friends who had questions for me and making sure the group never got too wild to hold a conversation.

One night, we paused our talk briefly to search for something to cover the wine bottle we had opened—Saad had been playing with the cork and had picked it to pieces. Snatching the bit of foil pulled out of a cigarette pack, Mokhtar sealed the bottle and asked me, "You don't have that, do you? *Fahlawa*? Do you know what that means?" *Fahlawa* is the Egyptian word for *bricolage*, MacGyver-ing a solution to a problem out of whatever happens to be at hand. *Fahlawa* can be heroic, like when Saad fashioned a curtain rod for his bathroom by stretching a heavy metal wire from his medicine cabinet to the window, or catastrophic, as when a pair of janitors at the Egyptian museum used superglue to fix the beard back onto Tutankhamun's mask after knocking it off in 2015. "Oh yeah," I replied to Mokhtar, "we have that. Everyone does." Clearly skeptical, he posed a question to the group: "*Al-Geish biyqolak eih*?" ("The army tells you what?"). A few of the guys giggled, but no one answered. Seeing my puzzlement, Mokhtar began to explain: This was an old joke, but it had changed. It used to be that the answer to the question was, "*Itsarraf*," meaning "deal with it" or "make do." In other words, the experience of being in the army teaches you to deal with any situation, no matter how horrible. But over time, a response to the response developed, "*Wi qo'd 'ala zobry wi ittarraf*"—"and sit on my dick and get the tip in." That's why, Mokhtar explained, in the third and latest form of the joke, there is no answer to the question—because if you answer the question of what the army tells you to do, you get fucked! My facial expression was the real punchline. Mokhtar and the guys roared, slapping their knees and my back.

In Mokhtar's lesson about *fahlawa*, what does the army tell you? Deal with it. Though this lesson echoes Mohammed's, it is ostensibly not serious. If this is a joke and not an actual command, then the punchline "*itsarraf*" implies an eyeroll or a smirk or a shrug of the shoulders, an unstated comment shared between friends who don't have to say everything. If this teaches us something about *fahlawa*, it's that "dealing with it" not only requires improvisation with the means at hand, but that when divested of every other human means, irony affords the possibility of sharing a laugh with a friend, a moment when you both recognize, but don't say, that you still

haven't been made into a beast. Laughter is a way of "dealing with it," and a good sense of humor ("*khiffat al-damm*") is a famously Egyptian trait.

The second form of the joke would seem to comment on this first lesson. The person who laughs at his own degradation has been convinced to "get the tip in." Whatever the use of this phrase in American sexual culture, in Monoufiya the kind of sexual experimentation this phrase points to does not normally involve women. Spatial boundaries between unrelated men and women are clear and widely respected, in part because punishment can be harsh. Rather, jokes about pressuring someone to put the tip in refer to sexual experimentation among adolescent boys. Most of the young men I knew would privately joke about the sexual games they had played with other guys when they were younger—but only in such a way that it was clear that they had been the one to fuck, not "get fucked." When the joke was a story, the story climaxed in intercrural sex, meaning that even the one who "got fucked" was never penetrated. Though I later learned that these encounters often involved a prior agreement to trade positions, the surface claim to never have been fucked was always made plausible in part because no penetration was actually involved.

Being a *mitnak*, a "fucked one," was a question of desire rather than position. During my time in Monoufiya, I met two men who had been singled out in pre-pubescence for sexual blackmail by dozens of older boys. At adolescence, both boys had been horrified by the creeping realization that they desired men, revealing, so they felt, their complicity in their own rapes. Though neither of these men ever had penetrative sex in their home villages, they were the designated bearers of *mitnak* among the boys of their generation. What made them "fucked" was the suspicion that they wanted it. The second generation of Mokhtar's joke, then, mocks the way the conscript comes to participate his own violation, echoing themes found in ʾAli's conscription, Saad's story, and the argument between Saad and Mohammed. In light of this confluence, we might hear the second version of Mokhtar's joke as recognition of the stakes of conscription as the primary condition of political life.

The third iteration of the joke is just the question, followed by knowing silence. The joke requires the recognition that nonspeech can respond. Here, silence is the considered response to a question that makes you into a joke; the laugh comes from knowing what the silence means. If this is a lesson about *fahlawa*, it would seem to be that non-action is the cleverest improvisation to fated violation—a lesson ratified by the abstinence of Ali's troops. Perhaps more importantly, in order for this joke to be funny, the joke requires that the audience have knowledge of its prior generations—I certainly had no idea what Mokhtar meant when he first posed the question, but it drew chuckles from our crew. Its irony emerges from a particular kind of historical awareness, the canniness necessary to avoid being violated as one has been in the past. This, it seems, is the kind of awareness that arises from Ali's conscription state, that makes conscription more than a mere past event.

In this chapter I have attempted to read Egypt's history as a means of understanding its present, paying close attention to the forms of violence that constituted the Egyptian nation-state. Despite my recourse to the philosophical work of Schmitt and Benjamin, it has also become clear, I hope, that the particularities of Mohammed ʾAli's conscription have shaped the constitution of this relationship in ways that require primary recourse to history, rather than philosophy, to understand. At the same time, this history does not determine Egypt's present any more than Ali's conscription necessitated submission. As Benjamin argues in his "Theses on

the Philosophy of History," historical continuity serves power as it is already constituted, making a history of continuities "the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate." Rather than indulging in an "empathy with the victor" which "invariably benefits the rulers" (256), the historian must discover a way to stop "telling the sequence of events like beads of a rosary" (263). Instead, s/he must "grasp the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one," positing every historical relation "posthumously" rather than identifying it as inhering in the original event. Finally, it is only by recording the interruptions of power—moments of abstinence, silence, and refusal—that the historian can resist the imperative to represent the past as fate. In excavating this particular version of Egyptian history, then, my hope is not to essentialize the relationship between Egypt's rulers and ruled, nor to represent this relationship as unchanging or as rooted in some ahistorical cultural tendency. Rather, this is a history I learned from Egyptians, scholars and peasants alike, as they struggled to articulate their own place within a state that continues to prey upon them. By putting their lessons into my words, perhaps we begin to loosen the rosary beads from their string.

Chapter 3

Gadaʾ: Love, Generosity, and Becoming a Good Man

I had thought we were headed to a wedding near Minouf when Abdo veered off the main road toward the closest town neighboring Saad's village of Salamant. Though more genuinely kind than his best friend, Mostafa, Abdo was also more likely to smile cryptically in response to my questions than to answer them; characteristically, he didn't bother to explain why were taking a detour, telling me only that we had to go do something in Nuqbas. The small caravan of other motorcycles from our village turned with us onto the dirt road—apparently, the others in our crew knew where we were going. It was my first time in Nuqbas, though I had been hearing about the place for years: Nuqbas was a majority Christian village, and Saad told me that Muslim boys from Salamant would visit after school to see women walking around with their hair visible; rumor had it that the Christians of Nuqbas had sex in church; and though its townspeople were rich, they were also known to be terribly stingy; still, guys from there always married the most beautiful women.

From what I could tell, Nuqbas didn't look much different from Salamant, except maybe in that its houses were a more likely to have multiple stories. After zipping through a small maze of alleyways, we came to a stop outside a large and rather stately mosque, where the dozen or so of us disembarked and entered a basement apartment adjoined to the back. The room was furnished with the smell of must and a bed, the latter opposite which we gathered, sitting on the floor against the wall. A group of boys from Nuqbas took their places sitting on the bed. Hamdy stepped forward from our group with his brother Yaseen.

Hamdy wanted to apologize on behalf of his brother: Whatever insults had passed between Yaseen and one of the boys from Nuqbas seated in front of us, they weren't worth a fight breaking out between the two towns. *Yaseen is high-strung (*ʾasabi*)*, Hamdy explained, *and he doesn't really know when to keep his mouth shut*—this last comment pointed in part at Yaseen, who had just tried to interrupt. *We all remember what had happened when Abdo made a problem a couple months ago*—Abdo smirked and caught my eye—*and none of us wants that to happen again.*

An older brother of Yaseen's antagonist took the lead in responding to Hamdy. His younger brother was perfectly within his rights to respond to Yaseen's insults—*sure*, interrupted Hamdy. And the folks from Nuqbas would want some assurance that this wouldn't happen again. *Look, my brother acts like an idiot (*biyistʾabat*),* replied Hamdy, *but I'm not going to let him do this again.* The group from Nuqbas did not accept these assurances immediately, and they pushed Hamdy to repeat himself until it was clear that he accepted responsibility for his brother's behavior. When the elder boys were satisfied that they understood each other, Hamdy pulled Yaseen to his feet and made him shake the hands of his foe from Nuqbas—which he did reluctantly and without much sincerity. This act of reconciliation accomplished, we all filed out of the apartment. We visitors from Salamant returned to our motorcycles and to the road.

When we arrived at the wedding hall near Minuf, Saad explained that I had just witnessed an *qaʾdat al-ʾarab*, literally a "seating of the Arabs," in practice a form of arbitration that Egyptians associate with people who live in the desert. In the legal structure of Egypt, *qaʾdaat al-ʾarab* are recognized as *ʾorf*, "custom," and are legitimate substitutions for the operation of state institutions like police and courts. Though ideally registered at a police station, in practice they gain their force through the sanction of family and neighbors.

When there are problems in the village, as Saad had explained after our meeting in the mosque, *it's better that we solve them ourselves rather than go to the police*. *Most of the time it's the elders (*an-nas al-kabira*) who come together to deal with things, but Hamdy wanted to take care of Yaseen's problem before someone got hurt.* I remembered Hamdy's reference to Abdo's "problem" (*mushkila*): Abdo had gotten into a fight with someone in Nuqbas a couple months back over a hash deal gone bad and had stabbed the guy in front of a handful of witnesses at an outdoor café. He had gone into hiding in Cairo for a few months while his father negotiated a blood payment to the family of Abdo's victim. Once the money was paid, all charges were dropped and Abdo had reappeared in the village.

It wasn't that Hamdy and Yaseen's family didn't have the wealth to pay such a debt—ʾAmm Fathy dressed like a *fellah* but worked in a bank in Shabin al-Kom. Rather, Hamdy's family had an acute sense of the other costs of these kinds of conflicts. Almost a century prior, Saad's great-grandfather and Hamdy's had gotten into a fight, and Hamdy's ancestor had lost an eye. Being a peasant, Saad's progenitor had had little wealth with which to recompense Hamdy's—except for his farmland. As the outcome of an *qaʾdit al-ʿarab*, Saad's great-grandfather had given up title to a small but productive tract of land, real treasure in a part of Egypt where wealth continues to be measured in land rights, and this transfer of wealth had led to real consequences for the descendants of these two men. Hamdy's father and Saad's were of the same generation, but with vastly different life trajectories: ʾAmm Fathy had been able to get an education, while ʾAmm Ahmad had not. When ʾAmm Fathy began work at the bank, ʾAmm Ahmad made his living building mudbrick houses. ʾAmm Fathy's children rarely wanted for anything, while Saad's mother had to resort to feeding her children *sadd al- hanaq* (literally "the dam of the palate"), or a paste of flour and water, when money ran short. Saad's mother even had to work as a cleaning lady for wealthy neighbors, while Hamdy and Yaseen's had the luxury—and propriety—of staying at home. Thus, teaching Yaseen some common sense and the ability to keep his temper in check represented an important act of care for Hamdy and Yaseen's family as a whole, but it was also a kind of education for the young man—that is, an attempt to build him into a person capable of having a good life rather than a ruined one.

It was not a coincidence that the form of mediation used by Hamdy was called a "seating of Arabs." Though they spoke Arabic, Egyptian *fellahin* distinguished themselves from Arabs in as much as they were farmers; when using "Arab" to refer to other Egyptians, my interlocutors meant Bedouins, unsettled people who lived in tribes in the desert. Though nomadic people only make up about one to two percent of Egypt's total population, tribal forms like the *qaʾdat al-ʾarab* inspire efforts to realize the ethical and political virtues Egyptians and other Arabic speakers associate with the people of the desert. As I pointed out in the first chapter, one use of the word "*wasta*" refers precisely to this tribal imaginary, in which the *wasta* is a non-violent mediator between warring factions.

An earlier generation of anthropologists earned their scholarly prestige by theorizing this mode of political organization as an exception to the Western conception of the state. According to a tradition of political thinking that stretches from Hobbes to Weber, the organization we call the "state" depends on the transfer of the individual right to violence to a sovereign, who then must wield that right in defense of the collective against enemies foreign and domestic. Hobbes famously characterizes the state of nature prior to incorporation as a "warre of all against all," but the "stateless states" described by Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, and Gellner in the 1940s and 50s seemed to require no sovereign to prevent their descent into civil war as a way of life. In this "segmentary model" of tribal politics, individual male members of tribes retained the right to take vengeance on fellow tribesmen, and religious authorities mediated the settlement of conflict by payment of a bloodprice. As Talal Asad showed in "Two European Images of Non-European Rule" (1973), these accounts tended to depict tribal systems as essentially timeless and unaffected colonial rule, even in cases where imperial regimes had used force to absorb tribal political structures in metropolitan systems of power. By the late-70s, Gellner's emphasis had shifted from the mediatory power of holy men to the loyalties owed to fellow tribesmen, to "the support in feud or at the collective oath." For Gellner, patron-client relationships were the illicit manifestation of tribal kin loyalties in modern bureaucratic institutions.

Though Doughan rightly criticizes these earlier attempts at thinking about politics in the Middle East for their lack of attention to the actual historical policies of states attempting to absorb tribal people into nations, I argue that these theories were also undermined by assumptions about the nature of kinship that pervaded anthropology at the time (Schneider 1984; Carsten 2004). On the one hand, the models described above privileged blood over affinity, depicting the "fictive" kinship often mobilized in modern petitions for *wasta* as both derivative and illegitimate. On the other, the overemphasis on structural roles made it possible for ethnographers to miss new affects invested in traditional forms (Carsten), like concern for the nuclear family worked out through a *wasta*. Characteristically, Meyer Fortes understood the "amity" expressed in kinship to be *axiomatic*, something that could be assumed (2006). Against the "segmentary" theory of *wasta*—one that emphasizes the traditionality of tribal kinship to explain corruption in modern Arab states—I take a more processual view of kinship. Just as the forms and affects of kinship can be transformed by acts of state violence and incorporation (as in Chapter 2), they can also created and maintained through acts of elective affinity. This is crucial for an account of the ethics of *wasta*, in as much as it is the idiom of kinship that makes doing a favor into an act of care and not of self-interest.

Indeed, I argue, it was though rituals of affinity like marriage and *wasta* that young men became good men. As Farha Ghannam points out in her excellent ethnography of masculine embodiment in Zawiya al-Hamra in Cairo, masculinity is a "collective project" that mobilizes the resources, care, and ingenuity of Egyptian men and women alike, through practices of childrearing and circumcision, romance and marriage, or calculated and productive acts of violence (2013). The cultivation of generosity is one of the most important vectors for the production of proper Egyptian masculinity, and though Arab generosity is certainly one cultural resource that makes this possible, the quality of being "*gadaʾ*" performed a much stronger role among the young men I studied.

Gadʾana, the noun form of this beloved Egyptian concept, is difficult to translate into English, though the "being a good man" comes close. To be *gadaʾ* is to look out for others without

expecting anything in return, and is a virtue related to being gregarious—literally "herd-like," *ʾashari*. To call someone *gadaʾ* can be a compliment of high order, or it can be an exhortation to behave in a manner that is responsible to others. Newcomers to Egypt are likeliest to hear the word first in the metro, as passengers trying to board crowded trains appeal to the good natures of anonymous fellow citizens: squeeze in and make more room for folks still on the platform. *Gadʾana* is like common courtesy; it's a virtue that should be common to all. Neither legal nor religious, *gadʾana* is nonetheless visible in voluntary institutions like *ʾadaat al-ʾarab*. As the best way for being with others, *gadʾana* is a way of realizing a good life.

Defined in this way, *gadʾana* would seem quite opposed to the ethic of giving involved in nepotism: where *gadʾana* demands a kind of generalized altruism, *wasta* operates through preferential treatment; *gadʾana* could be described in terms of a duty to behave as one would always wish others to act, while *wasta* (translatable as "means") would seem to realize a particular, self-interested end. In what follows, I argue that, in practice, being *gadaʾ* is not so simple or categorical as it might seem, and neither is *wasta* easily identifiable with corrupt intent. Using marriage and family as fields of play for both concepts, I hope to show how each begins to slip into the other. Drawing these opposites together, we find a common obligation to give without expectation of reciprocity.

Let me give an example of what I mean by the slippage between *gadʾana* and *wasta.* During the year I worked as an English and SAT tutor in Cairo, one of my brightest students responded to a Stanford admissions essay prompt—"Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you"—by expositing the concept of *gadʾana*. On a hiking trip in France, Musa and his comrades were beset by foul weather for most of six days. When one night the rain stopped, he and his tent mate set their boots next to the remains of the campfire before they went to sleep, hoping they would find their footwear drier by morning. As luck would have it, rain started up again in the night, waking Musa and prompting him to run out into the wet field to retrieve both sets of boots. When his tent mate woke the next morning to find the boots just inside the tent, now dry, he exclaimed, "*Ya-bn il-lazina! Ya gadaʾ*"—Son of a gun! Oh you *gadaʾ*!

When I met up with Musa after three years of college in the US, he told me the lack of *gadʾana* was the aspect of life there he'd had the hardest time adjusting to. After being disappointed by American friends too many times, he realized the importance of keeping Arab friends close so he could rely on them in times of need, recounting the story of a Yemeni classmate who picked him up in the middle of the night when his car broke down. In this story, Musa's friend clearly understood himself to be obliged to give without reciprocity in a way that qualifies as *gadʾana*. At the same time, it's also clear that *gadʾana* could be expected from Americans, but that other Arabs performed a similar generosity. Moreover, this *gadʾana* it requires a certain level of intimacy to be dependable, and that Musa strategically cultivated certain relationships to remain eligible for its boon. In other words, one is most *gadaʾ* with the person to whom one is closest.

Conversely, those with whom one is most *gadaʾ* become like family. As I recounted in the previous chapter, Diyaa and Mostafa were two friends in the village who shared nearly everything, to the point of not asking permission to borrow the other's things. They described this relationship as *ʿakhawiya*, or brotherhood, or having *gib wahid*, one pocket, an alternation that underlines the close association of family and property also captured in the ancient Mediterranean concepts of *oikos*—meaning "home" in Greek, and the root of "economy"—and

of *familia*—referring in Latin to a shared estate rather than a collective of kin relations. But in point of fact, Diyaa and Mostafa shared more than things. When Mostafa's father razed his house in order to build a new, glamorous multi-story building in its place—complete with street level store fronts available for rent to neighbors—Diyaa served, unpaid, as one of the project's daily laborers. This arrangement irritated Diyaa''s father to no end, who had become embittered and withdrawn after a lifetime of unpaid labor for friends, labor that had left him poor and his body broken. Against his father's wishes, Diyaa attended the needs of construction without question or contract.

In another configuration of the same elements, Saad collected an anecdote from his experiences after my fieldwork to show me how failure to abide by the norms of *gadʾana* could mobilize exhortations to behave like family. In the years after I left Egypt, Saad ensconced himself in the community of expatriate journalists, artists, and students I had introduced to him while there, often living with foreigners, including women, and accustoming himself to the social norms of being a *roommate*[18]. After finishing his military service, he found himself an apartment near downtown and, on a whim, invited one of his neighbors from the village to stay with him as Saad worked and the neighbor took classes for his bachelor's degree in law. At this point in the habit of drinking alcohol and boasting a handful of tattoos, Saad craved the privacy he had come to associate with living with foreigners. When Hamed moved in, Saad tried to explain the concept to him: *kull wahid fi halu*, everyone in his own situation. Though I often heard this phrase as a denunciation of the individualism and alienation of Western life, Saad used the saying to spell out the living situation he wanted; you do what you need to do, and I'll do the same. Hamed seemed a bit flustered at first, but ended the conversation smiling and even a bit excited. Still, it soon became clear that he hadn't grasped what Saad had been trying to convey. Within his first week in the apartment, Hamed cooked a big meal and knocked on Saad's door to invite him to eat. Saad, getting ready to go out, refused. Hamed insisted in the familiar way, pushing Saad to sit down and eat. *You don't have to do that*, Saad replied. *Kull wahid fi halu, remember?* Hamed flushed, exclaiming, "*Eih ya ʾAmm Saad, ihna ikhwat! Mayinfa'sh illy inta bitʾamilu dah!*" "What, Uncle Saad, we're brothers! What you're doing is no good!" Confronted with the refusal of a free gift, Hamed exhorted Saad to participate in the basic social ethic of giving without reciprocity (and receiving without refusal) by interpellating him as a member of his family. Saad's privacy was not *gadaʾ*.

In as much as marriage represents the social institution *par excellence* for the fabrication of family, it also serves as a singular field in which to observe giving without reciprocation. Of course, it is not unusual for an anthropologist to assert that marriage and economy are intimately entwined. Levi-Strauss famously theorizes marriage itself as a form of gift exchange—the trading of a bride between a father and a groom—one whose purpose he identifies in making alliances between clans. Marriages, as we know, can be used to forge political alliances and transfer wealth. Potter and Potter (1990), in the context of revolutionary China, cautioned that an analytic of marriage based on love is likely to deceive, given the temporally recent and geographically parochial nature of romantic marriage. To me, it seems short-sighted to exclude love from the analysis of marriage even if we recognize that romance does not always obtain. Love has many

[18] I italicize these words in English to denote the fact that Saad used these English concepts to stage and interpret his story.

names and many forms: in Egyptian Arabic, *hubb* is supplemented by words like *mahabba*, affection, *ʾishq*, adoration, and *widd*, constancy. Among other things, marriage involves the creation of intimacy, a closeness that renders another person into a part of one's own life. In other words, to imagine the economic force of marriage purely in terms of means to ends is to ignore the ways that intimacy instantiates affect and instrumentality all at once.

In the spring of 2012, I witnessed for the first time the way that marriage can orchestrate generosity in complex. Saad invited me and a group of his friends from Cairo to Monoufiya for his brother's wedding. I suspect his sell sounded different for his Cairene friends, who were all young Egyptian men of various lower- to middle- class backgrounds, but to me he said, "You have to come. It's going to be great for your research. You've never seen anything like it." How could I say no?

Late afternoon on the day of the wedding, I met with his friends near the pedestrian tunnel passing under Magles al-Madina road to the Shubra al-Kheima metro station. These were days when my Arabic was not good enough to understand conversations not directed at me, but I could tell the guys were having trouble finding a minibus for us to take to Monoufiya. I told Bebo, whom I had met before, that I normally got on over by the city council building, but no one in their right mind was about to take my advice about directions. After half an hour of bickering and running after minibuses, Bebo found a bus going to al-Bagour, close to Saad's family home. Saad would come from the wedding to meet us there and arrange transport.

Except when we arrived as last light left, Saad wasn't in al-Bagour. In those days before the bus station outside of town, every minibus trip started and ended in the tumult under the town's central bridge. One of our party called Saad, who told us that he had just mustered transport and was on his way, so we grabbed tables at the large, open-air café in front of the bus stop and waited. After most of an hour, Saad rolled up with a handful of his neighbors on motorcycles. We clambered onto bikes and—no helmets—held on tight.

We travelled for what felt like a long time, going down backroads the likes of which I have rarely seen since. Normally, along the main roads in Monoufiya, villages grow together, indistinguishable except to people who know the landmarks. Off the main roads, people still live by main thoroughfares, and most of the farmland is set deeper into the land, behind the houses. That night we went down miles of paved roads lined dense corn, fewer and fewer houses the farther we got out. When at last we could see the light of the party pushing into the sky at our horizon, we pulled onto a dirt road, then followed a driveway past a small cluster of houses. I couldn't quite see the source of the light and sound from where we got off, but Saad did not take us to it, instead escorting us through the crowd milling in the driveway into a small tent to the side of one house. Before we could go into the party, we had to eat, which we did, hungry or not, standing around a tall table quickly being replenished with rice, meat, bread, and different salads.

When we were all done, Saad led us to a cleared field, covered by dozens of plastic mats on which hundreds of people sat, mostly men. At the edge of the field, Saad directed us to a line of men standing—the groom's male relatives—whom we quickly greeted. Then he ushered us to the mouth of an enormous tent, closed on three sides by fabric and strings of light, and open on top. At the back of the tent stood two stages, the left occupied by a dozen-strong band playing

shaʾbi music,[19] the right by a glittering white throne occupied by two sets of newlyweds. The music was so loud I could feel it on my skin and in my bones. At the threshold of the tent as we passed, a man began shooting a semi-automatic rifle, piercing through the music and making us jump.

By the time that we arrived at our reserved table, Saad had already spoken to a couple of busboys, who disappeared and returned trays of soda and fruit. Saad took orders for shisha and beer and zipped out of the tent. Then two of Saad's neighbors, Ibrahim and Mostafa, started to giggle. I looked at them and they pointed at an old man in a *gallabiya*, who took note of our crew and walked towards us. From his woven tote, the man produced a stalk of dried cannabis (*bango*) larger than my forearm and placed it on the table, then shuffled off with his party favors in search of other guests. Ibrahim and Mostafa, apparently experienced at this sort of thing, set to work breaking leafy parts of the branch down into a coarse powder. Some of this they distributed to guests to sprinkle on their shisha tobacco; the rest, they decided to roll into a single joint. It was going to require lots of papers, so they requested some from one of the young busboys, who brought some promptly.

As Ibrahim and Mostafa worked on the delicate job of gluing multiple rolling papers into one sheet, a man with a camera on his shoulder approached the table and took a slow tour of our faces, which simultaneously appeared in one quarter of each of the half-dozen television screens hung on huge poles spaced at even intervals throughout the tent. I pretended I didn't know what was going on behind me at the table. The top right quarter of the screen grew big until it took over the whole screen, which now (mercifully) showed the couples dancing with their families on stage.

There was so much to see, and always doubled by the screen. A horse festooned with spangles pranced to the beat of the song, moving up and down the main aisle, pulling dancers out of their seats each time it pushed back to the left side of the stage. There, a crowd of men and boys would part, all dancing, the boys bouncing from heel to heel in time with the horse's step. To the right, a large area had been cordoned off with fabric for women and their children. I knew Saad's sisters wasn't there at the moment because I could see Israa and Fatima dancing with their brother Abdallah on the screens in front of us.

Soon the MC stopped singing, and his band entered a kind of musical holding pattern, playing the same short set of notes without fully achieving melody. A man about my age stood next to the MC—close enough to bump shoulders—whispered in the MC's ear, and began to drop cash from his hands. The MC erupted into a litany of names—all men—blessing them and extemporizing praise. A small crowd of children fought to catch the bills as they fluttered to the ground. As the children delivered the cash to a table at the middle of the stage, one of the videographers captured the mountain of growing money, beaming it to the screens stationed throughout the tent.

I immediately recognized this last act—called *nuqta*, I found out—as a potlach of the kind described by Mauss. As such, I was inclined to interpret *nuqta* as a display—more precisely, creation—of power. The young men literally threw away money in honor of their friend, the groom, but did so in the name of the important men of the families assembled. The act of blessing

[19] A la Abd el-Basset, not Oka and Ortega, though most of the weddings I attended featured a DJ playing the newer style of *shaʾbi* music.

al-nas al-kabira (the "important people") with money suggests their involvement in the making the marriage at hand possible. Indeed, the kind of person who emerges from marriage is precisely someone who can be *nas kabira*: that is to say, a married man. After marriage, a man finally owns a home where he has the right to organize its economy by his own rules. He goes from being family to having family. As Bataille argues, "sacrifice restores to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded, rendered profane. Servile use has made a *thing* (an *object*) of that which, in a deep sense, is of the same nature as the subject" (58). In other words, a sacrifice works by severing a person from a thing in order to reduce the thing-liness of the person. In this case, the sacrifice is for the groom—it is he who is made a person—but in the name of married men—by their power. Money is the medium by which this transformation takes place.

What I did not know at the time was that the *noqta* had been organized according to the rule of debt as well as the free gift. The field itself, and the adjoining house, were owned by the father of one of the grooms and one of the brides. Ailing, the father wanted to see his oldest children married. The groom enlisted his best friend and business partner (Saad's brother) to marry his sister and gathered his friend group into a *gamaʾiya* in which each owed 10,000 LE in *noqta* on the occasion of any member's marriage. I learned that most couples kept ledgers of the *noqta* extended to them at their weddings, with the expectation that they would need to reciprocate to an equal degree. What had at first appeared as a festival of free giving turned out to be governed by rules of reciprocity—indeed, quite specific rules of repayment based on written records.

And yet, it was necessary that these gifts should seem free, that debt remain obscure. The difference matters because it affects the nature of the *force* mobilized in the act of giving: the obligation to give, here, arises from family ties and friendship rather than (only) a feeling of debt; the *gamaʾiya* was mobilized among friends, not strangers. The obligation to repay this particular debt emerges not from a demand to be fair so much as to be loyal. In other words, the ethic of the free gift need not only conceal debt, but, motivated by intimacy, can secure it. At the same time, this festival of giving, in its excess, creates relationships that make more giving possible. Crucially, marriage is often the only way that a family like Saad's—that is, one bereft of wealth and power—can gain access to *wasta*, and families in marriage negotiations tally the positions held by their counterparts among the resources brought to bear in affecting desirability of the compact.

It wasn't until I moved to Monoufiya at the end of August 2013 that I realized how much social life in the village revolved around weddings. Earlier in the summer, when I had stayed with Saad's family during the Tamarod protests and the subsequent coup, the collective attention of the nation had focused on political events, and so had mine. Ramadan started shortly afterwards, putting a hold on engagement parties, weddings, and prestations of trousseaus for the month. Though festivities started up as soon as Eid al-Fitr ended on August 10th, on August 14th the new regime—led by Monoufis ʾAdly Mansour and Abdel Fatah al-Sisi—massacred over 1000 anti-coup protestors in Rabaa Adaweya Square in Cairo. Weddings were hardly the first thing on my mind even as they carried on at a furious pace in the village.

And so it was with some surprise and gratification that I accepted Diyaa's invitation to the wedding of an acquaintance the night I moved into my new apartment overlooking the main road of the village. Diyaa and his friends extended the invitation over a heap of beef liver sandwiches as we sat on the floor eating midst the boxes they had just helped me carry to the fourth floor.

When we finished eating, Diyaa insisted I smoke a cigarette with him, and, as soon as we finished, he hurried back downstairs for a shower and a change of clothes at his father's house. By dusk he returned to collect me.

In this way he initiated me to a new pattern of life, a rhythm that would carry on as long as I lived in the village. In the mornings I would read or write, waiting for Saad or Diyaa to wake up and call me some time after noon. They would come to my apartment with an ever-expanding rotation of friends who wanted to meet me, and I would give English lessons, shoot the shit, and strategize with them on how to get my landlord to fulfill his promises of furniture for my still nearly empty apartment. By the time daylight ebbed, Diyaa or Saad or one of the guys would begin coordinating the small envoy of motorcycles needed to ferry us out to whichever field or hall or alleyway would be hosting festivities that night.

For Diyaa, attending weddings was nearly a vocation: being at home meant bearing a constant, quiet stream of reproach and advice from his father, whom he found any excuse to avoid. On nights when there were no weddings, Diyaa would be forced to come home to eat dinner, an opportunity for harassment his father seized dutifully, if not with a modicum of pleasure. Like many other young men in the village, Diyaa struggled to find meaningful employment, which meant prospects for marriage were accordingly remote. Why didn't Diyaa use the *sandouq*, or flatbed-mounted motorcycle, that his sisters had gotten him to rustle up business in transportation?, his father would ask, to which Diyaa would respond by sitting silently, staring at the wall, and eating as fast as he could. On nights when there was a wedding or a henna, Diyaa could often expect to eat at the celebration, freeing him from listening to his father's complaints. Diyaa attended as many such parties as he could.

And there were plenty to attend. The word "party" inaccurately translates the word *farah*, as does "wedding." When I first came to the village, I found the word confusing because it was the preferred term for what I understood by "wedding": a celebration just prior to the sexual consummation of a legal and religious marriage. In fact, synonymous with "joy," a *farah* could be any number of different celebrations and ceremonies leading up to sexual consummation: though not required, many families would throw an extravagant *farah khatouba* on the occasion of an engagement; if the engagement continued progress toward marriage, a groom would buy a set of gold jewelry for his bride, which entailed a *farah shabka* in the street in front of the jewelry store; after recording all goods each party would contribute to the new household (*katb al-qayma*, "the writing of the list"), the bride and her family would load up a truck full of furniture and appliances, and her community would celebrate a *farah ʾazaal* by dancing in procession in front of the truck on the way to the connubial home; though the solemn ceremony registering legal marriage, *katb al-kitab*, technically sanctions sexual consummation, in practice sex is delayed until after *farah al-hinna*, the henna celebration thrown by the family of the bride, and *farah al-dokhla*, the celebration of "entrance," thrown by the family of the groom; the night of the *dokhla*, the bride's mother and her friends wait outside the newlywed's home for the blood on the bedsheet that proves the virginity of the bride, celebrating *al-ʾard*, "display," by ululating and dancing in the street; the morning after, bride and groom host their families for breakfast at the *sabahiya*, thus inaugurating their *shahr al-qamar*, "moon month" or honeymoon. Many of these events stage acts of exchange or giving, with gifts between bride and groom often mirrored by a giving in excess to the community in attendance. This complex of events defines what might be called a "marriage economy," a system of exchanges that structures the possibilities of life for

those who participate in it. As many scholars of Egypt have noted, the burden of this expenditure can be crippling for poor and rich alike, and the high cost of marriage often results in prolonged bachelorhood for poorer men, adding sexual frustration to the feeling of being choked by poverty. Still, it would be absurd to reduce marriage to an economic logic of reciprocity, as the word *farah* itself emphasizes: the *telos* of joy is not profit.

My interlocutors in Monoufiya consistently invoked the language of love in explaining their motivations for generosity. As Mostafa was fond of saying, "*kollo bi-l-hobb*," "Everything with love'; and with almost absurd frequency, "*hobb fi-l-hobb*," an ambiguous phrase that could mean "Love times love" or "Love in love" or, if I were aiming for a more natural English expression, "Love on top of love." Diyaa used the same phrase to explain his loyalty to Mustafa. The more Bedouin virtue of *karama*, dignity, rarely came up in our conversations, even though it was an important feature of revolutionary discourse against the Mubarak and SCAF regimes. In the context of contemporary Jordan, Doughan argues the use of tribal kinship models to interpret phenomena like *wasta* involves a historical mistake, the use of premodern social structures to explain the present without regard for the ways that colonial and postcolonial state forces reformed the very conditions of social and political life. I agree with this assessment; as I argued in Chapter 2, the advent of mass conscription in early 19th-century Egypt profoundly changed the possibilities of family life to the point that it marked the family sphere as a space of legal exceptionality for rulers and ruled alike. Given the eventual refusal of peasant conscripts to marry under Mohammed Ali, it is not surprising that 19th- and 20th-century Egyptians spilled so much ink diagnosing a perennially returning "marriage crisis." Moreover, the nation Mohammed Ali enfolded into the structures of the state was predominantly composed of peasants, not Bedouin, for whom the structures of kinship were more closely tied to the inheritance and accumulation of property.

Indeed, though the Monoufis I knew used social forms derived from images of tribal life, the ideals they invoked in these contexts were more closely linked to an intimate register of kinship. As one elder of Saad's village explained to me during my return visit in 2018, the *qaʾdat al-ʾarab* depends on *mahabba*, affection. *When you are an old man and you are called on to join an* qaʾdat al-ʾarab, he explained, *these are people you know, these are your neighbors. Half the time you've known them since they were little kids running around in the street. Even if would be fair, you can't bring yourself to do anything that would hurt them. That's why the* qaʾdaat al-ʾarab *are better than the courts, because their basis is affection* (asas-ha al-mahabba).

I want to draw attention to the ethical nature of the kind of care expressed through this type of elective affinity (Goethe 1963), affection that is acquired on the basis of closeness and exchange. When a person acts out of this kind of kinning care—as in *wasta*, *nuqta*, or fictive*'akhawiya*—it is be a grave misapprehension to interpret these acts primarily in terms of self-interest. Even if there is not something eudemonic, in the proper Aristotelean sense, about this form of substantive reason, there is nonetheless an entelechy that shapes the paths of its logic.

In the last month before I moved back to the US permanently, I spent as much time in Monoufiya as I could, hoping that any remaining puzzles would confess their secrets if I doted on them, remained attentive, and waited. "The field" was less obliging than I'd hoped, and anyway it turned out not to be so far from California in the age of Facebook. Nonetheless, I did witness a fight that served as bitter coda to my observations on the theme of family, one which both

illuminates the indeterminacies I've spent this chapter trying to reveal and which points to the themes of transgression and right that will preoccupy the next two chapters, respectively. I offer this story by way of conclusion.

On a Friday night about two weeks before my departure, I arrived in the village and found the usual group of young men gathered in front of ʾAmm Ahmed's small shop, smoking cigarettes, eating seeds, and shooting the shit. Yaseen was bragging about the fight he'd just won. A school kid from down along the irrigation canal had been talking to his sister on Facebook, an offense so wounding Yaseen's sense of propriety that he and his best friend grabbed a knife and set out looking for the offender. When they found the kid, Yaseen had attacked, opening a large gash in the offender's arm. Still puffed up by adrenaline, he rehearsed the moments of the encounter, clearly proud. Though I knew most in the village would consider this kind of revenge for the innocence of a sister within one's right—*haqq,* the subject of Chapter 5—after Yaseen wandered off, the other guys gathered confirmed my suspicions that Yaseen's attack would not be well-received. According to them, ʾAmm Fathy was livid.

The next morning, before Friday prayer, the sound of yelling drew the neighborhood out into the street. Hamdy was screaming at his brother: Yaseen had no right to act on behalf of the family. This isn't how things are done. Why didn't he just leave it to his brother? Yaseen roared back that it was his right, his right, his right. The brothers lunged at each other, grappled, rocked and jerked as force met with force. Hamdy tore his brother's shirt at the sleeve, exposing his chest and scratching his skin where the fabric fell away. By now Yaseen's chant had changed into a sob: you have no right, you have no right, you have no right. Hamdy turned his back on his brother in disgust and stormed back into his apartment.

Hoping to spare him the embarrassment of staying in the street in his state, Saad and I collected Yaseen and brought him into Saad's house. One of Saad's sisters got Yaseen a glass of water. He continued to talk, almost automatically, repeating phrases and trying to explain himself as Saad and I listened quietly. *Who does he think he is? Everyone knows he's a joke*. Speaking of his brother, Yaseen didn't have the heart to repeat the gossip that had been circulating in the village. Hamdy had gotten married about six months before, but he hadn't managed to save any of the money for marriage on his own—ʾAmm Fathy had paid for everything. Now that he was married, Hamdy still didn't make enough money on his own to care for his wife. What's more, she still wasn't pregnant. Supposedly, Hamdy couldn't get it up. Yaseen held back these stories, but his point was clear. Who was Hamdy to tell him what to do? Sure, he'd gotten married, but he was no big man.

This rupture between Hamdy and Yassen serves to turn our attention from the ways kinship motivates forms of generosity to ways kinship motivates eruptions of violence. Hamdy's failure to assume the responsibilities associated with marriage, especially his failure to provide, had unsettled the hierarchy between him and his brother and undermined his efforts to control the passions of his brother. The judgment of the community soon became clear: Yaseen had become *sayʾ*, a good-for-nothing hustler.

Chapter 4

Hustler and Thug: Family Right and the Limits of the Political

That the Egyptian revolution of 2011 ultimately failed to constitute a new political order is almost unanimously accepted by its observers—though not always by the propagandists of the current regime. In the years when this outcome was still in doubt, between 2011 and 2013, the Egyptian press and various governmental leaders warned about the pernicious deeds of various bad actors seeking to undermine the revolution: *feloul*, or "remnants" of the old regime; *al-dawla al-ʿamiqa*, or "the deep state"; and *al-ʿayadi al-khafiya*, or "hidden" or "invisible hands." In chapter Chapter 2, I explored the metonymy between *feloul* and people from the governorate of Monoufiya in the Egyptian popular imagination of revolution. I argued that the 50-year history of rule by Monoufis (Presidents Sadat, Mubarak, Mansour, and al-Sisi all hail from Monoufiya, directly or indirectly) has associated the province with a variety of corrupt favor exchange, known in Egypt as *wasta*, that implicated its residents in a politics of giving that brought them into intimate relation to the state. In this chapter, I turn my attention to other counterrevolutionary forces that served as the focus of anxieties about the fate of the 2011 revolution, inquiring whether these do not share a similar structure.

As other commentators have pointed out, the figure of the "hidden hands" offered authorities a way to refer to the forces behind the *baltagiya*—"thugs" who haunted nearly every protest from 3 February, 2011 until the end of the Morsi presidency—without naming or accusing them. Though the mystery surrounding the hidden hands enabled politicians of different stripes to insinuate that Egypt was under attack by foreign powers, in fact, organized thugs first appeared at protests in Egypt with identifiable members of the Mubarak regime. The "hidden hands" were, in other words, a euphemism for elites capable of bribing the poor into becoming agents of counterrevolution; the term was a way of disavowing these forces without being expected to stop them. The "deep state," by contrast, is a concept now familiar to Americans in the context of investigation of alleged wrongdoing by President Trump, though it was coined to describe the resistance of conservative office holders in the Turkish bureaucracy to various democractic movements in Turkish politics. The concept of the "deep state," in other words, points to the specific undemocratic or counterrevolutionary politics of elites holding positions within government bureaucracy. In revolutionary Egypt, the army was perhaps the ideal target for this epithet, in as much as it controlled vast swaths of the Egyptian economy through undisclosed industrial investments, but the term also enjoyed political salience during the constitutional struggle that played out between the Morsi administration and the judiciary in 2012-2013.

Both of these terms, however, index elite interests in counterrevolution without illuminating the counterrevolutionary motives of the socially dispossessed, like the *baltagiya.* In this chapter, I try to show that the powerful forces of counterrevolution in Egypt after 2011 cannot be reduced to elite machinations. Rather, I argue that the "depths" of the Egyptian deep

state can be better plumbed in the strategies of survival employed by non-elites like the rural, underemployed young men with whom I conducted my field work in Monoufiya. I analyze illegal and extralegal acts that undermined the anti-corruption values of the 2011 revolution, pointing to the way they manifest an extralegal conception of *haqq*, a polysemic word meaning variously "right" or "truth" or "justice" (Esmeir 26).

The illegitimate politics of the poor

In *On Revolution* (2006), Hannah Arendt laments the intrusion of necessity into the sphere of revolution, "when the poor, driven by the needs of their bodies, burst on to the scene of the French Revolution" (49). This intrusion, she argues, is caused by "the existence of poverty":

> Poverty is more than deprivation, it is a state of constant want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force; poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies, that is, under the absolute dictate of necessity as their most intimate experience and outside all speculations. (50)

Poverty, for Arendt, is an irresistible, natural force akin to gravity. It subjects human beings to necessity and thereby robs them of their freedom. Reduced to the needs of their bodies and thereby divested of agency, humans become inhuman. It is for this reason that she represents the demands of the *sans culottes* as contaminants to the French Revolution, dooming it to failure in a dictatorship of the hungry. The proper aim of revolution is freedom, not equality, and any revolution that promises equality does not deserve the name.

In *The Communist Manifesto* (1978), Marx and Engels offer an account of a different revolution—a revolution to come in the name of equality—but are also dismissive of the miserable classes. In the midst of a thorough accounting of the revolutionary potential of each class, Marx and Engels spares a short paragraph to describe the position of the desperately poor: "The 'dangerous class,' the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the bribed tool of reactionary intrigue" (482). "Passively" is the word that connects this short characterization to the rest of Marx and Engels' theory—these are people who do not labor. For Marx and Engels, in other words, the un- and underemployed do not threaten revolution through a demand for economic justice; rather, they endanger the prospect of economic justice by being coopted through their need to survive. As in Arendt, the poor are imagined as subhuman, but here they are not animals (they are not merely subject to their bodies) but waste, rotting scum who live without working, thereby divesting themselves capacity for class consciousness. In other words, because they don't work, their loyalties are necessarily misplaced.

The agreement between Arendt and Marx and Engels on the dangerousness of the non-proletarian poor strikes me as worth noting given the otherwise enormous ideological gulf between them. In both passages, we encounter a repulsion to "bare life" (Agamben 2014), a sense that merely living is not enough to guarantee one's humanity. In both, the suggestion that the needs of the miserable class *should not* determine the course of revolutions potentially obscures that they *do*—and all the more, why, and how. Their framing of politics effaces the political agency of a group that, if we judge by recent statistics on underemployment, in Egypt comprises somewhere on the order of 10 million people.

It may be useful to illustrate the kind of narrative of the Egyptian revolution that emerges from an analysis of only "properly political" actors. In his meticulous account of the Egyptian revolution, Neil Ketchley constructs his story largely from the analysis of an event catalog of 8,454 protests events, supplemented by interviews with different key actors in those events. Influenced by the work of Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly, Ketchley theorizes the revolutionary situation as a "conjunctural episode" in which "an alternative claim to sovereignty in the name of 'the people'" spurs viable contenders for the control of the state. Ketchley therefore analyzes protest events as acts of contention—as acts of performative force that aim at influencing the larger conjuncture of forces that have made contention possible. In his account, the repertoire and rhetoric of protest are important in as much as they give shape to acts of contention. Noting that January 25th-28th, the first days of the revolution, were *not* nonviolent, but in fact evinced a clear pattern of violence against police departments, Ketchley reads this violence almost as a kind of speech—as articulating a message against corrupt dealing and arbitrary violence through the metonym of the police.[20] From January 28th, however, revolutionaries turned to what Ketchley calls a strategy of "fraternization" aimed at the Army, and the political drama of the ensuing two weeks revolved around provoking and watching for signs of the allegiance of the Armed Forces. In Ketchley's telling, this kind of flirtation with the Army ultimately confounded hopes for constitutive change: To convince the army of their political responsibility and their capacity to take direction of the state, the Muslim Brotherhood demobilized from mass protests by the summer of 2011. Demobilization not only aligned the Muslim Brotherhood with the army, it also antagonized their erstwhile revolutionary partners (who were still using mass protest to advocate reform of the Interior Ministry and the end of military rule) and fractured the revolutionary forces. By the time the Brothers denounced protestors on Mohammed Mahmoud Street as *baltagiya* and *feloul*, they had irrevocably lost revolutionary legitimacy as critics of the deep state. In the Morsi administration's struggle with the Egyptian judiciary a year later, therefore, revolutionaries saw only cynical powergrabbing. Morsi could then become the enemy of the revolution and, with the help of the army-backed Tamarrod campaign, be removed from office. With the rise of al-Sisi, Army hegemony over Egyptian politics has been so far insuperable, but, Ketchley concludes, not uncontested. The Egyptian revolution, returning to its beginning, has failed—but future waves of mass mobilization, he predicts, will also return.

As a tale of revolutionary tragedy limned by faintest hope, Ketchley's narrative would please David Scott; it captures the ineluctable contingency of events with great clarity of detail and presents the choices of actors as rational but tragically shortsighted. I find it unsatisfying, however, because it does not adequately account for the forces that bring about the return of the old regime. If events in a revolution were truly and utterly contingent, we might expect new political forms to emerge even in the face of its failure. But events in Egypt did affect a return, an

[20] In *On Revolution* (2006), Hannah Arendt argues that violence cannot be political because politics is defined by speech, while "speech is helpless when confronted with violence" and "violence itself is incapable of speech." The claim seems odd, at first, because violence can clearly signify, as Ketchley's examples show; like shapes, colors, sounds, electromagnetic waves, and other human acts of innumberable sort, violence is capable of being a signifier to a signified. What's more, it seems to me, the signified of violence is not necessarily inchoate, but in fact can be quite definite. Arendt clearly wants to privilege speech above other media of communication, but I am both suspicious of her logocentrism and impressed by the fruits of a political analysis of violence in the work of theorists like Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben.

inertia that, to my mind at least, merits further investigation. Moreover, while Ketchley accounts for the motives and practical reason of elite counterrevolutionaries, he ignores the point of view of "thugs" and other "social scum." I want to suggest the "deep state" is an apt phrase to describe closely held but "unpolitical" values that motivate people who might have been liberated by revolution but who acted instead to undermine it. The question of "depth," here, is two-fold: on the one hand, these values are deep because commonplace understandings of politics requires that we submerge them, deny them in favor of other forces; on the other, these values represent a force that is more structural than contingent, meaning that they shape the flow of revolutionary events more profoundly than the day-to-day politics of contention.

Other theorists have been less reluctant wade into these "depths." In *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976), James Scott argues that the politics of the very poor are motivated by a "subsistence ethic." Though he does not disagree with Arendt's assessment of the aims of this class, Scott accords these aims positive political content. Elaborating on a peasant context in Southeast Asia, Scott rethinks the economic assumptions that underwrite the survival strategies of this class:

> Living close to the subsistence margin and subject to the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders, the peasant household has little scope for the profit maximization calculus of traditional neoclassical economics. Typically, the peasant cultivator seeks to avoid the failure that will ruin him rather than attempting a big, but risky, killing. In decision-making parlance his behavior is risk averse; he minimizes the subjective probability of the maximum loss. (4).

Scott portrays the peasant as conservative in a way particular to their interests. The rural poor redistribute wealth to the poorest in their communities not out of a sense of radical egalitarianism, but from an understanding that people with no means of survival will do drastic and violent things. This does not mean that peasants living at the level of subsistence did not participate in revolution. Rather, Scott argues, peasant participation in revolution depended on a moral and economic reckoning quite different from that practiced by the proletariat.

If Scott's intervention serves as a corrective to Marx and Engels' unwillingness to see the struggle to subsist as constitutive of a class with defined interests, Partha Chatterjee can be read as responding to the tradition of thought represented by Arendt. In *The Politics of the Governed* (2004), Chatterjee argues that the mainstream of Western political theory has long been dominated by the figure of the citizen as the source of national sovereignty. At stake in this image is the theoretical relation whereby the state acquires powers of decision and violence from the assent of the citizen. With this relation as axiom, the logic of popular sovereignty foregrounds the question of the legitimacy of the state (in what circumstances can the sovereign be said to have forfeited his power over the citizen?) as the primordial contest of politics.[21] Expectation of revolution—the feeling of inevitability expressed by Arendt and Koselleck alike—would seem to be a further entailment of a political logic so structured.

[21] In Arendt's account of this complex, the freedom found in political action arises from the condition relieved of necessity. As Agamben will show, Importantly, Arendt's emphasis on the image of necessity as being imposed by poverty supplants the Hobbesian interpretation of the state of civil war as tyrannical necessity.

Chatterjee argues that we must supplement this theory with a political logic of "populations."

> Citizens inhabit the domain of theory, populations the domain of policy. Unlike the concept of citizen, the concept of population is wholly descriptive and empirical; it does not carry a normative burden. Populations are identifiable, classifiable, and describable by empirical or behavioral criteria and are amenable to statistical techniques such as censuses and sample surveys. Unlike the concept of citizen, which carries the ethical connotation of participation in the sovereignty of the state, the concept of population makes available to government functionaries a set of rationally manipulable instruments for reaching large sections of the inhabitants of a country as the targets of their 'policies'—economic policy, administrative policy, law and even political mobilization. Indeed, as Michel Foucault has pointed out, a major characteristic of the contemporary regime of power is a certain 'governmentalization of the state.' This regime secures legitimacy not by the participation of citizens in matters of state but by claiming to provide for the well-being of the population. Its mode of reasoning is not deliberative openness [cf. Arendt's notion of freedom] but rather an instrumental notion of costs and benefits. Its apparatus is not the republican assembly but an elaborate network of surveillance through which information is collected on every aspect of the life of the population to be looked after. (2004, 34)

Where Arendt banishes economic reason from politics, Chatterjee argues this politics already exists; these politics employ a different form of reason than the politics of citizen and sovereign, but they cannot be denied because their domain is already enormous. Indeed, Chatterjee argues, these are politics of "most of the world": "technologies of governmentality often predate the nation-state, especially where there has been a relatively long experience of colonial rule" (36). Conquest has long subjected colonized populations to "classification, description, and enumeration" as strategies for managing the dangerous resource of exploited people. In states like India, where the nation-state comprises diverse populations that must be classified, enumerated, and protected by law, the politics of the governed competes with the politics of the citizen, leading to conflict, adjudication, and improvisation.

Thus prepared for the task of characterize the "social scum" whom Marx and Arendt dismiss, we must concede to them the dignity of interests, of priorities and goals, of values by which to weigh one option against another—in short, what Scott calls a "moral economy." We must imagine that someone who would willingly sow violence and destruction at home in exchange for money might have more than merely compelling reasons for doing so. By what values could one make such a bargain? With what goals drawing a chain of action toward realization? With what image of happiness at the end?

Hustler and thug

The point of view of the *baltagiya* will not be directly reflected in what follows (I hope it surprises no one if I confess that I did not conduct fieldwork among *baltaga*). The young, underemployed men with whom I conducted my fieldwork in rural Monoufiya, however, occupy a close enough economic position that it is worth considering a figure of social reprobation, not

unlike the *baltagy*, whom they use in reckoning with their own prospects for survival. This character is the *sayʾ*, variously the "bum," "loiterer," "good-for-nothing," or "hustler." As suggested by the translation "loiterer," the young men I knew used it to point to guys who stayed out of the house, in the streets. This characteristic was generational, in part: Married men tended to stay home after work, and prepubescent boys tended to play in the immediate neighborhood of home, but the young men of the village where I worked tended to roam and linger, propelled far from home by their maturation into access to motorcycles and exasperation with parents. When I was in Monoufiya, that particular group of post-pubescent, pre-marital men were also the first generation of the village to have no reasonable expectation of employment unless their family was already rich and well-connected.[22] Marriage was the dream, but many young men would need to wait into their thirties or work as many as four jobs to save enough money to become eligible. *Siyaʾa*, or being *sayʾ*, therefore also pointed to the characteristics needed to survive deprivation. Like the "hustler" in American colloquial, the *sayʾ* is prepared to do whatever it takes to advance his goals. As such the *sayʾ*, I argue, is a moral character of the kind identified by Alasdair MacIntyre, embodying an ethical orientation in the figure of a recognizable social stereotype. As a character representing the cohort and class of young men from whom the *baltagiya* of the Egyptian revolution were drawn, the *sayʾ* helps us to flesh out the moral imaginary of an underclass Marx dismissed as "social scum," unimportant to revolution except as possible threat. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the *sayʾ* and the *baltagy* are not equivalent kinds of socio-political actors: while the *sayʾ* is defined largely by his willingness to use any means, the *baltagy* is characterized by his use of the means of violence. I will consider violence in greater specificity in Chapter 5, so for the moment I will note that, as the boundary between *sayʾ* and *baltagy*, violence binds the two to differential values accorded to life. Where a *baltagy* might destroy a human life, the *sayʾ* desists.

The clearest example I saw of *siyaʾa* came from Mohammed al-Soghayer, wayward son of an army officer, *hashshash*, and self-affirmed *sayʾ*. Mohammed, like most of the young men of the village, worked, when he worked, in Cairo. One morning when I briefly lived in the village in the Fall of 2013, my friend Diyaa invited me over for a late breakfast after a late night of wedding hopping. When I arrived, I found Mohammed halfway through the process of rolling a breakfast joint while Diyaa and his brother fried *t3ameya* and French fries in the kitchen. At the time, I was

[22] I don't have statistics to lend quantitative credibility to this claim, but it does express both my reckoning and the reckoning of my interlocutors. Most of the older men in the village had secure incomes, often from comfortable jobs at established institutions with branches in the governorate, and didn't have to commute: ʾAmm Ayman worked at a government bank in Shabin al-Kom, the same city where ʾAmm Sherif held a sinecure at a tax office he visited once a week, freeing him up to run a small tire factory out of the bottom floor of his home; it was well known that ʾAmm Seif only showed up to the gas company once a month—to collect his pay check; Diyaa's father lived on a *maʾash*, a pension, from his late-in-life employment at a local school, and spent most of his time manning a small makeshift store near their house. The younger men mostly had to work in Cairo if they wanted an income that would enable them to save enough money to get married. Khairy worked in an autoshop in Matariya with Sayyed, who had gotten his job through his connection with Khairy. Diyaa had an on-again-off-again relationship with a job installing lines for the gas company in Nasr City—his sister kept begging her boss to take him back, only for Diyaa to quit within a month over poor treatment and bad pay. 'Atef drove an armored bank vehicle back and forth between Cairo and Suez. Getting these kinds of jobs generally depended on having *wasta* with an employer, and they tended to be grueling, demanding 12-hour workdays and a cramped shared apartment to crash at during the week.

in the processes of trying to catalogue the different modes of giving and generosity recognized in the village, and, hoping to stir conversation, I brought up something another friend of Diyaa's had said the night before. I summarized: The kind of giving that happens when your friends become like brothers, when you've got just "one pocket" between the two of you; he said *that's* all the more important because of how hard it is to make a living in Egypt. Mohammed responded by telling a story to illustrate how hard it really was.

Mohammed was no longer working at the gas company in Cairo, right? He quit a few weeks ago, was staying at home. But he'd quit because the boss stopped paying his salary, stopped paying a bunch of peoples' salary—there was some mysterious problem with cash flow that went on for over a month. So Mohammed quit, but before he did he took a part from one of the gas mechanisms that he worked with—a part worth more than the back salary that was owed to him. Mohammed quit, he took the part, he went home, and he waited. Before a week had passed, a man from the company showed up in a sleek black car in front of his house bearing an envelope full of cash in exchange for the part.

Now seated with us in front of the food he had made, Diyaa interjected, defining for me—that's *sayʾ*. Later, Diyaa would clarify a part of Mohammed's story that hadn't made sense to me in the telling: why did Mohammed struggle to find work if his father was an army officer? It turns out that Mohammed's father disapproved of his love of hashish and refused to help him look for work anymore. Still I was struck by Mohammed's boldness in the story—his courage, one might say—and the neatness with which he had won. When I started asking around the village about *siyaʾa*, I learned that the heroism of the *sayʾ* was a feature of the genre of story told about him; a cousin of Khairy's told me a particularly Munchausenian story centering around several years' worth of ever bolder feats in deceiving the ticket counters at a soccer stadium in central Cairo. Whether or not Mohammed's account of the act was perfectly factual, though, the basic ethical orientation he expressed was clear: sometimes you have to do something wrong to get what you are entitled to by right. This was Mohammed's specific response to my inquiry about the difficulty of making a living, and it was an opinion ratified in different ways by my group of interlocutors (one example of which I will describe presently). This ethic, if interpreted correctly, goes a long way toward helping us to imagine the morality of the "social scum" and the *baltagy*, the one who betrays and violates his people in exchange for cash: perhaps this person sees in money the embodiment of a higher right than that embodied in the bonds of the nation or the law.

In a grim turn of events, Mohammed also helped to clarify the difference between *sayʾ* and *baltagy*. Two years after I had left Egypt, I learned from Saad that Mohammed had been jailed for murder. Mohammed and a friend had accepted 2000 Egyptian pounds (somewhere between one- and two-months' salary for most of the young men in the village) to kill a local man. Mohammed's father had then taken to Facebook to denounce the crime and disown him. In committing such an odious crime, Mohammed had crossed the line from one social position to another, and his father marked the boundary by casting him out of the family.

The family takes a much larger role in defining the ethical import of *siyaʾa* in a situation that unfolded in my last months in Egypt, in 2016. I no longer lived in Monoufiya for practical and safety reasons, but knowing the rhythms of the village, I made a habit of arriving on Thursday evenings with the wave of young men returning from work in Cairo so we could gather and catch up. One Thursday in June, we sat out in the street after dark, smoking cigarettes, talking, and eating *lib*—in a word, loitering. A friend of Saad and Diyaa's, Khairy, had made a point of wanting

to talk to them and me and the other guys who lived in the neighborhood about a problem with his brother. Khairy's brother was a nice guy, but not that clever, and he'd gotten himself into a situation with a *toktok*. His job in Cairo wasn't enough to support his new family, so he'd rented a *toktok* from one of the richer men in the village—signing no contract—and he started a side hustle going out at night taxiing passengers to and from the bus stop heading out to Cairo. One night, a truck forced him off the road and he'd broken the axel of the *toktok* in a ditch. Being a nice guy, he took the *toktok* to a mechanic and got it fixed. Afterward, he wrote to the owner with a text to say that the accident had happened, that he'd got it repaired, and that he'd appreciate any cash that the owner could kick in—seeing as it wasn't the brother's fault and it wasn't his property. The owner replied by demanding that Khairy's brother pay for a new *toktok*. Khairy's brother didn't have that kind of money.

Tough luck for Khairy's brother, sure, but it became Khairy's misfortune, too, because this happened to be the same rich neighbor from whom Khairy had been buying a small storefront in the village on installment. Being the earnest sort, Khairy worked two backbreaking, underpaying jobs and invested any savings in *gama'eyat*—informal round-robin savings collectives in which a small group of people would each pay a defined amount into a collective pot of money every month, taking the pot for themselves when their turn came up on the list of participants. For over two years, Khairy had turned those savings over to his rich neighbor with the expectation that he'd get title to the store when he'd paid the price in full. But Khairy had now paid and the neighbor would not grant him possession of the property, saying Khairy couldn't take the store until his brother paid for the *toktok*. Like his brother, Khairy didn't have money like that lying around.

So Khairy told the story, first to Diyaa and then to Saad and Hamed, and then Sayyed and me, hoping for some comfort or advice. When Khairy reached the end of his story, Sayyed smirked and told him *Al-ʾayla illy mafihash sayʾ, haqqaha dayʾ*—"the family has no *sayʾ* loses its right." Diyaa and Hamed cackled, overhearing from a side conversation, and Sayyed ran off with an air of mischief. I didn't understand, so I asked Khairy to clarify. He sighed. The other guys were always telling him that he's too *gadʾ*, that he makes himself *ghalban*—that he is too kind-hearted to do what it takes to get his right. His brother was the same way, and his dad. There was no one in the family who had the character required to use any means necessary to solve the problem. Put another way, their virtue had lost them their rights.

The saying cited by Sayyed—"the family that has no *sayʾ* has lost its right"—therefore situates Khairy and his family in an ethical and political paradox that is both insoluble and culturally recognizable. To understand this paradox, it helps to explore the grammar of its concepts by elaborating the relation between *sayʾ*, right, and family. As Samera Esmeir notes in her study of legal authority in colonial Egypt, *haqq* is a polysemic concept, meaning "right," "justice" or "truth" depending on its use (26). We can use a similar ambiguity in the English word "right" to give a sense of the predicament of this polysemy: A strong sense of right and wrong leads Khairy's family to act in ways that forfeit their rights. For both "*haqq*" and "right," polysemy invites their user to identify factual correctness with natural law. Esmeir quotes a late-nineteenth century Egyptian legal scholar, Amin Shmayyil, who ratifies this identity though a literary version of arguments I heard in the village: "It was right that fixed the celestial bodies, organized the natural masses, and founded elementary essences, the key ingredients of things, as well as the primary elements. Yes, right is an internal quality of creation, or, put differently, right is creation's

distinctive characteristic" (26). Esmeir elaborates further on Shmayyil's theological position with respect to *haqq*, but for the moment I simply want to point out that the coincidence of fact and law is not a logical deficit to be clarified away, but a feature of the concept that conditions the kind of moral reckoning that it enables. In the context of Sayyed's saying, part of what is implied by this polysemy is that is that the concept of "right" is more than legal—that human law alone is not enough to guarantee that one gets what one deserves. And yet the saying does not imply that the extralegal guarantor of justice is God. Rather, the figure of salvation appears in the absent "hustler," the person willing to use any means.

Equally important, that which the *say'* should save is the right of the family. In this saying, the higher right for which the *say'* does wrong is given familial content. A member of a family is not only personally responsible for other members of his or her family, but that responsibility surpasses (at the very least) the responsibilities of the citizen. As I and others have observed (see the previous chapter), familial obligations pervade the "corrupt" practice of procuring favors through connections, known as *wasta* in Arabic. Here I'd like to add that *wasta* also embodies the kind of rule breaking that is the primary characteristic of the *say'*. Indeed, the word *wasta* is also polysemic, pointing to sometimes to "connections," others, to "means"—a coincidence that parallels the *say'*s use of illict measures to achieve his ends.

Between family and city

More than elaborating on the grammar of *wasta* and *siya'a*, however, I want to tarry with the supposed illegitimacy of this moral economy I've begun to describe, particularly in its relation to the sacredness of the family. In classic anthropological literature, *wasta* relationships are interpreted as patron-client relations. As Ernest Gellner describes it,

> the kind of patronage which … concern[s] us is a form of power. In part, it intrigues us because we disapprove of it. Why? It offends both our egalitarianism and our universalism. Patrons and Clients are in general unequal. Patronage relations are highly specific. They fail to illustrate the principle that like cases should be treated alike (1).

It strikes me as characteristic that Gellner uses "cases" when he means "people." People should be treated equally. Patronage is doubly unequal: yes, Patron and Client are unequal, but so are Client and Outsider. Gellner is careful to argue that the term "patronage" does not obtain in "genuine kinship societies," where real blood relations are the structuring forces of society, but rather represents an illegitimate "borrowing" and "utilization" of the language of kinship. Analogously, patronage uses the forms of bureaucracy, but never legitimately. In patronage, rather, family and state are mixed and mutually rendered impure. To the "we" ventriloquized by Gellner, patronage seems to offend sacred principles of political organization. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel famously philosophizes the tragedy of Antigone, interpreting ancient drama as instituting precisely such an ethical separation of family from state. Reading Hegel, we can draw out—and schematize—the logic implicit in Gellner.

In Sophocles' tragedy, Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus, born from incest. Her father has died, as have her brothers in battle against each other for the throne of Thebes. Her great-/uncle and new king Creon has declared her brother Polynices a traitor who must not be afforded the privilege of burial, but Antigone sneaks out of the city to bury her brother—twice—and is

caught. Admitting her crime against the city, she explains that burying her brother is her duty, set by divine law. Closing Antigone in a cave and thus provoking her suicide, Creon punishes a crime but alienates human law from its divine source of legitimacy. News of his own, divine, punishment soon reach him: his son and wife have both killed themselves in grief.

Hegel uses this tragedy to stage a dialectic of ethics, much as he used the encounter between master and slave to dramatize a dialectic of self-consciousness. If master and slave illustrate the emerging self-consciousness of desire as it violently alters the world and thereby comes to know itself as an agency responsible to others, the confrontation between Antigone and Creon shows how the desire to behave in a way that is universally desirable splits against itself and becomes alienated. According to Hegel, Spirit arrives at the ethical moment of the dialectic already split between two conceptions of ethical law. On the one hand, Spirit realizes itself in the "plurality of existent consciousnesses"—that is to say, in a community, in a city. As the unity of a plurality, the city wills, and this will is human law—one form of a universal ethical duty, but one tied to the particularity of a nation.

On the other hand, Spirit arrives at law from the immediate experience of duty in a family—what Hegel calls "a *natural* ethical community" (268, emphasis original). This law he characterizes as "inner" and "unconscious," as opposed to the conscious way a city acts on itself. To be truly ethical, however, requires this obligation to ascend to universality; it must exceed the force of love that ties one family member to another so that "the *individual* member of the Family" is placed in ethical relation "to the *whole* Family" (269, emphasis original). The individual only comes to recognize a universal imperative for action—a duty—in the death of a member of a family: After death, the dead person is threatened by oblivion, is easily erased by human memory and natural forces of decay, "all of which are now more powerful than himself." Through the ritual of burial, the family raises the dead to the status of a member of the community who "prevails over and holds under control the forces of particular material elements and the lower forms of life" (271). In this way, "even death is recuperated for self-consciousness" (Taylor 173); the particular, the finite life of an individual attains participation in the universal.

What interests me here is, first, the paradox posed between two universal ethical orientations: that each form of ethical reason is legitimate but incompatible with the other, that therefore both claim to supercede the other in a contest of political theologies. Later in Hegel's dialectic, immediate ethical experience will be integrated into the mediate ethical substance of the state when Enlightenment philosophy locates the legitimacy of the state in the citizen, but in the moment of Antigone and Creon, family and polity are mutually dependent but incompatible.

What's more, Hegel's account identifies the law of the family as that which undermines the law of the state. This seems to suggest more definite content for motivations to break the law than animal necessity. As a way of the thinking about "corruption," family obligation tells us much more about why it is so hard to give up, even when it is illegal, even when we know it hurts us, even when we have just seen a revolution to finally stamp it out. Breaking the law is not merely something one does to survive, but can be something that one does for others. By way of comparison, the stalwart anti-corruption NGO Transparency International defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain." Here, the organization defines the private negatively as a space as outside the community that entrusts power. Seen from the perspective of the family, however, the "private" gains a positive content that explains its power against the "public."

Finally, Hegel's account leads us to a confrontation with gender that is submerged in Arendt, Marx, and Gellner. As we've seen, the obligation to bury the dead becomes a form of divine law, rooted in the family. At first this force supplements human, political, law, and then eventually comes to undermine it, as we see in the confrontation between Antigone and Creon. The split between divine and human law begins in the gendered dichotomy of ethical obligations on brother and sister: as he matures, the brother marries, passing out of the natural family and "becom[ing] an individuality"; he turns to the sphere of the city, where he discovers that he is an individual among individuals; in this commonality he discovers a universality, one which defines his commitment to human law; "but the sister becomes, or the wife remains, the head of the household and the guardian of divine law" (275). Interestingly, the dichotomous experiences of brother and sister seems to be rooted not only in their gender but more specifically in the matrilocality of marriage practices; the ritual passage of marriage also inaugurates the rupture of the ethical order.

Moreover, while human law is the first to win in the fight between Antigone and Creon, the divine law soon has its revenge. Women, and the family obligations they advocate, become an "internal enemy" to the state:

> Womankind—the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community—changes by intrigue the universal end of the government into a private end, transforms and perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the Family. Woman in this way turns to ridicule the earnest wisdom of mature age, which, indifferent to the purely private pleasures and enjoyments, as well as to playing an active part, only thinks of and cares for the universal. She makes this wisdom an object of derision for raw and irresponsible youth and unworthy of their enthusiasm. In general, she maintains that it is the power of youth that realty counts: the worth of the son lies in his being the lord and master of the mother who bore him, that of the brother as being one in whom the sister finds man on a level of equality that of the youth as being one through whom the daughter, freed from her dependence [on the family] obtains the enjoyment and dignity of wifehood. The community, however, can only maintain itself by suppressing this spirit of individualism, and, because it is an essential moment, all the same creates it and, moreover, creates its repressive attitude towards it as a hostile principle, However, this principle, being merely evil and futile in its separation from the universal end, would be quite ineffectual if the community itself did not recognize the power of Youth (the manhood which, while immature, still stands within the sphere of individuality), as the power of the whole. For the community is a nation, is itself an individuality, and essentially is only such for *itself* by other individualities being *for it*, by excluding them from itself and knowing itself to be independent of them. (288)

I've quoted this passage at length because it captures how theorists like Gellner imagine as the spirit of corruption: most especially, its relation to a universal historical horizon of rational governance frustrated by private pleasures and interests. As agents of these interests, women become objects of special scorn, and their pleasure in the brutal strength of their sons (particularly in the passage that follows) takes an incestuous air. The chthonic powers they

mustered against state—indeed, the very powers that make the state possible—must be overcome in the dialectical movement toward the perfect realization of Spirit.

In her own commentary on Sophocles' play, Judith Butler cautions against Hegel's interpretation of the tragedy as depending on "the separability of kinship and the state." Rather, she notes that "every interpretive effort to cast a character as representative of kinship or the state tends to falter and lose coherence and stability." The text of *Antigone* is rife with crossings and mixtures. Antigone defends kinship despite being the product of incest, while Creon defends the state despite wielding its power by inheritance. "Antigone emerges in her criminality to speak in the name of politics and the law: she absorbs the very language of the state against which she rebels, and hers becomes a politics not of oppositional purity but of the scandalously impure" (5). In her challenge to Creon, Antigone becomes manly, and Creon is unmanned. When Creon, challenged by Antigone's claim to act on behalf of Divine law, says, "Now I am no man, but she the man," Butler reads Antigone as assuming "a certain masculine sovereignty, a manhood that cannot be shared, which requires that its other be both feminine and inferior" (9). In other words, for Butler Antigone does not embody fealty to an originary, divine, familial law so much as she unsettles the political and sexual categories that pretend to a natural legality. Part of Butler's aim in advancing this reading is to underline Antigone's queerness, not only in the sense that her gender is indeterminate, but also in the sense that she threatens the application of norms. As in Butler's other work, this indeterminacy represents a form of power that cannot be assimilated to law. At the same time, Butler's reading also underscores the important role misogyny plays in illegitimating the power of the family. If Antigone's incoherent gender mirrors the interpenetration of family and state, we might interpret *Antigone* not just as an ethical tragedy but as a tale of the uncanny drawing on the "powers of horror" that guard the division between masculine and feminine (Kristeva 1982). If the moral economy of the poor needs rehabilitation, then, the reason may be its association with familial and feminine values. The family and the feminine, then, would represent a return of that which repressed in order to maintain a coherent identity—and these would be submerged powers, indeed.

The *sayʾ*, of course, is a quintessentially masculine character, marked by absence from the home and a certain ruthlessness and bravado; nonetheless, the nature of the *haqq* he realizes is familial and intimate. However if, Hegel suggests and as I've argued in the previous chapter, it is marriage—rather than gendered bodies— that serves as the means of separating masculine ethics from feminine, this suggests in turn that the illegitimacy of the ethic of the poor might be based in kinship of affinity rather than of blood. Put another way, is there something dangerous about the power to make someone into family? The critique of kinship pioneered by Schneider (1984) and carried on by theorists like Strathern (1990 and 1992) and Carsten (2004) suggests one interpretation of what that danger might be. If, as these authors argue, the attribution of blood kinship to nature is itself a cultural act, then it is worth considering if this act serves, in part, to delimit the politically destabilizing powers of family attachments.

Agamben's investigation of the concept of *stasis*, or civil war, in ancient Greece (2015), would seem to confirm this interpretation. Arendt, he notes, distinguished the modern concept revolution from civil war by noting the association of the former with beginnings and the second with a kind of eternal return. (Is the movement from revolution to counterrevolution better described as a civil war?). In his reading of classic Greek texts and their commentators, civil war recurs because of an inassimilable tension between the family and the city. The family is always

capable of producing loyalties that lead to civil conflict but, as he shows, it is also by cathecting family loyalties to the city that ancient Greeks resolved these conflicts. Instead of positing an historical telos whereby the private is naturally subordinated to the public, Agamben maintains that *stasis* perpetually threatens the erasure of the very distinction. Civil war, he argues, "constitutes a threshold of indifference between the *oikos* and the *polis*, between blood kinship and citizenship," a place where the home and the city can no longer be distinguished, inasmuch as "civil war assimilates and makes undecidable brother and enemy, inside and outside, household and city. In the stasis, the killing of what is most intimate is indistinguishable from the killing of what is most foreign" (2015, 14-15). Demarcating and delimiting the place of the family within the polity would therefore seem to be a crucial means by which violence is limited to the sovereign. Conversely, asserting the right to forge loyalties that exceed the authority of the state has the potential to unleash what Agamben calls "destituent power" (2013), power that renders power "inoperative," unable to work.

What kind of "right," then, does the *sayʾ* recover for his family? It is certainly not the right of the state. Though he may be forced to interact with state institutions and even accede to their power by seeking *wasta*, there remains a way in which the right manifested by the *sayʾ* frustrates the power of the government to impose its own order.

Conclusion: On Conscription

In the argument I've pursued here, the family was instituted as the legal exception in the foundation of the modern Egyptian nation-state through Mohammed Ali's conscription of the Egyptian peasantry in the early 19th century. For the first time in over 2000 years, Egypt's peasants shared the sovereign's right to violence, creating an army that would become the primary instrument of popular will. The nature of conscription, however, is such that it redounds against oneself the very violence that one assumes. In the agony of this double-bind, conscripts improvised a refusal of their own capacity to make family.

The cleverness of the *say'*, the refusal of the conscript, and the exception made through *wasta* all demonstrate ways in which Egyptian citizens mobilize the power of kinship to frustrate state power—even as they accept its structures. Indeed, what characterizes these modes of engagement with the Egypt state is their ambivalence, the double movement of acceptance and refusal that makes it difficult to characterize them as quietism or as subterfuge.

As Judith Butler's argument in *Antigone's Claim* suggests, there is something *queer*—in-between and therefore disquieting—about the forms of subjectivity made manifest through these acts. The figure of the Monoufi that haunted the Egyptian revolution between 2011 and 2013 was such in-between figure, generous and stingy, treacherous and clannish, foreign and all too close-to-home. Like any subject of power, he is also "a figure of turning, a turning back upon oneself or even a turning on oneself" (Butler 1997, 3). The historical return of the "old regime" in the Egyptian counterrevolution must be understood in terms of this prior turn, a circularity I have identified as "conscription."

In a short and deceptively simple essay written in honor of Stanley Diamond, Talal Asad (1992) uses the image of conscription to conceptualize the force Western modernity exerts in the present world. As he points out, there is no part of the world that is unaffected by the imperial expansion of the West. Modern imperialism differed from earlier colonial projects not only in its totality, however, but also in the nature of state intervention in the lives of the governed. The birth of the nation-state in the West witnessed the politicization of myriad social domains that had been previously outside the reach of state power: reproduction and sexuality, education, housing, hygiene, and health.

Asad argues that once certain domestic reforms had been achieved in the colonial metropole, like the establishment of an age of consent for sexual activity, the colonizing powers soon embarked on campaigns to impose the same reforms on their subject populations abroad. The colonization of India, according to one of its architects, required not just military force but "the radical change of ideas and institutions of a vast population which has already got ideas and institutions to which it is deeply attached" (quoted in Asad, 338). As Asad points out, at stake was the problem of how to get Indians to *desire* to become better. "What was lacking was not a virtue, a learnt special skill, but something more like a natural force; an unfulfillable desire, a 'spring of spontaneous improvement.' To implant the desire for progress in native minds it was essential to employ despotic powers—including, where necessary, violence" (339).

Asad's use of conscription to describe colonialism helps us to understand the predicament of the colonized precisely because it is a quintessentially *domestic* form of power. We can see

this dynamic at stake in the words of Indonesian nationalist, Sutan Sjahrir, who Asad quotes to illustrate his point:

> What the West has taught us … [is a] … higher form of living and striving … and this is what I admire in the West despite its brutality and coarseness. … I would even accept capitalism as an improvement upon the much-famed wisdom and religion of the East. … The East must become Western … Faust must reveal himself to the Eastern man and mind. (quoted in Asad, 345)

Conscription by Western civilization involves turning against oneself, becoming a friend of power and the enemy of its enemies. Conscription works, as Samera Esmeir points out, by *inclusion*, not exclusion (2012, 35). It is for this reason that any account of the Egyptian counterrevolution of 2013 must consider the ways the state *included* Egyptians in its projects, as opposed to the focus on exclusion that characterizes many analyses of discontent with the Mubarak regime (Marsot 2007; Ray and Habib 2012; Shenker 2016).

This dissertation began with a series of questions whose force I tried to direct at the reader as a way of encouraging her to imagine how she herself might respond. There is an analogous force at work in conscription, in the sense that no answer, not even silence, is not shaped by the command to respond. I leave my reader with a final question: What would it mean to imagine your own politics through the figure of conscription rather than the figure of contract?

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