Ambivalent Protestors: Neo-Orientalist Depictions of the Arab Spring Revolutions in Anglophone Narrative

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by

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate the literary representations of the Arab Spring revolutions in Anglophone memoirs and novels, arguing that a new form of neo-Orientalism has emerged to reflect the ostensibly peaceful and liberalising nature of the Arab Spring revolutions, which I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. This new iteration is different from classical Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism in two key areas: firstly, the inclusion of Arabs into the West and the disappearance of the stereotype that indicates that Arabs are anti-Western, as evidenced by the increasing emergence of themes depicting globalisation and the possible multicultural co-exitance between Arabs and Westerners; secondly, the curtailment of Islamophobia and the elimination of stereotypes concerning Islamic fundamentalism, violence and terrorism. Nevertheless, while post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism departs from the open xenophobia that had been a staple in Western literature pertaining to the Arab world, it continues to draw on classical Orientalist stereotypes relating to other aspects of Arab culture. Specifically, it demonstrates a misreading of Arab politics by means of describing the Arab revolutions using Western political thought rather than Islamic principles for political leadership. In addition, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist literature depends on repackaged Orientalist abstractions such as 'the lazy Oriental' and 'Oriental despotism' to depict the disappointing outcome of the Arab revolutions. Simultaneously, despite adopting this transformed neo-Orientalist discourse, a majority of post-Arab Spring memoirs and novels belong to the genre of postcolonial literature and the authors resist Western discursive hegemony by means of employing counter-narrative strategies, including the journey into the Oriental wilderness and magic realism. Such resistance, however, is limited to the use of a host of themes and sub-plots within a predominantly neo-Orientalist voice. 'The West' thus, emerges as an ambivalent category that is both desired and undesired in the post-Arab Spring literary renditions of this phase of Arab political history.

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Chapter 1: Transformed neo-Orientalist Discourses

1.1 Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism

In this thesis, I explore Western neo-Orientalism since the beginning of the Arab Spring revolutions on the 17th of December 2010 as evidenced in Anglophone literary narratives on the historical event. I argue that a new form of neo-Orientalism, which I term 'post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism,' has emerged in response to the peaceful and ostensibly democratic nature of the Arab revolutions. This iteration of Western hegemonic discourse differs from classical Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism in two principal respects: 1) the inclusion of the Arabs in the West as evidenced by the disappearance of the Orientalist stereotype that describes Arabs as anti-Western and anti-modern; 2) the manifest curtailment of blatant Islamophobia and the emergence of Islam as a non-violent religion. For instance, the literary narratives under discussion are preoccupied with a globalised world dominated by the West in which Muslim Arabs share democratic ideals virtually equally with Westerners, revealing the disappearance of the xenophobia that characterised Orientalism. While this is evidently a nuanced representation of the Arab Other, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism continues to draw upon a host of repackaged and outdated Orientalist stereotypes. These include attributing the disappointing victory of the counter-revolutions to the autocracy of the modern Arab state in, for instance, Yasmine El Rashidi's novel—an indirect reproduction of the Orientalist trope of 'Oriental despotism.' Simultaneously, because the majority of the authors of this literature belong to the postcolonial Arab world, they employ counter-narrative strategies to resist Western hegemonic discourse regarding the Arab Spring. Such narratives, however, only function on a minor scale and in limited areas, for instance Omar Hamilton's use of the concept of the colonial city to demonstrate that Cairo's colonial infrastructure sides with the neo-colonial comprador regime against the revolutionaries. While Hamilton resists Western discourse in this regard, the primary thrust of his narrative demonstrates that the protestors attempt to emulate Western democratic systems of government. 'The West' thus emerges as an ambivalent signifier that is both desired and undesired in this literature. This way of depicting the Arab Spring, filtered via the Western imagination and worldview, is extremely problematic and, I contend, does not correspond with the reality of the Arab world and the lived experience of those who took part.

My investigation of the discourses surrounding the Arab revolutions pays specific attention to three key categories: the Arab Spring, the West and neo-Orientalism. Firstly, I use the terms 'Arab Spring,' 'Arab revolutions,' 'Arab uprisings' and similar expressions indiscriminately

to denote the mass action that occurred in the Arab world beginning in Tunisia with the self-immolation of street vendor Mohamad Bouazizi in 2010 and later in other Arab countries. I acknowledge the problematic connotations of this usage: initially, calling the revolutions 'the Arab Spring' bears the unnecessarily intended endorsement of the mass action, in particular, since 'Spring' not only suggests rebirth and warmth, but it has also been associated with the liberalising spirit of the 1848 'Springtime of the People' in Europe (Weyland 917–18). Joseph Massad also emphasises that the seasonal term conceals a strategy employed by the United States to control the aims and goals of the revolutions since the term has been applied to refer to liberalising regimes considered dictatorial and 'has an American Cold War anti-Soviet genealogy' ("AS"). Likewise, Magid Shihade et al. argue that 'The concept of seasons is embedded in a long history of Orientalising the region' because it neglects the rich history of Arab anti-colonial resistance prior to 2011 (1).

The use of these expressions also raises the problem of deciding what makes a revolution and the concomitant question of the geography of the revolutions. In my thesis, I follow the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* definition of 'revolution' as a 'rejection of the existing government's authority and an attempt to replace it with another government, where both involve the use of forceful extra-constitutional means' (Buchanan and Motchoulski). Nevertheless, I consider revolutions to be complete only when a population expels an unwanted president, and consequently, only four Arab countries fit my criteria: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Countries such as Syria and Bahrain undeniably belong to the Arab Spring movement, but their uprisings are not considered fully-fledged revolutions because a change did not occur in their political systems. Recently, however, the Algerian Hirak Movement (which resulted in the expulsion of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika) and the Sudanese revolution (which forced President Omar Al-Bashir out in what was termed a *coup d'état*) further problematised the category of the Arab Spring due to the temporal gap between the initial 2010/2011 revolutions and the 2019 mass movements in these two countries ("26FP"; "ABB"; El Sirgany et al.; Osman and Bearak). In my view, the political upheaval in Algeria and Sudan is organically connected to the initial phase of the Arab Spring owing to the similarity between the popular demands and the resentment with the existing political systems amongst the youth in 2011 and 2019. It should be noted, however, that the Algerian and Sudanese revolutions are not mentioned in the literary works under investigation in my thesis, and, consequently, they will not be analysed any further.

Secondly, the term, 'the West,' is applied reluctantly due to its tendency to simplify the plethora of identities, locations and differences that it covers although the term remains

relevant. This is borne out by its wide employment by writers, notably in academia and postcolonial theory, to designate a place, a people, on occasion, an ideology and the amorphous, indeterminate, expandable and collapsible concept of civilisation (Allen, *I* 25; Lazarus 44; Kaiwar 340–41).[1] Stuart Hall's definition encompasses several key aspects that underlie my use of the term in this thesis: '"the West" is a *historical*, not a geographical, construct. [It is] a society that is developed, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secular and modern' (186). Most importantly, Hall's definition stresses the capitalist dynamic behind the term, which serves to bridge a gap in, and avoid a constant critique of, Edward Said's use of the term; namely, that Said tends to neglect the connection between capitalism and Western imperialism (Deckard et al. 31–32). I perceive 'the West' to predominantly encompass 'countries of Western Europe and North America, the societies that function on the principles of bourgeois liberal democracies and market economies, historically generated in Europe' (qtd. in Allen, *I* 25). Simultaneously, I do not apply the term as a fixed category, as it contains a plurality of national/territorial positions and refers to an Anglophone discourse that is dominant in the Western hemisphere and used in the promotion of West European and North American hegemonic representations of the Arab Spring.

Thirdly, neo-Orientalism is defined as 'a style of representation which, while indebted to classical Orientalism, focuses on "othering" the Arab world with the exclusion of some geographic parts, such as India and Turkey, from the classical map of Orientalism' (Altwaiji 313). Neo-Orientalism establishes Islam in cultural and ideological opposition to the West and encourages the notion of a clash of civilisations, which, in turn, provides fertile ground for a Eurocentric view of the world—with its associated 'us' versus 'them' mindset—to take hold globally (Kerboua 20–25). Eurocentrism is the conscious or unconscious construction of Europe or European culture as the normative standard and 'first emerged as a discursive rationale for colonialism [and, by extension, neo-colonialism]' (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 107; Shohat and Stam 2). 'Eurocentrism consists of a notion of the West as advanced and a construction of the rest of the world as not only detached, but also inherently different from the West—as backwards, in comparison' (Kerner 552). Neo-colonialism refers to all forms of control of the former colonies by Western powers, and also the economic pressures exerted by Western powers to prevent Third World countries from achieving economic and political independence (Langan 1; Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 178). Throughout this project, I draw upon Ali

[1] Indeed, the expediency of the term was not limited to postcolonial theory as evidenced by Samuel Huntington's notorious propagation of 'the West' as a distinctive civilisation in his 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of World Order* (Huntington 69; Kaiwar 340; Allen, *I* 25–26; Dirlik 17).

Behdad and Juliet Williams' definition of neo-Orientalists: neo-Orientalists are not only Europeans, as was the case in the classical theoretical configuration of Orientalism, but can also be 'Middle Eastern men and women who use their native subjectivity and newfound agency in the West to render otherwise biased accounts of the region seemingly more authoritative and objective' (Behdad and Williams 284–85). Pointing out this approach concerning those authors, journalists, politicians, and analysts of Arab origin functions to dismantle their supposed authority and objectivity with respect to the Arab world.

The primary argument of this thesis is that in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, a novel iteration of neo-Orientalism evolved to reflect the non-violent tactics and progressive goals of the Arab revolutionaries which I call post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. In several countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the Arab Spring was 'radically unlike all other revolutions of the modern era' because it was 'spontaneous—a surge of resistant force emanating from an existential condition, rather than one or more ideological or perceived strategic ends' (Spanos 84). The 'existential condition' is the need for 'bread,' 'dignity' and 'freedom,' which were epitomised in Bouazizi's predicament that resulted in his selfless demise. The same message was reiterated by the millions of Arabs who took to the streets shouting 'bread, freedom, social justice' and 'the people want the overthrow of the regime,' which 'reveals a burning desire for popular sovereignty' (Kraidy 6, 10–11). William Spanos asserts that the Arab revolutions 'cannot any longer be identified in the terms of the political theological categories available to the triumphant Western discursive regime' (92). Similarly, Stephen Salaita maintains that 'the revolutions contravened long standing Orientalist assumptions about the incompatibility of Arab culture or Islam with democracy (as democracy has been envisioned and defined by a Eurocentric conception of modernity)' (131). Spanos and Salaita articulate the unconventional nature of the revolutions as surprisingly democratic and non-violent, as well as shaking the previously held assumptions regarding the lack of democracy in the Arab world and the violence that is attributed to Islam. These authors, however, fall short of theorising the transformation in Western neo-Orientalist engagement with the Arab world which I undertake in my thesis.

The two key variations in post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism are the inclusion of Arabs in Western cultural paradigms and the curtailment of Islamophobia. Initially, the Arab revolutionaries are perceived as seekers of Western-style democracy because their political endeavour has been interpreted in Western political and literary production as an attempt at democratic change. The Arab revolutions are portrayed as familiar and adjacent, which implies that Westerners identify with their motivations and goals. Consequently, the

Orientalist stereotypes that the Arabs are anti-Western, anti-modern (with democracy being the peak of a Eurocentric definition of modernity) and incompatible with Western civilisation have disappeared (Salaita 131; Ventura 292). For example, the literary narratives use globalisation as a setting in which Arabs and Westerners share actual and virtual spaces and Western-dominated values and technologies. While the Arabs are included in the West, and hence post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism invalidates the classical stereotype that Arabs are anti-Western, the texts continue to configure the Arabs as requiring Western tutelage in technologies and politics. In Hamilton's novel, the Egyptian revolutionaries depend on digital technologies such as Twitter and Facebook to organise the uprisings in Tahrir and other sites and to draw upon global influence to put pressure upon the Egyptian regime to comply with the protestors' demands. This discourse depicts the Egyptians as being part of a global network of freedom seekers who fit into Western categories of democracy and liberalism, but simultaneously it undermines the Egyptian's agency and independence because it portrays them as in need of Western technology and political pressure to revolt against injustice.

Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism also demonstrates a manifest curtailment of blatant post-9/11 Islamophobia. In political and academic discourse, Islam is portrayed as a non-violent, peaceful and democratic religion. Once again, this discourse reflects the image of Islam that emanated from the Arab streets—notably the support that moderate Islamic parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunisia and Islah (Reform) Party in Yemen provided for the people's demands of freedom and self-determination. Ennahda's renunciation of plans to introduce Sharia Law as the primary source of legislation in Tunisia was considered as stunningly democratic by Western observers such as Noah Feldman for the reason that it was undertaken by a party that had won the support of the Tunisian people who would have encouraged its adoption of Sharia (140–41). In literary discourse, Islam's representation as a peaceful and nonviolent ideology is evidenced by the disappearance of descriptions of it as terroristic and bloody. However, two primary sets of representations are used to domesticate Islam's cultural difference and make it known and less frightening: the pacification of its threat and adaptation of its difference. For example, in Saleem Haddad's novel, *Guapa* (2016), Islam is pacified in the vignette in which Rasa (the protagonist) meets Sheikh Ahmed and his group who have abandoned violence against the regime since the beginning of the revolution to seek political change via democratic means. The violence Islamic fundamentalist groups perpetrate in the name of Islam is thus pacified. Similarly, when Islamic cultural values depart from Western norms, Islam's difference is adapted. For example, in Hamilton's novel, Mariam is portrayed as a liberal woman who engages in a

relationship with Khalil (the protagonist) that is inconceivable within Islamic boundaries which prohibit relationships between males and females out of wedlock. This depiction reveals Hamilton's adaptation of Islam in order to correspond with Western liberal culture. While this discourse indicates that Islam is less associated with terrorism in post-Arab Spring literary texts, it is nevertheless problematic because it excoriates Islam's uniqueness by way of domesticating, secularising and westernising it.

Moreover, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism uses less poignant vocabulary to represent the Arab Other while simultaneously continuing to depend on a reconstruction of outmoded Orientalist tropes in its representation of the Arab Spring. These representations include 1) a misreading of Arab Spring politics by means of interpreting it via Western political thought; 2) demonstrating a dependence, on the part of the Arab protestors, on Western technologies and political influence (a repackaging of the Orientalist trope of 'the White Man's burden;)' 3) ascribing the failure of the Arab Spring to the Arabs' lack of organisation and the ability to persist in the democratic endeavour (a reproduction of the Orientalist stereotype of the 'lazy Oriental;)' 4) portraying the outcome of the Arab Spring as a victory of the counter-revolution on account of the rootedness of autocracy in the modern Arab state (a contemporary rendition of the Orientalist assumptions regarding 'Oriental despotism.)' For example, in *Kapow!* (2012), Adam Thirlwell demonstrates that the Arab revolution in Egypt fails because the Egyptians are incapable of carrying out a collective effort due to their disunity and lack of purpose. This representation is a repackaging of the classical Orientalist stereotype regarding the laziness of the Oriental natives.

Lastly in my thesis, I investigate the postcoloniality of Arab Spring literary narratives. Postcolonial literature mobilises narratives aimed at artistic and political self-representation, particularly narrating the story of the colonial encounter and its aftermath from the point of view of the colonised (Innes 4–5). Six out of the eight authors whose work is discussed below are of Arab descent, which poses the question as to whether they reflect upon the coloniality of the Arab world in their work to resist Western Orientalist discursive bias. Indeed, despite the overall neo-Orientalist depiction of the Arab Spring revolutions, these authors employ counter-hegemonic narrative strategies that function to decolonise aspects of Arab culture but only on a minor scale. For example, in his novel, *Book of Sands* (2015), Karim Alrawi uses magical realism as a genre in order to give voice to indigenous Arab culture by means of privileging Arab traditionalism and mysticism over Western rationalism. Magical realism is recognised as being used by postcolonial authors to appropriate the political tensions in the colonies because of its prioritisation of non-Western forms of knowledge (Younas 545–46;

Zamora and Faris 3). Alrawi's novel features scenes of magic and superstition taken from Arab culture, and thus, it questions the validity of mimeses in the novel, which is a realist and rational Western literary form.

Consequently, 'the West' is not utilised as a stable signifier in this literature: it is ambivalently both desired and undesired. This use follows Homi Bhabha's definition of the nature of the colonial encounter between the coloniser and the colonised. In his critique of Said's thesis that colonialism has always been unequivocally rejected by the colonised, Bhabha observes that the encounter between the Europeans and the natives is more complex and the power relations are multidirectional and involved in a process of circulation and movement (Bhabha 165; Young, *WM* 188; Huddart 29–30). Thus for Bhabha, ambivalence describes the simultaneous feelings of desiring and lack of desire projected towards the colonisers by the colonised. The representation of the West in the Arab Spring narrative vacillates between a resistance to its political and discursive hegemony and a desire to adopt its political and cultural ideals. For instance, in Alrawi's text, in addition to the discursive resistance of the notion of the inferiority of Arab indigenous traditionalism to Western rationality, the text features a simultaneous adoption of feminist stereotyping of Arab women as being oppressed; Mona's genital mutilation is performed by her brother Omar, which reveals a stereotypical image of Arab patriarchy (*B* 312).

Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism's inclusion of Arabs in the West and its curtailment of Islamophobia indicate a departure from literary post-9/11 neo-Orientalism and its thematisation of the War on Terror (i.e., Islamic terrorism) and the clash of civilisations. This is borne out by the contrast between Western literary works produced after the Arab Spring (as discussed in this thesis) and post-9/11 literature, which is rife with Islamophobia and anti-Arab resentment, specifically in American literature. Richard Gray argues that 'the cataclysmic events of 9/11 and their aftermath […] are part of the soil, the deep structure lying beneath and shaping the literature of the American nation' ("OD" 129). Islam rose as the cultural Other that the post-9/11 literary writers had to deal with. Gray writes: 'There is the threat of the terrorist, but there is also the fact of a world that is liminal, […] where familiar oppositions—civilised and savage, town and wilderness, "them" and "us—" are continually being challenged, dissolved and reconfigured' ("OD" 135). For example, in his novel *Terrorist* (2006), John Updike introduces his protagonist, Ahmad, in terms that emphasise Ahmad's alienation from American liberal life:

> *Devils,* Ahmad thinks. *These devils seek to take away my God.* All day long, at Central High School, girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair. Their bare bellies, adorned with shining navel studs and low-down purple tattoos, ask, *What else is there to see?* (3; Gray, "OD" 135–36; Gray, *AF* 33–34; Morey 24).

Gray proclaims that 'the threat here is not in Ahmad but in the world that seems to challenge and imprison him' ("OD" 135). The text emphasises the sense that Ahmad does not belong and does not feel safe in Western culture ("OD" 135). In short, Ahmad is 'an outsider' belonging to 'an underclass, alien in a nation that persists in thinking of itself as light-skinned, English-speaking, and Christian' (Updike 244; Gray, "OD" 136). As Anna Hartnell observes, Updike's work 'self-consciously explores the discourse on morality—the subterranean economy of much post-9/11 reflection—as the clash of monotheistic religions [(i.e., Islam and Christianity)]' (477). She adds that Islam emerges as the Other, and the religious register of the text overwhelmingly 'contrasts the values of Islam with those of what is recognisably Judeo-Christian culture' (479).

Martin Randall maintains that the fiction of 9/11 evolved into a complex narrative of representation that he terms the 'Literature of Terror' and was different from the initial production which revolved around survivor and eyewitness accounts of the tragic events, including Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn's *102 Minutes: The Untold Story of the Fight to Survive Inside the Twin Towers* (2005) (2). Novels such as Don Delillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) exemplify how 9/11 could be radically represented (8, 15). For example, the protagonist of Hamid's novel, Changez, feels 'remarkably pleased' while watching the attacks unfold on the television screen although he later feels 'under suspicion and uncannily "guilty"' (15; M. Hamid 72, 74). Changez's initial jubilation is an indication of his 'collusion with the terrorist imagination,' but his feelings of being suspected reveal the sort of estrangement and detachment from American society that Ahmad, Updike's protagonist, feels (15).

Despite representing an important evolution from post-9/11 neo-Orientalism, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism remains problematic because it filters the Arab revolutions and contemporary Arab culture via Western imagination and worldview, which, I argue, does not correspond with the reality of the Arab world and the protestors' experience. The new iteration reflects key political developments in Arab history via an inclusion of the Arab uprisings in Western revolutionary history as familiar and adjacent and the curtailment of Islamophobic xenophobia when dealing with revolutionary Islam. Nonetheless, it continues to

be a discursive hegemony concerning the history of the Arab Spring in the way that reinforces hegemonic binaries that marginalise the Arab Other and privilege the Western metropolis. This is evidenced by the continued dependence on the part of the literary authors on outmoded tropes to refer to the Arab world, such as 'Oriental despotism' and 'the lazy Oriental.' An important outcome of this is that the Arab Spring and its Anglophone narratives demonstrate that postcolonial theory remains integral to any understanding of the contemporary power relations between the revolutionary Arab world and the West.

1.2 A New Age of Arab Revolutions

The transformed Western response came as a consequence of the political transformation in modern Arab history that the Arab Spring revolutions represented. The events that began in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid and spread instantaneously to other Arab countries defined a new era and marked a break with existing paradigms of knowledge regarding Arab history (Spanos 92; Salaita 131; Hazran 116). This age of Arab revolutions, I argue, was enabled by exceptional socio-political conditions that led the Arab protestors to engage in a mass-scale political endeavour that was hardly imaginable a few years earlier for several reasons that include the Islamic prohibition against disobeying rulers.[2] Initially, after the nineteenth-century Renaissance in the Arab region (the Arab Nahda), contemporary Islamic political interpretations of orthodox Islamic political thought created a space to accommodate alternative politics and paved the way for the possibility of revolting against rulers within Islamic boundaries. In addition, the rise of so-called moderate political Islamic parties in the early decades of the twentieth century created self-appointed representatives of Islam, exemplified by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood which adopted and propagated the recently introduced unorthodox political interpretations of Islamic leadership. Moreover, the revolutions were extremely quick and spontaneous, which left little room for the protestors to pause and contemplate (Rosiny 2; Bayat, "AS" 587). Spontaneity refers to the fact that the revolutions were leaderless and lacked meticulous organisation. This combination of socio-political factors was compounded by the 2008 financial meltdown which worsened the already existing economic deprivation and economic inequalities in the Arab region.

[2] I believe the most important reason regarding why the Arab Spring was surprising is violating the Islamic prohibition against mass rebellion and revolutions. I discuss political Islamic thought and the prohibition of popular revolutions in detail in Chapter Three, 'Misreading the Arab Spring Revolutions.' I also discuss the important rise of political Islamic parties during the Arab Spring in Chapter Five, 'Islamophobia Curtailed.'

The spark of the Arab Spring was the self-immolation of the Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi in protest against the confiscation of his vegetable cart. Bouazizi died in the hospital on the 4th of January 2011, and his tragic act of protest 'symbolise[d] the hopelessness and frustration of a generation of Arabs' (Noueihed and Warren 74; Cottle 647–48). In solidarity, many leaderless Tunisians rallied to protest against Bouazizi's death and their own economic depression. At his funeral, thousands marched and chanted: 'Farewell, Mohammed, we will avenge you. We weep for you today, we will make those who caused your death weep' (Bady 137). This resulted in 'the protests quickly reach[ing] the capital city of Tunis and spread[ing] to neighbouring countries' (Rosiny 2). While the protests spread regionally throughout Tunisia and across the remainder of the Arab world, they also spread socially to include diverse segments of society, such as the Islamists, secularists, youths, the elderly, men and women, rich and poor (Rosiny 2). President Ben Ali sought to pacify the protests by promising parliamentary elections and three hundred thousand jobs, but with the army refusing to use fire against the protestors, Ben Ali left office on the 14th of January (Rosiny 2; Gelvin 27).

The initial success of the protests in Tunisia and the expulsion of Ben Ali instigated other Arabs to follow suit in Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman and Lebanon. The protestors 'called for an end to corruption, improved living conditions, democracy and the protection of human rights,' and their sacrifices led to the removal of three other long-ruling presidents: Mubarak, Gaddafi and Saleh (Cottle 647). On the 25th of January, the first major rally took place in Egypt, the most populated and most important of the Arab nations, in what was called 'The Day of Anger' (Cottle 648; Gelvin 44–45; Bowen 54). After eighteen days of continued rallies in several cities, streets and squares, including Tahrir, which became an emblem of the people's resistance, Mubarak's vice president, Omar Suleiman, announced on the 11th of February that Mubarak surrendered power to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) (Gelvin 47). In Yemen, the uprisings began in late January, and by mid-February tens of thousands of predominantly Yemeni youth were starting to occupy the squares in Sana'a, Aden and Ta'iz (Allinson 98–99). Saleh surrendered power to his deputy Abd Rabbu M. Hadi in February 2012 after signing a settlement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council in November of the previous year (Fraihat 39). On the 15th of February, three days after Mubarak's departure, the protests against Gaddafi began in Benghazi, a thousand kilometres away from the capital and Gaddafi's stronghold, Tripoli (Bowen 85–86). Eight months later, Gaddafi was killed within the outskirts of his hometown, Sirt, and the National Transition Council declared the liberation of the country (Fraihat 21).

Although some of the necessary conditions for the Arab Spring such as the economic crisis of 2008 were recent, other factors such as the unorthodox interpretations of Islamic principles for political leadership were long in the making. Discussions of Western political thought in the Arab world during the Arab intellectual Renaissance provided unorthodox interpretations of the principles of Islamic political leadership. Those debates began in 1821, particularly in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria (Massad, *DA* 1, 5–6, 16–17; Deuchar 50).[3] The Arab encounter with Europe in the eighteenth century created a painful realisation among Arab intelligentsia of what they believed to be their cultural, economic and militaristic 'decline' and the 'progress' of European civilisation (Patel 12–13; Hill 3–4, 11, 13, 15; Hourani iv, vi; Sheehi 5; Abu-Rabi 8).[4] The Arab intellectuals' dismay at contemporary cultural stagnation was exacerbated by their lack of progress in comparison with the glory of Arab expansionism during the early Islamic empires (Patel 12–13). Dual camps of intellectuals provided two solutions as regards resurrecting the Arabs from their civilisational 'torpor.' The first group advocated the adoption of Western philosophical and technological innovations, contending that it was possible to politically assimilate while maintaining Islamic identity (Hourani iv). The other camp focused on the uniqueness of the early Islamic tradition, referred to as 'heritage,' warning against the dangers of 'Europeanisation' (Hill 10). These debates were symptomatic of a deep crisis within Arab intellectuals and their ambivalence towards both the West and Islamic heritage (Abu-Rabi 6–8; Sheehi 6–7).

The Arab intellectuals transformed the Renaissance into an historical and social movement that resurrected interest in, and created new expressions for, philosophical, cultural, social, linguistic and psychological subjects predicated on Islamic heritage and the challenges of the present (Abu-Rabi 8). Prominent Muslim Renaissance scholars, such as Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi (d. 1873), Jamal Addin Al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), 'postulated that a regeneration of Islam and an acceptance of the "positive" features of the West were not at all incompatible' (Abu-Rabi 6).[5] The fundamental question that these intellectuals encountered

[3] As Abdulrazzak Patel explains in his book, *The Arab Nahdah* (2013), there are different dates for the beginning and end of the Arab Renaissance (13–15).
[4] In his book *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Massad discusses the Orientalist echoes in the terms 'progress,' decadence,' 'development,' 'torpor,' 'modernity' and 'renaissance' (i.e., associating Europe with modernity and Arabs with decadence in the Arab Renaissance discourse) (*DA* 5). Unfortunately, that important discussion cannot be outlined here for the sake of brevity.
[5] It is worth noting that not all Arab Renaissance intellectuals were Muslims. In fact, many were Christians (Patel 20) whilst the majority were males (Sheehi 13). They originated from different parts of the Arab world (primarily Greater Syria and Egypt), and some of them were

was how Muslims can be both authentic and assimilate Western ideas (Abu-Rabi 9). Firstly, the Arab intellectuals asserted the worthiness of Islam: they 'argued for the viability of Islamic reasoning in the modern age because they believed that Islam was inherently rational' (Abu-Rabi 9). Subsequently, by way of vulgarisation and translation, the Arab intellectuals sought to assimilate the achievements of European civilisation, while also reviving classical Arabic cultural production in the early Islamic centuries and experimenting with new solutions for existing problems (Laroui vii; Muasher 9). This cross-cultural interaction developed complex epistemologies that combined both Islamic and European components (Abu-Rabi 8, 11–12; Laroui vii). Ibrahim Abu-Rabi writes that 'One can easily argue that the *nahdah* phenomenon is based on a complex epistemological structure which has both Islamic and Western components' (8).

The Arab Renaissance debates on politics centred on the relationship between religion and the state and followed similar lines regarding the possibility of importing European political practices (Abu-Rabi 11). European approaches to government were seen as part of a global heritage and a potential model for Muslims; this, in my view, gave later generations of Arabs alternatives to orthodox Islamic politics. Tahtawi, for instance, borrowed the European concept of nationhood and applied it to the context of Ottoman rule in Egypt in order to theorise national identity within Islamic thought (Muasher 9–10). This 'reopen[ed] the door to reasoned interpretations of the sources of Islamic law, the Quran and Hadith […], which had been considered fixed authorities for centuries' (Muasher 10). Such independent reasoning and rationalisation of Islamic political tradition were considered to be blasphemous by a majority of Muslims, although Tahtawi believed that Islamic politics could be understood in light of present-day demands (Muasher 10). Similarly, Khayr Addin (d. 1890) in Tunisia helped to draft a Tunisian constitution that attempted to hold a number of the Ottoman powers in check (Muasher 10). Moreover, new parties were formed by political activists that sought to implement democratic reforms (Esposito et al. 11). For example, the Wafd Party in Egypt called for the establishment of a constitutional government (Esposito et al. 11). These developments (at times viewed as 'modernisation' of Islamic political thought) enabled Arabs to engage with unorthodox politics in the next decades.

The creation of Islamic parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and other Arab countries such as Jordan, the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia and the Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah) is a product of this experience. These parties had an uneasy relationship with

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of non-Arab descent, for example Al-Afghani, who was Persian but lived for some time in Egypt (Sheehi 136).

the Arab regimes due to the latter's tendency to be secular. Consequently, I argue that these parties' engagement with politics and their historical resistance of the regimes' secular reforms helped to religiously legitimise the Arab Spring protests further. The establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which pioneered the idea of political Islam in 1928 (Bowen 79), constituted a second phase relating to the Westernisation of politics in Islam. The pan-Islamic terms of this modernisation aimed to reinstitute the Islamic nation in the form of the already abolished Ottoman Empire (Abu-Rabi 11). In view of the British and French colonial control of many Arab countries such as Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon after World War I, and the continued replacement of traditional Islamic ways of life with European culture, the ultimate aim of this phase was to stress the uniqueness of Islam:

> Europe's political actions and alien cultural norms were conflated in the minds of a new breed of Muslim reformers who stressed a sharp distinction between European and Islamic culture, the purity and superiority of Islamic values, and the sufficiency of Islam for all human needs (Esposito et al. 11–12).

This new discourse appealed to the largely undereducated masses and sparked their political involvement (Esposito et al. 12). Hasan Al-Banna (d. 1949), who founded the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as a mass-based movement, wanted to create an Islamic state and disagreed with traditional Muslim scholars who defended orthodox Islamic views of leadership (Abu-Rabi 11). The Muslim Brotherhood viewed orthodox Islamic scholars as upholders of the Arab political status quo that the Brotherhood sought to change (Abu-Rabi 11; Chamkhi 456). They also disagreed with existing Egyptian political parties because of their secular orientations and the fact that they were comfortable with European ways of life (Esposito et al. 13). While this initial phase of what is now known as 'Political Islam,' or 'Islamism' (Esposito et al. 13), was radical, it popularised the idea of religious parties and aroused religious political awareness and activism—a crucial step to set the scene for revolutionary mass action in 2010/2011.

Later in the century, the Islamic parties increasingly adopted political pragmatism in order to realise their view of the Islamic society. Unlike the founding generation of Islamists who resisted European influence, Islamists now regarded representative government as a viable means of governing an Islamic nation (Esposito et al. 15–16; Dalacoura x). M. Ayoob explains that Abul Ala Mawdudi (d. 1979), who classified basic Muslim Brotherhood ideological principles,

> accepted only politics as a legitimate vehicle for the manifestation of the Islamic revelation and as the sole means for the expression of Islamic spirituality, a position that correlated piety with political activity, the cleansing of the soul with political liberation, and salvation with utopia (67).

Mawdudi expressed a sort of pragmatism that enabled Islamic parties to use existing (Western-influenced) parliamentary and constitutional channels to attain political power. Nevertheless, the ultimate aim of the Islamic parties' engagement with politics remains the establishment of the Islamic society. This pragmatic logic was behind the participation of parties such as Islah and Ennahda and their followers in the revolution as a channel for removing dysfunctional political leadership. In the case of Islah in Yemen, the Islamic party provided support for the Yemeni youth camping in February 2011 in the squares of Sana'a and other cities to demand the resignation of Ali Abdullah Saleh (Brehony 238). These pragmatic interpretations are not necessarily disallowed by the traditional Islamic sources, but they have not been mainstream practices until the recent rise of Islamism due to their possible conflict with the Islamic principles of political leadership.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia, for instance, played relatively limited roles in the uprisings due to their unwillingness to give Mubarak and Ben Ali a reason to crush the nascent revolutions (Wolf 131–32; Bowen 79; Noueihed and Warren 82), their historical support of demonstrations against the regime and political change was known to the majority of Muslims. Their position, I argue, had the effect of mobilising large numbers of their Egyptian and Tunisian followers—the Brotherhood has significant popular support among Egyptians (Bowen 24; Noueihed and Warren 79). The Brotherhood and Ennahda had been major players in their countries' political stage for decades prior to the Arab Spring, and their animosity to the regime won them popular support. The tensions between political Islamic parties and Arab governments were exacerbated after World War II because most of the Arab countries fell into 'authoritarianism' after gaining independence (Esposito et al. 13–14). These regimes were dominated by the military and, while not being openly anti-religious, they embraced secular views regarding the role of religion in the state (Esposito et al. 14). Simultaneously, they failed to bring about significant prosperity for their peoples, and most of their populations considered them failures (Esposito et al. 15; Muasher 16–17). Most of the opposition to these regimes came from Islamic parties (Esposito et al. 15). As Marwan Muasher argues: 'Political Islam promised cleaner and less self-serving governance on behalf of a population purified by a more rigorous religious practice' (17). The Arab protestors regarded these parties as a viable alternative to

lead their countries in place of the old Arab regimes. Thus, political Islam's historical position regarding change in the Arab world solidified the initial success of the revolutions.

In addition to the evolution in Arab contemporary politics and the rise of political Islam, I contend that the spontaneity and speed of the Arab Spring protests contributed to the spread of revolutionary spirit across geography and social strata. The element of surprise left little room for the Arab protestors to reflect upon their actions with respect to Islamic restrictions or to predict that these demonstrations would eventually lead to the departure of their presidents. Indeed, unpredictability is a common feature of all revolutions, but it becomes more evident in countries where the suppression of mass political action is the norm since the Arab protestors would have envisioned that their revolution would be crushed before achieving tangible results.[6] The speed and spread of the Arab revolutions, as Asef Bayat explains, took all the actors by surprise, including those who took part ("AS" 587). Bayat goes on to say that the Arab Spring surprised even the CIA who 'seemed confident that the Mubarak regime was safe enough not to crumble by a handful of "usual" demonstrators' ("AS" 587). Hilary Clinton, the US Secretary of State at the time, exclaimed that 'we are facing an Arab awakening that nobody could have imagined and few predicted just a few years ago' (qtd. in Myers).

The elements of surprise and speed were compounded by the pressing needs of economic uncertainty, poverty, unemployment and the rising cost of living. Many analysts have argued the that the main driving force of the Arab Spring was the failure of the economy. Alain Badiou defines the Arab revolutions within a larger 'global uprising against [globalised capitalism],' which he views as an oligarchy, 'a regime of gangsters' (4–5, 12). Badiou stresses that the spark of the revolution was the suicide of a street vendor who was 'prevented from selling' and could not make a living (22). Omar Dahi locates the explanation for the uprising in the political economy of regime consolidation in the Arab region, arguing that the demise of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes was the result of decades of economic and political failures that weakened their popularity (2–3). He writes that 'The ruling cliques of Zine El Abdine Ben Ali and Husni Mubarak were finished off by the worldwide financial crisis beginning in 2008, when there were few if any social forces to come to their defence' (3). Similarly, Andrea Ansani and Vittorio Daniele argue that the 2008 global financial crisis contributed to the creation of the conditions that gave rise to the Arab revolutions only in conjunction with other factors, such as labour markets, education and demography (7). For

[6] It should also be noted that not all protestors demanded political change. In fact, the majority of them prioritised economic reform as I demonstrate in the following paragraph.

example, the authors demonstrate that in 2010, unemployment was higher in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco than in the previous year, revealing that the jobless were primarily youth (7–8). This aspect of insufficient economic opportunities explains one of the most relevant factors behind the revolutions; namely, 'Juvenile dissatisfaction' (8). The revolution was the people's attempt to vent this sort of economic frustration and transform existing injustices.

1.3 Revolutionary Narratives

In this dissertation, I critically analyse representations of the Arab Spring revolutions in literary prose narratives written originally in English. This is a nascent literature, and, to date, there is only a select amount of literary reactions to the Arab Spring limited to eight works: two memoirs (*Cairo: my City our Revolution* by Ahdaf Soueif and *The Return* by Hisham Matar), five novels (*Guapa* by Saleem Haddad, *The City Always Wins* by Omar Hamilton, *Book of Sands* by Karim Alrawi, *Live from Cairo* by Ian Bassingthwaighte and *Chronicle of a Last Summer* by Yasmine El Rashidi) and a novelette (*Kapow!* by Adam Thirlwell). My choice to study fictional and non-fictional narratives is due to the fact that narrative, as Peter Morey demonstrates, 'is always a social act and that it is the interplay between power and resistance that makes texts possible' (4). My postcolonial investigation of contemporary Anglophone narratives serves to expose this sort of power dynamic surrounding the representation of the Arab world during the Arab Spring. Morey follows Said who explains how

> stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative (*CI* xii–xiii, 75, 77–78, 89).

Said's contention is that the novel is '*the* aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study' (*CI* xii; cf. Said, *WTC* 4). For a similar reason, only Anglophone writings are scrutinised; specifically, because they demonstrate a Western discourse, despite the fact that the majority of the texts are written by Anglo-Arab authors who make a minor attempt at resisting some aspects of Western

hegemonic discourse such as language. As Arab authors writing in English, they employ the Western language (English) in counter-hegemonic ways in order to appropriate and/or abrogate the power structures embedded within it with the aim of destabilising the Western monopoly over it. The authors appropriate English by means of moulding it to new usage that fits the position of the colonised while also abrogating it (and thus denying it a privileged status) when continually using Arabic words in the English text. Thus, their works are discussed as Western literature (in English), and as Anglo-Arab authors of English literature, they represent Behdad and Williams' above-quoted definition of non-Western neo-Orientalists who, despite their attempt to assert their difference from the West, accept a framework in which Arab culture is inferior to Western culture.

In my study, post-Arab Spring narratives are the works that feature the Arab Spring revolutions or their aftermath as a major historical framework of reference. Consequently, I excluded works such as G. Willow Wilson's 2012 novel, *Alif the Unseen*, since it does not use the revolutions as a constitutive element of its setting. Although the novel is advertised as 'A Novel of the Arab Spring,' a close reading reveals that the revolutions are only vaguely mentioned in several passages at the beginning and towards the end of the story (11, 376, 380, 392–93). My findings reveal that Wilson's work is the only Anglophone narrative that deals with the Arab revolutions other than the works mentioned above. There is no published comprehensive list of the literary works of this literature, and to produce such a list is one of the contributions that my study aims to achieve. In order to retrieve the scattered and individual works of the Arab Spring, I conducted ongoing research over four years on recently published novels pertaining to the Arab world since 2011 in literary journals, literary reviews of recent works and revolutionary literature, along with general searches on the web. The search terms that I used included 'Arab Spring literature,' 'literature of the Arab revolutions,' 'writings on the Arab uprisings,' 'fiction of revolution' and 'Arab literature.' For example, *The Middle East Institute*, an independent educational organisation, published a 2016 article entitled 'The Literature after the Arab Spring,' in which the author, Nahrain Al-Mousawi, wrote about a host of authors, including Ahdaf Soueif (Al-Mousawi). Similarly, in the same year, *The New York Times* published an article entitled 'After the Arab Spring: 5 Writers to Watch,' which discussed the work of El Rashidi, Haddad and others (Alter).

There are also very few secondary sources on the individual texts, including book reviews and academic articles, whilst the critical studies of the literature as a whole are limited to only one 2022 study by Julia Wurr titled: *Literary Neo-Orientalism and the Arab Uprisings: Tensions in English, French and German Language Fiction*. Wurr takes a larger sample of works

featuring the Arab Spring in English, French and German. Her book confirms my findings that there are only eight works published originally in English since she does not mention any work other than the works I discuss. However, her main thesis does not acknowledge the transformation in neo-Orientalism that I demonstrate in my thesis. She argues that literary neo-Orientalist depictions of the Arab Spring had undoubtedly lessened the dependence on outmoded Orientalist stereotypes, but this occurred initially at the beginning of the protest and was not permanent:

> At least for a short while, the Arab uprisings seemed to be a possible opening in—or even the end of—Neo-Orientalist discourse. […] Within just a few years, however, the so-called Arab Spring itself was turned into yet another construct of Western representational power. [R]epresentations of the uprisings still abound with Orientalist and Neo-Orientalist stereotypes (4–5).

Wurr explains that the optimistic reception of liberation and freedom that the Arab Spring evoked was 'the odd one out' and that 'Neo-Orientalist modes of representation have consequently regained much of the ground which they appeared to have lost in 2011' (5). In her exploration of her chosen literary texts, she identifies the recurring tropes and themes in which 'Neo-Orientalism was able to gather such momentum' (5–6).

As such, my work represents an original contribution to a new field of literary studies and provides an opportunity to mobilise critical methods with the aim of bridging a critical gap. It addresses questions such as: how did the West represent the Arab Spring in literary discourse? In what ways did the West misread the Arab Spring? Did Anglo-Arab authors challenge or replicate Orientalist representations of the Arab Spring? Is postcolonial theory still relevant?

These questions are investigates throughout the eight chapters of the thesis. Chapter One, 'Transformed neo-Orientalist Discourses,' introduces the topic of the thesis and the main arguments, with an overview and a background that sets the scene for the discussion in the next chapters. In Chapter Two, 'Theoretical Framework,' I develop the matrices of the theoretical framework to be used in the thesis, explaining how a post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist thesis is developed based on understandings and critiques of Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism. I argue that the neo-Orientalist discourses circulating in the West at the time of the Arab Spring marked a significant break from previous discourses used to describe the Arab world, especially post-9/11 discourses. In Chapter Three, 'The Meaning of Revolution,' I investigate how the concepts of revolting and revolution are understood or

misunderstood by the novelists and memoirists of post-Arab Spring literature and how this understanding/misunderstanding is depicted in their literary works. Following Robert Young's observation that Islam is misunderstood in Western discourses, I argue that idioms borrowed from Western political thought, rather than Islamic political thought, are employed to interpret and describe the Arab Spring revolutions ("PR" 30). Thus, I demonstrate that postcolonial theory remains relevant today as evidenced by the need to appropriately avoid misreading Islam.

In Chapter Four, 'Not the "Other" but "our Other,"' I give a detailed analysis of the first feature of post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse; that is, because the Arab revolutionaries embraced idioms familiar to Western conceptions of resistance against unjust regimes—promotion of freedom and liberal and representative democracy—they appeared familiar and adjacent to observers in the Western hemisphere. Thus the revolutions are portrayed not as belonging to the antithetical Other of the West but as belonging to the familiar Other of the West. This way of perceiving the Arab Other marks a significant departure from post-9/11 neo-Orientalist views of Arabs and Muslims in which they were viewed as inherently anti-Western and anti-modern. The disappearance of the stereotype of the Arab as anti-Western is the first element that indicates that a new form of neo-Orientalism is established after the Arab Spring.

In Chapter Five, 'Islamophobia Curtailed,' I analyse the second feature of post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse; namely, the curtailment of Islamophobic sentiments. I argue that Islamophobia cannot define the relationship between the Arabs and the West in post-Arab Spring literature. This transformation with respect to Islam's image in the West also indicates a departure from post-9/11 neo-Orientalist political and literary representations of Arabs in post-Arab Spring Western discourses. This chapter builds on the idea argued in the previous chapter that the Arab Spring appeared familiar and relatable to Western observers within the context of globalisation, and, consequently, the Orientalist stereotype that Arabs are anti-Western disappeared. Islam is portrayed as being less violent and terroristic. In Chapter Six, 'Representing the Outcome of the Arab Spring,' and in line with the argument delivered in the previous chapter, the Arab revolutions are depicted in academic and literary discourse as a failure that is caused not by Islam or its previously supposed incompatibility with democracy/modernity, but by social and political factors such as the patrimonial structures of the Arab states. Thus, while post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism moves away from the major stereotypes of Western hegemonic discourse such as associating Arabs with anti-Westernism, it remains indebted to the cultural biases of classical Orientalism in other areas. For example,

it reverts to a reproduction of the classical Orientalist stereotype of 'the lazy Oriental' by means of describing that the revolutions failed due to the Arab revolutionaries' lack of political unity. Thus this discourse continues to undermine the agency of the Oriental Other.

In Chapter Seven, 'Postcoloniality in post-Arab Spring Literature,' I introduce a qualification to the central argument of the thesis, demonstrating that the majority of post-Arab Spring novels and memoirs stem from the Arab postcolony and bear a level of discursive resistance to the Western metropolis. Because most of the authors whose work is discussed throughout the thesis originate from a previous Arab colony, post-Arab Spring narratives, while reiterating key Orientalist abstractions regarding the Arab Spring, exhibit a limited level of resistance to hegemonic colonial discourse. For example, Haddad's text uses postcolonial resistance strategies such as a reversed version of the journey into the Oriental wilderness in the episode in which the protagonist travels to the United States to explore his homosexual identity. However, the level of resistance remains limited to the Orientalist tropes associated with Arab homosexuality while the other major themes of the novel repeat Orientalist and Eurocentric discourse. This mixing of attitudes of desire and lack of desire towards the colonial powers demonstrates that the category of the West is ambivalent in the literature of the Arab Spring: the West stands both as a source of inspiration to be emulated and as a menacing neo-colonial ideology that should to be resisted. Consequently, post-Arab Spring literary texts embody an illustration of Bhabha's thesis regarding the ambivalence of imperial authority in the colony.

In Chapter Eight, 'Conclusion,' I summarise the findings of this research and link them to postcolonial theory in a broader context, demonstrating that postcolonial theoretical scholarship remains relevant to present-day cultural investigation as evidenced by the need to address the issue of misreading Islam.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Orientalism

In order to examine post-Arab Spring literature in this thesis, I utilise and critique Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism, developing the matrices of a theoretical framework that is significantly different from previous iterations of Orientalism to be employed in this investigation. The Arab revolutions began almost ten years after 9/11 in a new decade marked by a global economic crisis, the widespread use of social media and the death of Usama Bin Laden which symbolically marked the end of the so-called Islamic terrorism. Analyses of the Arab Spring revolutions demand a concomitant revisiting of the neo-Orientalist theses within an era of globalisation. One of the defining features of the Arab Spring is that it was shared in real time on social media—often referred to as the 'Twitter Revolutions' or the 'Facebook Revolutions' (Cottle 647). In addition, the revolutions raised popular demands familiar in Western political discourses such as calls for democracy and freedom. Moreover, the revolutionaries mobilised semi-organised mass movements which have been viewed positively in the political history of the West. For instance, the Arab Spring is frequently compared to the Springtime of the People (1848) (Weyland 917). Finally, the dominant narrative of the Arab Spring in US and European mainstream media sympathised with the Arabs who rose against tyranny and injustice (Spanos 85–86). Despite the many neo-Orientalist tropes attached to this narrative, the Arab Spring was perceived as heroic in nature and could be understood within pre-existing Western discourses concerning political dissent and civil disobedience. From a Western perspective, this made the Arab revolutionaries appear familiar, legitimising their cause as a shared and just human demand (Salaita 141; Spanos 86). This is further evidenced by the fact that the Arab revolutions inspired the Occupy movements across different cities in the Western hemisphere (Salaita 141). With these factors in mind, I go on to argue that the neo-Orientalist discourses circulating in the West at the time of the Arab Spring marked a significant break from previous discourses used to describe the Arab world.

This study is underpinned by an understanding of neo-Orientalism as theorised by such writers as Salim Kerboua who argues that neo-Orientalism depicts Muslims 'not only as backward and inferior but more importantly as violent and threatening' (9). Neo-Orientalist stereotypes, according to Kerboua, are characterised by strong Islamophobic sentiments informed by the clash of civilisations between Islam and the West and the war-on-terror dynamic (8, 9, 21). Neo-Orientalism evolved from a second-generation theoretical

engagement with Said's seminal study of Orientalism and began to take shape after the fall of the Soviet Union, and, following the events of 9/11, appears as an important mode of theoretical thinking (Altwaiji 314; Sadowski 14; Kerboua 9). According to Kerboua, a US and European neoconservative creed informs neo-Orientalist constructions of Islam (9, 14–15). While this dissertation agrees with certain configurations of post-9/11 neo-Orientalism—for instance, its association with American policies in the Middle East (Altwaiji 314)—it argues that a new iteration of neo-Orientalism emerged after the Arab Spring which I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism and which cannot be defined by the war-on-terror or the 'clash of civilisations' narrative. The Arab Spring challenged a basic premise of post-9/11 neo-Orientalist theorisation; namely, that the Arabs were anti-Western and undemocratic (Altwaiji 316; Tuastad 592, 594–95). Indeed, the Arab Spring revolutions were interpreted in the West as the 'dawn of a new era' of democratisation (Ventura 283). However, this new perspective to reimagine Arab figures did not result—as Sedef Arat-Koç contends—in the increase of an Islamophilic discourse, but, I argue, it did engender a level of tolerance towards some forms of Islam in shared virtual and actual spaces (Arat-Koç 1656). Post-Arab Spring discourses, however, retain the centrality of Western ideals and continue to position the Arabs as inferior. As such, I contend that this recent phase of neo-Orientalism was shaped by the nature of the Arab Spring; namely, since it is interpreted as a nonviolent move towards democracy, the Arabs are not viewed in Western discourses as anti-democratic or violent. Consequently, my research findings cohere with Said's argument that 'Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities' (*O* 203). My work also reiterates Said's contention that a connection exists between literature and empire (*O* 9–11). I read post-Arab Spring literary texts as being shaped by the dynamics of power between the West and the Arab world as played out in this moment of world history.

In order to work towards a theoretical definition of post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism, my research explores the relevance of Said's theorisation of Orientalism and how his critics identified potential problems within it. In *Orientalism* (1978), Said provides a three-pronged definition of Orientalism: 1) as an academic discipline, 2) as a method to envision the Orient, and 3) as a discursive institution (*O* 2–3). Said's contribution to our understanding of colonial discourse lies mainly in the last two definitions. Initially, Orientalism is 'a [Western] style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (*O* 2). This style of thought establishes the Western 'Self' against the Oriental 'Other' and is adopted by 'a large mass of writers [such as] poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators' who

contribute to its formation, maintenance and extension via processes that involve 'making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it' (*O* 2–3; Burney 23). In other words, the literature produced in the West regarding the Orient accepted this epistemological and ontological binarism as a form of intellectual truism. Secondly, Said applies Michel Foucault's conception of discourse to define Orientalism as 'a systematic discipline' the West uses in order to deal with the Orient by means of 'dominating, restructuring, and having authority over [it]' (*O* 3). Said's contention is that Orientalism represented a Foucauldian enterprise whereby power and knowledge over the Orient became established within a symbiotic formulation, and thus the West 'gained in strength and identity' (*O* 3). Thus Orientalism enabled the West to dominate the Orient and strengthen its own definitions of itself.

Although Said's argument was widely accepted (and inspired multiple debates), it also generated fierce criticism within the emerging field of postcolonial studies. Said's totalising usage of the terms Occident and Orient in *Orientalism* was interrogated and contested by Aijaz Ahmad, James Clifford, Jacinta O'Hagan and others. Although Said's approach rejects claims of being anti-essentialist, Ahmad's critique, for instance, points out that:

> It is rather remarkable how constantly and comfortably Said speaks […] of *a* Europe, or the West, as a self-identical, fixed being which has always had an essence and a project, an imagination and a will; and of the Orient as its object—textually, militarily, and so on (183).

Ahmad contends that Said's approach reproduces an Orientalist, and, on occasion, a reverse Orientalist discourse of the kind which Said critiques in his book. Ahmad emphasises that the Occident is not a geographically or historically monolithic entity. He alludes to Samir Amin's *Eurocentrism* (1989) and Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* (1987) which both demonstrate how the imaginative configuration of Europe as a fixed and stable category, the origins of which can be traced back to classical antiquity, undermines the complexity of imperial historiography (183, 335; see also Varisco 61–62). I believe that Ahmad would be correct if the second definition of Orientalism is read in isolation from the other two, and especially the third conceptualisation of Orientalism. In this regard, Ahmad argues that Said's definitions are 'mutually incompatible' (179; cf. Sardar 68). Nevertheless, Said states that his three definitions of Orientalism are 'interdependent' (*O* 2). Notwithstanding Ahmad's critique, I argue that Said's tripartite definition provides a working paradigm that can be used to read contemporary depictions of Arab figures in literary culture. On the one hand, Said uses the word 'can' in the second definition: '*This* Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and

Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx' (*O* 3). On the other hand, Said's third definition applies to the West—as he states—from roughly 'the late eighteenth century' (*O* 3). This means that Said's theory of Orientalism (in the second and third definitions) 'can' be applied to the distant Greco-Roman past, but this is not what Said does in this book; he applies it to the last two centuries of Western history.[7]

Arguably, the most controversial aspect of Said's theorisation of Orientalism is the question of whether or not the discursive construction of the Orient produced by Orientalists was empirically related to an established Oriental reality (Young, *CD* 152). While it is difficult to determine Said's position in this regard, I believe that his initial remark that there must be a relation between the actual Orient and its representation provides an adequate understanding of this point; namely, Orientalism is a textual exaggeration of Oriental specificity. Said contends that 'The Orient was almost a European invention […]' (*O* 1). Said's expression introduces an ambiguity into the sentence via 'almost,' and the ambiguity is retained in his treatment of this subject in Part Four of Chapter One, 'Crisis.' The crisis which this section refers to is that which 'dramatises the disparity between texts and reality' (*O* 109). The crisis is that texts about the Orient shaped Occidental attitudes such as the ones espoused in work such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Ferdinand de Lesseps: 'the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes' (*O* 93). Said explains that the crisis of Orientalism is that 'such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe' (*O* 94). When writing in response to Said, Young concludes that '[t]his knowledge has no necessary relation to the actual at all'; however, Young's conclusion is problematic because it radically oversimplifies Said's meaning (*CD* 152). In the subsequent page, Said gives details of this relationship between Oriental reality and Orientalist discourse:

> Here I must be very clear—Orientalism overrode the Orient. As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one; an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet multiplied itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia. Similarly a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality (*O* 96).

[7] It is true that Said turns to antiquity and Greco-Roman traditions later in the book in his discussion of early records of the contact between the East and the West (*O* 55–57). He does so, however, to illustrate a point regarding the distant history of contact between East and West rather than to apply his argument of Orientalist discourse to Greco-Roman times.

Said explains that Orientalist discourse mainly functions through exaggerations of a perceived reality. He emphasises this discourse/reality relation in the caveat he introduces in the Introduction: 'it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality' (*O* 5). In the literary analyses in this thesis, I adopt this position; namely, that generalisations of this sort define the Orientalist approach to the Orient.

In the final chapter, however, Said begins to blur the connection between representation and reality in his attempt, ironically, to clarify how Orientalists like Louis Massignon who sympathises with Islam and Arabs still constructs Orientalist discourse: 'No scholar, not even a Massignon, can resist the pressures on him of his nation or of the scholarly tradition in which he works. […] Messignon seemed to refine and yet to repeat the ideas of other French Orientalists' (*O* 271). Said then explains why Orientalists such as Messignon fail to make a neutral representation of the Orient despite apparent sympathies with its cultures:

> The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth,' which is itself a representation (*O* 272).

Although Said elaborates this point further in subsequent paragraphs, he does not answer what he poses here as a question. Ahmad, like others (Clifford 260; D. Porter 351; Tekdemir 148–49), is better placed than Young to accuse Said of failing to decide whether Orientalists misrepresent the Orient intentionally or because objective representation is impossible (193). Ahmad situates 'Said's equivocation' within the Nietzschean anti-humanist tradition of questioning the 'facticity of facts' which, Ahmad asserts, produced the poststructuralist rejection of fixed meanings as seen in Foucault and Jacques Derrida (193–95).

While Ahmad is correct to raise the issue of the incompatibility of Said's historiographical approach to the study of Orientalism and to contextualise this within the Nietzschean nihilistic contention that truths are no more than a rhetorical use of language, Said's historiographical methodology (including approaches mobilised throughout *Orientalism*) is revealed to be

varied.[8] I argue that Said's problematic theoretical approach in *Orientalism* reveals his interests and purposes regarding his theorisation of Orientalism which are crucial to any understanding of the book. Regarding his methodological approach, Said explains that:

> it is hard for me to map my interests—why is it that I am interested in this thing, why am I interested in all these other things? So I simply gave up and figured that one is moved in ways that are quite mysterious, and that it is better for me than trying to find some system to contain them all. I am invariably criticised by younger postcolonialists (Ahmad, etcetera) for being inconsistent and untheoretical, and I find that I like that—who wants to be consistent? (Ashcroft 281; see also Said, *O* 340).

Said privileges writing as a discursive means to resist and write back against historical misrepresentations of the Orient in *Orientalism* over a forensic need for theoretical consistency. Said wrote *Orientalism* as part of a trilogy, and thus it constitutes only one third of a larger project. Said does not clearly define his purposes in *Orientalism*; he does so in *The Question of Palestine* which he wrote in 1977-8 (*QP* ix). In this book, which constitutes the second theoretical instalment of a trilogy, he states that his purpose is 'to write a book putting before the Western reader a broadly representative Palestinian position […],' but his attempt to describe the unique Palestinian experience is hindered by 'many connections between what Palestinians did and what other Arabs did' (*QP* xxxvii). Consequently, he believes that in the West 'there is the entrenched *cultural* attitude toward Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient. This attitude […] dehumanised us, reduced us to the barely tolerated status of a nuisance' (*QP* xxxxii). Thus what matters for Said is weaponizing culture as a resistance to the forms of prejudice he identifies in his other writings, such as those outlined in his essay 'Shattered Myths' (1975) ("SM" 92; cf. Said, *PPC* 264). In order to defend Palestine, Said had to defend the Arab world and Islam. This resistance is grounded in the 'reality' of the political history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He concludes that his book (*The Question of Palestine*) 'is a series of experienced realities, grounded in a sense of human rights and the contradictions of social experience, couched as much as possible in the language of everyday reality' (*QP* xxxxiii). Consequently, Said's

[8] In the interview with Gauri Viswanathan, Said expressed a lack of interest in theoretical work. Viswanathan asks: *'Would you say, particularly when you wrote* Orientalism, *that you were attempting to do something like that* [Fanon's use of Lukacs' subject-object dichotomy in colonial analysis] *with Foucault, and take Foucault where Foucault dared not go?'* Said's answer is: 'I was much more interested in the material than I was in theories. By that time I had already begun to lose interest in Foucault, actually' (*PPC* 267).

theory of Orientalism is the product of his engagement with the political history of the Middle East.

Said's Orientalism thesis, however, raises other important methodological problems which cannot be assuaged by his statements of purpose. Critics have raised theoretical inconsistencies with Said's use of humanism.[9] For instance, Valerie Kennedy argues that Said's use of humanism to critique Orientalist bias is not justifiable because humanism is 'based on a hierarchical view of cultures which tended to define European and Western culture as civilised and superior and other cultures as barbaric and inferior' (34). Thus his appeal to Western historical, humanistic and cultural research to critique Orientalism is contradictory (34). However, Leela Gandhi develops a critique of Said's methodology to contend that his work can be defined by an overarching anti-humanist theoretical approach (28–30, 64). Gandhi explains that Said's anti-humanism can be perceived in his critique of its premise that identifies and equates humanity with European man. Kennedy correctly observes that 'modifying' humanism as Said attempts to do in *Orientalism* is hardly possible because 'It is exceedingly difficult to free Western humanism from its Eurocentricity' (34).

While I agree with Kennedy, I critique humanism more for its radical anthropocentrism than its Eurocentrism, especially when applied in the context of the Arab Spring. Theories based on humanism, such as Said's critique of Orientalist discourse, give supremacy to political systems which place man in the centre, such as Western liberal democracy, and fail to recognise the significance of scripture-based theological interpretations of politics. In his 'Preface (2003)' to *Orientalism*, Said insists on the category of secular humanism as the only way out of the injustices and inhumane practices that emerged in the world after 9/11 and resembled a clash of civilisations between the West and Islam: 'The secular world is the world of history made by human beings' (*O* xx–xxii). He observes that the world needs 'the active practice of worldly secular rational discourse' rather than what he calls 'a sentimental piety enjoining us to return to traditional values or the classics' (*O* xxii). Thus, I argue that Said falls into the same logic for which he critiques Orientalists; namely, to impose a Western view (secularism) on the Orient. Said explains that Orientalists assumed that 'there are still such things as *an* Islamic society, *an* Arab mind, *an* Oriental psyche,' which overlay 'ordinary human experience' (*O* 299–301). Said's use of the word 'human,' however, is problematic

[9] Humanism in this discussion refers to the 'categorical valorisation of the human subject' (L. Gandhi 29). Leela Gandhi quotes Diderot as he observes that man 'is the single place from which we must begin and to which we must refer everything… It is the presence of man which makes the existence of beings meaningful' (qtd. in L. Gandhi 29).

because of its emphasis on rationality and secularism (of the West) over theology and scripture (of Islam). Consequently, his secular humanism overlays the human experience of the religious Arabs and is thus radically Eurocentric and anthropocentric.

Specifically in my discussion of the Arab Spring, Said's postcolonial stance fails to accommodate Islamic political thought which is based on the Word of God and is an integral part of the political setting of the uprisings. In Chapter Three of this thesis, 'The Meaning of Revolution,' I argue that post-Arab Spring narratives define the revolution's aims as being an achievement of Western-style democracy and freedom. I use Young's thesis regarding the misreading of Islam that the majority of Western intelligentsia falls into to contend that this representation of the goals of the Arab revolutionaries fails to accommodate the traditions of Islamic political thought which shaped the interests of the Arab protestors (Young, "PR" 30). The paradigms of Islamic justification of government are different from those produced by the Western Enlightenment with its focus on the centrality of the contractees (men) within social contract theory (Rosen et al. 60). Sunni Islam's justification of government springs from the doctrine of the caliphate which is based on coercive divine government ordained by God (Crone, *MI* 6). Islamic political philosophy is hostile to popular revolutions as a means to achieve regime change. In addition, representative democracy is not highly regarded in Islam as a method to govern. Consequently, endorsing the revolutions and assuming that the Arab protestors sought to create representative democracies such as that practiced, for instance, in the United States drastically Westernises the Arab mass action.

My critique of Said's anthropocentric humanism—and by extension postcolonialism's anthropocentrism—defines an original modification to the fundamental theoretical framework of postcolonialism. My postcolonial investigation of the Arab revolutions looks at the Islamic roots of the politics surrounding the events as the product of divine revelation and the people's acceptance and adoption of them as a genuine act of faith. This does not entail a complete departure from the Marxist materialism and the enlightenment humanism that defined Said's postcolonial thesis but an attempt to critique those schools of thought in order to theorise the connection between religion and politics during the Arab revolutions. I am interested in defending some of the elements of the political status quo with respect to the Arab uprisings; namely, the paths to legitimately dislodging rulers are limited according to Islamic politics and the uprisings did not fit the Islamic criteria for legitimate opposition. In order to accommodate this position, the Marxist materialist interpretation of history and humanism should be revisited. I must acknowledge that my approach points towards the well-

rehearsed debate regarding reconciling metaphysics and ontology, faith and reason (Pelletier 206). However, postcolonial theory needs to define the connection between its materialist and secular background and religion in order to properly investigate Islamic and other religious societies. The political reality of the Arab mass action and the inadequacy of Western theoretical frameworks to interpret an Islamic event necessitate such an approach. This inadequacy of existing postcolonial research has been pointed out by Young, whose observation that Islam has been misunderstood by many Westerners—which I discuss in further detail in Chapter Three—evidences the need for modification and critique. Nonetheless, Young's essay is only an indication for further investigation—a gap which my work in this thesis strives to bridge.

Said's 'undecidability—' to use Ahmad's term—over the question of reality and representation can also be seen in his distinction between the latent and manifest types of Orientalism which he invokes in his discussion of contemporary Orientalism, a point of particular relevance to my work because this area of Said's work on contemporary US engagement with the Orient was developed later in neo-Orientalist theses. Despite Said's critics (such as Daniel Varisco), I believe the categories he introduces to explain the two configurations of Orientalism are useful. Said defines latent Orientalism as an unconscious positivity while manifest Orientalism refers to 'the various stated views about [the Orient]' (*O* 206). He uses these concepts to explain the 'long and slow process of appropriation by which Europe, or European awareness of the Orient, transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic, and even military,' referring to the large-scale Western first-hand engagement with the Orient in the twentieth century (*O* 210). This resulted in a tension between the (latent) academic and (manifest) administrative relationship to the Orient: 'a tension developed between the dogmas of latent Orientalism, with its support in studies of the "classical" Orient, and the descriptions of a present, modern, manifest Orient articulated by travellers, pilgrims, statesmen, and the like' (*O* 222–23). Nevertheless, latent Orientalism, Said goes on to explain, is always 'more or less constant' because 'Oriental material could not really be violated by anyone's discoveries' (*O* 205–06). Kennedy contends that this distinction is Said's way of reconciling the historical and non-historical of his definitions of Orientalism (23).

My theoretical approach coheres with Kennedy's argument: I understand that latent Orientalism represents established views about the Orient which are now divorced from the reality of the Orient while manifest Orientalism can be negotiated and debated based on actual views of the Orient. This reading resolves what is otherwise a problematic concept. Varisco,

for instance, identifies how the two categories are confusing because they borrow from psychoanalysis which turns Said's investigation from philosophy to psychology; yet, Said's dichotomy enables him to engage with the contemporary aftermath of Orientalism (57–59). This is exemplified by his explanation that, since World War II, American imperium overtook the French and the British as the dominant global hegemonic authority (*O* 284–85). Said's discussion of American hegemony and the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict to recent Orientalist discourses bears the seeds of neo-Orientalism.

2.2 Neo-Orientalism

In order to illuminate the different configurations of the term neo-Orientalism and to highlight the critical deficit that my work serves to address, it is useful to give a short account of the evolution of the term and how it was shaped by the end of communist rule in Eastern Europe (1989) and the attacks on the World Trade Centre (2001). The term neo-Orientalism evolved after 9/11, and Said's use of the discursive category in his 2003 Introduction to *Orientalism* contributed to its popularity (*O* xxi). It was first used in Yahya Sadowski's 'The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate' (1993) when he explains how after the collapse of the Communist Bloc, a new wave of Western thinkers sought to prove that all ideological alternatives to Western liberalism virtually died out (14). Those 'new thinkers' contended that resistance to Western democracy came now from the Middle East. They included 'neo-Orientalists' such as Samuel Huntington and Daniel Pipes (14). Many of the debates discussed by Sadowski were reiterated and expanded by Said three years later in his 1996 Introduction to the Vintage Edition of his book *Covering Islam* (1981). Without referring to the term 'neo-Orientalism,' he discusses most of the characteristics of the concept, including the focus on the Islamic world, the association between Islam and terrorism and the lack of genuine academic scholarship in the writings of neo-Orientalists (*CI* xi, xvi).

Sadowski and Said's theorisations began to take definite shape after the events of 9/11, especially after Dag Tuastad's 2003 study of the violent Western military response to the September attacks. Tuastad refers to 'what has been labelled neo-Orientalism' (594) and links it to Paul Richard's concept of new barbarism—ascribing violence to certain cultures rather than to political conflicts (592–94). Tuastad explains that the violence of 9/11 is linked to the post-9/11 discourses that describe Muslim Arab culture (592–94). Three years later, I. H. Malik authored a book in which he dedicated a chapter to 'Neo-Orientalism and the Muslim Bashing: Bernard Lewis on Islam.' Malik defines neo-Orientalism as the outlook that Islam is inherently anti-Western (152). M. Alam, in his book *Challenging the New Orientalism*

(2006), defines new Orientalism as a 'repackaging' of old Orientalist tropes and links it to US and Israeli hegemony in the Middle East (xiii). This discussion was further developed around the turn of the decade with two studies by Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams and Muhammad Samiei. Behdad and Williams provide a sober theorisation of neo-Orientalism, contending that it propagates new stereotypes regarding the Other in addition to the ones found in traditional Orientalism (284). They define five characteristics of neo-Orientalism: 1) neo-Orientalists do not have to be White male subjects but can be Middle Eastern male and female authors, 2) neo-Orientalism is unapologetically involved in the politics of the Middle East, 3) it is based on what the authors call 'an ahistorical form of historicism,' 4) it tends to deploy 'superficial' scholarship about Muslims, and 5) it uses the veil as a 'signifier of oppression' (284–85). Samiei, on the other hand, links neo-Orientalism to an unprecedented wave of globalisation wherein the dualism of the West and Islam has been 'reconstituted, redeployed and redistributed' (1148). This had been envisioned by Z. Sardar two years before 9/11. He argued that 'Orientalism is transformed into an expression of globalised power and becomes both an instrument for exercising that power and containing perceived threats to that power' (110).

Recently, Mubarak Altwaiji (2014) argued that neo-Orientalism serves a similar function to traditional Orientalism: the creation of hegemonic reality in order to advance Western imperialism (321). The distinction between Orientalism and neo-Orientalism originates in the geography with which they are concerned: in neo-Orientalism 'the Arab world becomes the centre while major classic components such as India, Iran, and Turkey are excluded from the neo-Orientalist map' (314). Altwaiji emphasizes that the link between neo-Orientalist discourse and US 'new imperialism' is the US expansion strategy in the Middle East for the control of oil (319). Salim Kerboua (2016) contends that neo-Orientalism differs from Orientalism in many respects, defining it as 'the neoconservative construction of Islam and the Muslim world as a social and existential threat to what neoconservatives and right-wing actors call the Western world and civilization' (8). Consequently, it is conceived mainly as an American phenomenon, strongly associated with the right wing, encouraging Islamophobia and is linked to Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis (8–9). Kerboua adds that neo-Orientalism is ideologically motivated since it espouses Zionist and pro-Israeli viewpoints, and it is directed against Muslims in the Islamic world and Muslims in the West as well (21–22). Altwaiji and Kerboua wrote after the Arab Spring was well set in motion, but they do not discuss the effects of its aftermath on representations of Arabs. This is an omission in their illuminating discussions which my work seeks to address.

I argue that literary representations of the Arab Spring demonstrate that Western discourses regarding the Arab Spring and the revolutionary Arabs differ from the popular representations that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11. Although the main narrative, which maintains the superiority of the West over the Orient, persists, there has been a shift in the defining theses of neo-Orientalism, and it is here that my work makes several key critical interventions within the field of existing scholarship. Firstly, there is a departure from themes that intensified after the attacks such as those featuring Islamophobia, the clash of civilisations ideology and the War on Terror agenda. For example, the post-Arab Spring literary texts which I study in my thesis rarely centre on plots, themes or motifs that are concerned with terroristic attacks or the peaceful co-existence of Westerners and Arabs. When terrorism is explored, this occurs briefly or in sub-plots within a context which differentiates between terrorism and Arabs. For instance, in Haddad's *Guapa* (2016), when Rasa travels to the United States to complete his education, he does not fear being mistaken for a terrorist on the day of the 9/11 attacks. He is asked by a 'blond' girl (who is representative of Western culture) to donate blood for the victims, but he refuses. This is symbolic of the acceptance of Arab blood or race in the United States. She returns later to tell him that 'no one blames you for what happened' (*G* 138–39). In Chapter Five of my thesis, I explore the significance of similar themes which constitute a major departure from dominant post-9/11 neo-Orientalist Islamophobic tropes.

Secondly, there is a deterritorialization of the binary of 'us' versus 'them' due to the prevalence of pluralism evidenced via tropes that promote cooperation between Westerners and Arabs in shared spaces and for common concerns. Depictions of such spaces of cooperation include both virtual and real places in which people from East and West find themselves. This does not mean that the distinction of Orientalism between the 'superior' West and the 'inferior' Orient has disappeared, but it is now present in shared places provided by globalisation and multiculturalism. In the postcolonial context, globalisation indicates that world cultures are becoming increasingly mixed and juxtaposed due to the growing dependence on technologies and the dominance of a single economic world system (Young, *PSI* 129). This has profound consequences for a system predicated on binary opposition, but its immediate effect on post-Arab Spring discourse is that people (from East and West) are depicted as sharing the same spaces and concerns. This gives rise to multicultural interactions that undermine claims of territorial and cultural boundaries that could be policed and maintained. Multiculturalism, which in this context refers to 'a society defined by cultural diversity,' is widely explored in post-Arab Spring literature (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 163). For example, Charlie, the White American protagonist of Bassingthwaighte's novel *Live from*

Cairo (2017), works at the Refugee Relief Project with Aos, the Egyptian Islamist, and Michael, a British lawyer who is in love with a British Egyptian girl (39, 48). Charlie, Aos and Hana—who is a Christian American Iraqi—form a group to help an Iraqi refugee escape the UNHCR relentless bureaucracy and obtain asylum in the United States (11–12). This is significant because these characters are depicted as if they belong to the same nation, not as individuals divided by geography and ideology. Although they resist a supposedly Western institution (the UNHCR), their resistance is led by Charlie, which indicates a superior representation of the West. The different implications of this discourse of globalisation and neo-Orientalism are explored further in Chapter Four of my thesis.

Accordingly, I argue that the Arab Spring literary discourses represent a clear manifestation of the sort of theoretical ambivalence that Bhabha identifies as being key to colonial discourse. Bhabha contends that ambivalence—oscillating between desire and repulsion—is the central defining feature of colonial authority (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 13). As Young notes, Bhabha's thesis effectively 'perform[s] a political reversal at a conceptual level in which the periphery […] has become the equivocal indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence that characterises the centre' (*CD* 153). Bhabha explains that 'the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference,' and that the discriminatory effect of colonial discourse refers to 'a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubts, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different*—a mutation, a hybrid' (153, 159; cf. Loomba 148–49). Bhabha's concept describes the contradictory and multidirectional nature of post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse, which destabilises, but does not overthrow, its authority (Parry 43). I contend that the Arab Spring is centred in this discourse by positive readings of the events as heroic attempts at democracy and feelings of repulsion at its location in the Arab world. This materialises, for example, in ambivalent representations of components of the Arab world such as the old Arab regimes which are depicted, on the one hand, as dictatorial and brutal and, on the other hand, as pro-Western.

My thesis identifies a transformation in Western discourses regarding the Arabs after the Arab Spring which has been investigated by critics such as Steven Salaita, Sedef Arat-Koç and Hamid Dabashi. Although these critics establish potentially insightful observations indexed to the subtle evolution within Western discursive responses to the Arab Spring, their assessment tends to overlook some aspects of this change. In his paper, Salaita dedicates a section to what he calls 'The New Arab Image and Unrevised Orientalism' in which he argues that the most interesting aspect of the representation of the Arab Spring is the 'improved image of Arabs'

(141). Salaita notes that Arabs are viewed 'by Americans as sources of inspiration, as people to be emulated,' but he does not argue that this constitutes a shift in the paradigms of Orientalist discourses, concluding that 'such favourable images were never systematic' (141). Arat-Koç, on the other hand, concludes that the Arab Spring engendered a significant change in Western discourses regarding the Middle East. She argues that Islamophilic reactions by Western governments have been more noticeable since the Arab Spring (1656). She adds that this shift represents a recent phase which she terms '*new* new Orientalism' (1657). However, Islamophilia describes a radical interpretation of these discourses and cannot adequately explain the shift that has occurred. Dabashi is a vociferous proponent of the 'new phase' thesis. He argues that, after the Arab Spring, 'The East, the West, the Oriental, the colonial, the postcolonial—they are no more. What we are witnessing unfold in what used to be called "the Middle East" (and beyond) marks the end of postcolonial ideological formations […]' (*AS* xvii). He radically theorises 'a new geography of liberation [produced by the Arab Spring], which is no longer mapped on colonial or cast upon postcolonial structures of domination' (*AS* xviii). The Arab Spring came as a case in point for his thesis which he outlined in his 2009 book *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge & Power in a Time of Terror*. In that book, he contends that since 9/11 the world is witnessing a post-Orientalist moment in which he envisions modes of knowledge production free of fixated discursive subject-object formation (*PO* xxii–xxiii). My work takes these readings of the Arab Spring one step further to argue that Western neo-Orientalist discourses on the Arab Spring represent a unique mode of discursive engagement with the Arabs.

The theoretical framework used in this thesis asserts that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism reinvented the structures of knowledge with which it dealt with and defined the Arab revolutions according to the imperatives of this historical moment. The literary texts of the Arab Spring represent a recent moment of contact between the Western writer and the Arab world. However, rather than generating neutral discourses that highlight the distinctiveness of the Arab Spring, writers of this literature draw upon new and established Orientalist tropes about the Arab Other, adding to, extending and deepening neo-Orientalist discourses. In my interrogation of the literary texts in the following chapters, I demonstrate that the texts reveal a departure from the themes that depict Arabs as anti-Western and as violent terrorists. Nonetheless, they evidence the dependence upon other stereotypes regarding Arab culture. In the following chapter, 'The Meaning of Revolution in post-Arab Spring Narratives,' I discuss the most important misrepresentation in which Western authors fall; namely, misreading the Arab revolutions by means of describing them using Western political thought rather than

Islamic political though. The significance of this is that Said's thesis in *Orientalism* regarding Western misrepresentation of Arab and Islamic culture continues to be valid and relevant today.

Chapter 3: The Meaning of Revolution in Post-Arab Spring Narratives

3.1 Misreading the Arab Spring Revolutions

In this chapter, I investigate how the concepts of revolt and revolution are understood and misunderstood by the novelists and memoirists of post-Arab Spring literature. I follow Young's observation that Islam is misunderstood in Western discourses to argue that idioms borrowed from Western political thought, rather than Islamic political thought, are used to interpret and describe the Arab Spring revolutions (Young, "PR" 30). The Arab revolutions are endorsed as a legitimate political act to remove unwanted presidents and described as an attempt at democracy, thus partially occluding Islam, which often looks with suspicion at acts of disobedience to the ruler and does not highly regard democracy. For example, Lorella Ventura argues that democracy (indicating rule of the citizens—allowing all citizens to have a voice in political decisions) is not regarded as a value to be achieved in Islam (295). The root of this misunderstanding is the lack of awareness on the part of Western politicians, academics and literary authors of the difference between Islamic political thought and Western political philosophy. I demonstrate that the misreading of the Arab revolutions by post-Arab Spring literary authors can be mapped across two main indicators: 1) describing the Arab regimes as dictatorial (while dictatorship and tyranny in Islam have different connotations from those in the West) and celebrating revolutions (the mere act of revolting) as a positive development and the correct path towards political reform (while in Islam, political reform should not be realised through mass protests); and 2) portraying that the revolutions aim to achieve Western-style democracies and political systems (while evidence reveals that in Islam, democracy is not part of political agenda and that economic aims were prioritised by the Arab protests prior to and during the Arab Spring). For example, Matar's memoir, *The Return*, thematises that the Arab Spring revolution in Libya is a political movement aiming to achieve liberation from a totalitarian dictatorship. Gaddafi is portrayed as a dictator in the Western sense of the word, and the revolution is viewed as the right way to depose him. Soueif's memoir, *Cairo: my City, our Revolution*, depicts that Western-style democracies are adequate and were the main goal of the revolutions, while there is little evidence that the Egyptian protestors took part in the protests in order to create a democracy. Rather, evidence suggests that improved economic opportunities were their primary aim. The idea of revolution is thus a site of neo-Orientalist misunderstanding and misinterpretation where the two discrepant views of the East and the West are projected.

The discourses originating in the West configured the Arab Spring in a discursive language that recalled prior Western revolutions, describing and codifying it within a framework of Western political, philosophical and cultural vocabulary. Little attempt was made in Western discourses to view the Arab Spring within Arabic and Islamic historical and political contexts. Ignorance surrounding the significance of Islamic political thought as a major force shaping the lives of contemporary Arabs leads to a misreading of the Arab Spring. The misreading, and the subsequent misrepresentation, occurred when Western politicians, thinkers, journalists and authors reconfigured the Arab uprisings in the West's own historical image, reworking Western history and the development of democracy in the narratives that were used to report the Arab Spring. President Barak Obama, for instance, made a speech on the 11th of February, 2011—shortly after President Mubarak of Egypt announced his resignation—in which he praised the Egyptian people for embracing 'genuine democracy' and 'elections that are fair and free' (*OOE* 00:12:35 – 00:13:10). Yet there is little evidence that the Egyptian protestors were thinking of the Western ideals of 'democracy' and 'fair elections' when they stood in opposition to Mubarak in Tahrir Square. In fact, evidence points in the opposite direction: shortly before the uprisings in Egypt, only 11 percent of Egyptian youth thought that 'participation in government decision making was a top priority and a mere 3 percent thought freedom of expression should accompany the exercise of democracy in Egypt' (Gelvin 28). Badiou and Achcar assert that democracy or a desire to become Western were not among the protestors' demands (Badiou 55; Achcar, *MS* 5). Consequently, to say that the Arab Spring was a genuine expression of the love of democracy is to rely upon Western tropes as a means of constructing narratives attached to a singular Arab phenomenon. This manner of depicting the Arab Spring, filtered through the Western imagination and worldview, is problematic and, I argue, does not correspond with the reality of the Arab world and the lived experience of those who took part. It is a misreading that uses an ethnocentric and essentialist neo-Orientalist discourse to reduce the Arab world to a mere simulacrum of the West, and it overlooks the singularity of those understood as representative of an Arab 'Other.'

To illuminate this Western failure to conceive of the Arab Spring within an Islamic historic tradition, my work is underpinned by Young's argument in his essay 'Postcolonial Remains' (2012), that the Islamic world has always remained unreadable to Western thinkers. He writes that: 'While an intense interest in postcolonial theory has developed in Islamic countries, […] Islam was just as unreadable for most postcolonial theorists in the West as for everyone else' ("PR" 30). For example, Young observes that 'Westerners tend to read all forms of radical Islam as the same, that is, as fundamentalism, itself ironically a Western concept' ("PR" 29).

Young's argument illustrates the inadequacy of Western analyses of Islam and the ill-suited methodologies applied by Western analysts and commentators of Islam.

In his attempt to demonstrate that the postcolonial remains, Young finds a role for the postcolonial in contemporary academic practice in what he calls 'the politics of invisibility and unreadability' ("PR" 22). He writes: 'the issue is rather to locate the hidden rhizomes of colonialism's historical reach, of what remains invisible, unseen, silent or unspoken' ("PR" 21). The invisible remains include, in addition to indigenous cultures and illegal migration, political Islam ("PR" 22). Such touch points are postcolonial legacies, and they reveal that there are 'left over' subjects in contemporary research in the humanities linking political insights to colonialism and anti-colonialism. Young postulates that postcolonial work on Islam, which still remains to be done, would guide Western knowledge about its history, culture and society, correcting such inadequate mis-readings and fallacious assumptions.

In the literary texts under investigation in this thesis, I argue that the misreading of the Arab Spring stems from the authors' dependence on Western political thought (rather than Islamic politics) regarding two main concepts: dictatorship and democracy. The novelists and memoirists of the Arab Spring literature fall into Orientalist stereotyping when describing Arab rulers as dictators according to the Western sense of the word and when portraying that the aim of the revolution is to achieve democracy. As the following discussion demonstrates, Arab rulers cannot be accurately described as dictators in the Islamic sense of the word and democracy was not an Islamically endorsed political system.

Western political thought derives from theories such as the social contract theory, which posits that the people, assumed to be free, equal and independent, gave up their freedom in order to be ruled by others. In doing so, they exercised their collective power, and collective power in social contract theory is the only source of legitimacy of government (Rosen et al. 54–60). In addition, Western political thought owes a significant ideological debt to various historical revolutions through the centuries, for example, the American Revolution (1775) and the French Revolution (1789). Western political thought also draws upon the Bible, from which it took, for instance, the basis of the concept of the separation between religion and state (Witte Jr. 16–17). Finally, Western political thought evolved throughout centuries of development and painful change specific to the nations and countries in which it originated. For example, feudal Western Europe remained divided and there were interstate rivalries, which contributed to the limitation of governmental power, oppression and the confiscation of property because the people of a misgoverned territory tended to easily migrate to other neighbouring states (Weede 371). Such limitations to the ruler's authority are thus specific to

Western politics, and, consequently, concepts such as sovereignty, separation of powers, nation, state, constitution, parliament, representation, freedom, justice, to name only a few, have distinct Western denotations.

In one view, the predominant ideas of modern Western political thought can be traced to the turbulent seventeenth century in England (Isaacs and Sparks 4). For example, the concept of government is grounded in social contract theory which sought to explain why people gave up their freedoms willingly to be ruled by a group of others. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), John Locke tried to answer this question. In order to justify the authority and legitimacy of the state, Locke repudiated previously held justifications such as the divine right of kings as expressed by philosopher Sir Robert Filmer and argued for a government by the consent of the people (Spellman 77). Locke believed that people in the state of nature are inclined to preserve and respect each other's well-being. Unlike Thomas Hobbes, Locke believed that this original state of nature is not necessarily marked by hostility between people (Rosen et al. 7). In their 'free, equal, and independent' natural state, men willingly chose to join in a community where they gave up some of the freedoms of the natural state, subjecting themselves to the political authority of other men—thus creating a political body called government. However, if any man chose not to sign this contract (thought of as explicit or tacit), he would have been obliged by the will of the majority who chose to join in the contract (Rosen et al. 58). By political power Locke meant the employment of 'the force of the community in the execution of […] laws, and the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury' (Rosen et al. 54). This is the only justification of government that Locke allows; he writes, 'this is that, and that only, which did or could give beginning to any lawful government in the world' (Rosen et al. 60). Other political theorists like Hobbes and later Jean-Jacques Rousseau expressed similar ideas confirming that the social contract is the basis of government. However, as C. Sparks and S. Isaacs put it, John Locke's 'ideas came to be used in later times as an ideological foundation for liberal democratic order' (4). While there is no unanimous consensus over it, the social contract theory makes the basis of government and explains the justification of the state in the West (Rosen et al. 53).

Western political thought developed through the ideas of thinkers and philosophers such as Locke but also through political activities, legislations, revolutions and political crises exemplified by the American and French revolutions (Isaacs and Sparks 2). In America, for instance, the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Federalist Papers (1787), and the signing of the Constitution (1787) were viewed as major milestones on the road towards full representational democracy. The American Revolution gave the world the first example of a

democratic government ruled by a democratic society in which everybody is equal (G. S. Wood 91). The social hierarchies which divided people based on rank inherited from old regimes were abandoned, and the common people were allowed to participate in their own government as voters and ruler (G. S. Wood 91). This had not been seen before, not even in English representative democracy which retained the existing social structures of king, nobility, and common people in its form of government that is comprised of Crown, House of Lords, and House of Commons (G. S. Wood 94).

While the Americans succeeded in freeing themselves from the old English monarchy, they did not destroy it. The French revolutionaries, in their version of democracy, destroyed one of the oldest monarchies in Europe in 1789, replacing the kingdom with a republic. Not only did the monarchy fall, but also fell the whole social system which divided the society into aristocracy, bourgeoisie and peasantry. As B. Fontana observes, this taught the world two main things about democracy: the first is the participation of the people 'below' in the social ladder in the making of their political reality, the second is the establishment of a political system clearly defined by constitution, legislation, institution and function (109).

The application of such concepts beyond the West fails to recognise the singular development of political institutions in various cultures, including the Islamic world. Unlike Western political philosophy, the Sunni strain of Islamic political thought widely practised in the Arab world has long resisted such development via interactions with external influences until recently. The only sources that form its basis are the Holy Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad: this has crucial ideological and structural consequences. Firstly, the separation between religion and state is rejected in traditional Sunni Islam (Bowering et al. 203). The state, politics and the judiciary must be informed by Islamic principles, and the claim that politics ought to be isolated from religion runs counter to Islamic rules. Secondly, justification of government in Sunni Islam is unlike that provided by social contract theory: in Islam, it comes from the belief that since the time of Adam and Eve, 'government is the inseparable companion of monotheism,' and only 'human disobedience' can disturb this order (Crone, *MI* 14). Consequently, traditional Sunni Islam has no equivalent to the supposed equality of the contractees in the social contract, which means that Muslims must accept that the leader (always male) is chosen to lead because he is the fittest, and the rest—supposedly not fit to take the part of the leader—have no hand in this choice. In addition, this Islamic tradition does not give Muslims the choice of whether to have a government—government is part of faith in Islam. Thirdly, the state is formed around the figure of the leader (the imam), who has to be a man physically and mentally fit for the position, and who possesses probity, observes

the law and practices independent reasoning (Crone, *MI* 225). The imam's power came from God, and, therefore, his rule acquires a religious legitimacy (Crone, *MI* 226).

This tradition within Sunni Islamic political thought, however, imported aspects of Western political practices during the colonial period starting in 1798. Nevertheless, I contend that politics in Islam retains its unique character that distinguishes it from Western political iterations. Under colonisation, many Arab countries that once constituted the Ottoman Empire adopted Western government systems such as parliaments, constitutions, parties, voting, representatives and so on. In Tunisia, for instance, the first constitution was drafted in 1860 which encouraged reform to Ottoman rule and introduced a level of institutional checks on Turkish political control (Muasher 10). At the highest level of Ottoman Empire bureaucracy, Sultan Abdulmecid I issued a formal decree in 1839, which was the first to officially adopt European political language (Black, *H* 282). Such measures (called Tanzimat) began in the Ottoman Empire as part of its adopted trend of Westernisation, culminating in the abolishment of the last Islamic form of government when the Ottoman caliphate ended in 1924 (Black, *H* 282, 297–98).

Nevertheless, this system of reform and appropriation did not permanently or widely transform traditional Islamic political practice in the Arab region. There is little evidence that such ideological borrowings from Western political ideals effected genuine change in the way that the majority of lay Muslims in the Arab world viewed governments or leaders. In his book, *Islamic Political Thought* (1968), Montgomery Watt observes that the Arab political reforms and borrowings throughout the recent history only scratched the surface, and, consequently, a paradigmatic shift did not occur in Islamic politics—Islamic political traditions of imamate (state and government), imam (leader) and ummah (nation) continue to hold sway over the majority of Arabs. He writes:

> It is obvious that at different times and places European ideas have been enthusiastically accepted by particular groups [in the Islamic region]. It is not so obvious that, despite the enthusiasm, this acceptance has been only partial and limited. Often a show was made of taking over European institutions in order to impress on European statesmen that Islamic countries were rapidly transforming themselves into 'modern' states. This was especially so with the Ottoman empire in the nineteenth century. Frequently this led to a slavish imitation of details without much appreciation of the reasons for a practice (116).

Watt describes the anxiety that Arab and Ottoman statesmen felt due to contact with colonial Europe, which resulted in a superficial adoption of Westernisation strategies but with little willingness to abandon Islamic identity.

The cultural ramifications of this anxiety are better understood using Fanon's remarks on 'cultural obliteration,' 'negation of national reality' and colonial domination in colonised nations. Fanon maintains that the colonised society is split into an elite that strives to adopt the colonists' cultural ideals, while condescendingly looking down at indigenous culture, and a general population that resists cultural colonisation and adheres to national identity:

> The reactions of the colonised to this situation [i.e., the obliteration of national culture by the colonists] vary. Whereas the masses maintain intact traditions totally incongruous with the colonial situation, whereas the style of artisanship ossifies into an increasingly stereotyped formalism, the intellectual hurls himself frantically into the frenzied acquisition of the occupier's culture, or else confines himself to making a detailed, methodical, zealous and rapidly sterile inventory of it (171).

Fanon alludes to the ambivalence (later developed by Bhabha and further discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis) that befalls subjugated nations; that is, the acceptance of colonialism by the national elites which makes them complicit in the colonisation of their culture and the rejection of the colonists expressed by the masses who attempt to protect their cultural intactness.

Abdul R. JanMohamed extends Fanon's psychoanalytic methodological approach, demonstrating that minorities in both the Western metropolis and the Third World find themselves between two extremes of self-expression and self-censorship when their culture is threatened by a supposedly higher civilisation. He notes how,

> on the one hand, there is a desire to define one's ethnic and cultural uniqueness against the pressures of the majority culture and on the other hand an equally strong, if not stronger, urge to abandon that uniqueness in order to conform to the hegemonic pressures of the [White] liberal humanistic culture (289).

In a similar fashion, the Arab and European colonial interactions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced the position adopted by the majority of Arabs regarding borrowed Western politics; namely, the Arabs would *express* an adherence to 'modern'

political principles while *practising* Islamic traditional politics. My argument is that the facade of Western democratic practice that is observed immediately in contemporary Arab politics ought not conceal the reality that Islam governs the political aspirations of the Arab peoples.

The resultant dichotomy in Arab political identity that Watt describes can be observed in various situations; for example, in the case of Arab presidents staying in power for extended periods, including Mubarak and Ben Ali. These presidents ruled more like caliphs than presidents of republics (and should have faced genuine multiple re-elections). They could do so despite constitutional hurdles because the public, which is mostly religious, accepts in principle that rulers can—and probably should—stay in power until they die. For example, in Egypt, new 2019 constitutional amendments were introduced, approved by parliament and put to a popular referendum, with the sole purpose of allowing president Abdul Fattah Al Sisi, whose last term ended in 2022, to stay in power until 2034 ("AFA"; "EPV"). The proposed changes were met with some public resistance, and the government sought to repress potential dissent by the people who saw the amendments as no more than an attempt to keep Sisi in power ("ECC"; "AFA"). The Egyptian House of Fatwa (religious advisory opinion) indirectly interfered on behalf of the government; without mentioning the referendum it urged the people to show 'support for' and 'obedience to' the Muslim leader because these are 'religious obligations' ("IIC" my translation). The video released for this purpose repeated these phrases several times and quoted several lines from the Holy Quran and the Hadith, as well as mobilising opinions by prominent clergy in support. The House's message derives from a tradition of Islamic theology that outlines the rights of the imam regarding his subjects, as laid out in many books by Islamic philosophers of political thought, such as eleventh-century jurist al-Mawardi's *al-Ahkam al-Sultania* (the Ordinances of Government). In a country like Egypt, it would be hard to imagine that the House of Fatwa could make this move without being urged by the government. The regime has a clear vision of how to use religious obligations towards the rulers in order to manipulate the masses into accepting the constitutional amendments, which reveals the prevalence of principles of Islamic political philosophy in contemporary Arab communities.

Arab leaders might also nominate an heir. President Mubarak, for instance, had paved the way for his son, Gamal, to be nominated as the next president ("ISM"). Bashar Al Assad of Syria ascended to power after his father's death in 2000, and the constitution was amended in order to allow the young son (who was thirty-four at the time) to become president (Faris). This also explains why some of the largest and oldest kingdoms in the world are located in the

Arab world. The kingdom of Morocco has existed since 1631, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 1744. Unlike some of the monarchies in Europe that are limited in their power, Arab monarchs hold full sway in their dominions. In Kuwait, for instance, the Emir can issue a decree to dissolve the unicameral Ummah Majlis (National Assembly), which occurred as recently as in 2011 ("TKH"). In Saudi Arabia, the Arab state farthest away from colonial influence, and where Islam is almost fully recognised as the basis of governance, there are no elections, constitution or any form of representational political bodies. The king has absolute power, but he is not considered a dictator in terms of the Islamic political system nor by his people.[10]

The degree to which different countries in the Arab world still adhere to the essence of traditional Islamic government systems varies, of course, from one country to another. Indeed, there is some level of acceptance of Western influence in politics and bureaucratic mechanisms. Westernisation of this sort can be observed in constitutional, representative and partisan politics (Marxist, liberal, Islamic), for example in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. My argument, rather, touches on the essence of political practice, ignorance of which leads to a misreading of the Arab Spring by the West in political and literary discourses. Misinterpreting the Arab Spring derives from two assumptions: that the Arabs lived under dictatorships up until the point that they revolted in 2010 and that the revolutions *per se* were a suitable means of political change; and that the revolutionary Arabs were seeking Western-style democracy when they took to the streets. In the following section, I discuss the roots of the mis-readings, revealing that Islam and Western philosophy have divergent views regarding the conceptions of dictatorship and the importance of democratic governance.

3.2 Dictatorship and Democracy in Islam

In post-Arab Spring novels and memoirs, the meanings of dictatorship and democracy demonstrate their cultural influence from Western political and historical understanding of twentieth-century usage of the terms, rather than from the Islamic usage.[11] I argue that the

[10] In Chapter Five, I analyse the relatively recent introduction of municipal elections in Saudi Arabia and to what extent it remains a limited democratic experience.

[11] The term dictatorship, rather than other similar terms such as autocracy, patrimonialism or despotism, is used in this thesis to refer to the concept of oppressive and undemocratic regimes for two main reasons. Firstly, dictatorship is the preferred opposite of democracy in Western usage. Secondly, dictatorship is the term typically applied to modern Arab forms of rule. While dictatorship is generally considered an imperfect form of government by Western political scientists, it is sometimes considered suitable for certain Third World countries (to borrow a language and terminology from Frederic Jameson). What matters in this discussion

differences between Islam and the West regarding political leadership reveal that the types of rule that are prevalent in Islam such as caliphate and imamate only partially map onto a modern Western configuration of the term 'dictatorship.' This has resulted in a misreading of the Arab Spring politics, as evidenced by the literary representations of Arab leadership. In their work on twentieth-century European totalitarian dictatorships, C. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski mobilise the term to indicate a form of governance that is defined by a dominant ideology, a single party led by a dictator who possesses 'absolute power' and a brutal law enforcement agency with control over information and communications and the economy (15, 21–22, 31). Dictatorship primarily denotes a ruler's unlimited powers and indefinite term length, as well as arbitrary and brutal governance (Dowswell 4; Arendt 29–30; J. Gandhi 2–3, 7; Baturo 1; Linz 20–21; Wintrobe 345). These characteristics alone, however, do not simply make a government a dictatorship according to Islamic politics, which reveals great diversity. Different sub-denominations of Sunni Islam possess differing attitudes and expectations with respect to the appointment of caliphs and imams, such as the Khariji's view that the imamate is an office held on the basis of merit rather than descent (Bowering et al. 294, 313; Crone and Hinds 12; Bowering, "IPI" 5).[12] The main features of the Sunni Islamic view of political leadership runs counter to the Western view (Crone, "TP" 238; Bowering, "IPI" 4; cf. Black, *W* 78). In Sunni Islam, the unlimited powers for which an absolute ruler is criticised in Western thought are reworked in this theological imaginary to accommodate religious and secular duties, obligations and privileges. In contemporary Arab politics, this orthodox Sunni position is still practiced by the majority of Arabs today as evidenced by the complex epistemologies of contemporary Islamic political movements such as Ennahda which adopted European politics but also revived medieval Islamic heritage—the two views were combined (Abu-Rabi 8; Laroui vii). The Arabs can choose to adopt Western or orthodox Islamic political views depending on the situation and the circumstances. During the Arab Spring, for instance, the influence of Western forms of political activism can be perceived in the revolutionary Arabs' rebellion against Muslim rulers, which is not endorsed by orthodox interpretations. Consequently, equating Muslim caliphs, imams and leaders to Western

is that the term is used derogatively to refer to Arab regimes in post-Arab Spring literature. Similarly, democracy is interpreted differently and vaguely in Western political science (D. Robertson 129), but it is important in this discussion because it is used as the opposite of dictatorship (J. Gandhi 2–3; Baehr and Richter 26).

[12] Reference is made to traditional Islamic political thought, which has formed over the past 1400 years (Bowering, "IPI" 4–6).

dictators as the post-Arab Spring literary authors do is a misreading that engenders Western-centric biased stereotyping of political leadership in Islam.

Islamic political philosophy differs from Western conceptions of how leaders should rule in three main areas: the appointment of leaders, the terms of government and justification for removing corrupt rulers. Firstly, the appointment of leaders in Islamic political thought was established around the figure of the first Islamic leader and imam (Prophet Muhammad who was the founder and leader of the first Islamic state) and his successors—the caliphs (Rosenthal 26; Crone, *MI* 3, 13; Black, *W* 77). There are five requirements that must be observed by the Muslim nation regarding the appointment of an imam or caliph: 1) political leadership is a religious and a rational necessity (i.e., all Muslim nations must appoint a leader); 2) the imam must be selected by a qualified elite (electors) or designated by a previous imam; 3) the imam combines political and religious functions and has power over the judiciary when necessary; 4) he must govern by the rule of God, thus prohibiting the amendment or abolition of established religious laws; and 5) as long as the leader demonstrates good adherence to Sharia law, the entire Muslim nation is obliged to show obedience to him (Rosenthal 26, 29–30; Bowering et al. 199).

Consequently, the leader officially attains political leadership by one of two ways according to rule number two: appointment by a group of electors or nomination by a predecessor (Bowering et al. 84, 313; Crone, *MI* 226–27). In the first, the group charged with the responsibility of appointing the leader comprises elites from the community—but not the entire community as in a democracy—who are known to possess the appropriate moral integrity and discernment to choose someone who is qualified to perform the duties of such an important entrustment (Bowering et al. 313). In the second, the predecessor's nomination should be accepted by the electors.

Giving an elite group (whose decision is binding on the whole community) the authority to nominate a leader does not conform to the democratic principles of representational government, where democracy literally denotes government by the people (Bowering et al. 313). The Islamic method of appointing a leader negates the influence of those possessing a theological or cultural influence outside that elite group, although this privileged cohort is supposed to decide on behalf of the entire Muslim community. Likewise, the second way of nominating an Islamic political leader (i.e., designation by a predecessor) denies people the right to express their opinion of such a designation. The Muslim population is disempowered in the Islamic political system with regard to the choice of a leader or those who legally represent them to choose a leader.

The fifth requirement outlines that when the leader figure attains authority by either of the official ways, his subjects should make a pledge of allegiance to him (called *bay'a*) (Bowering et al. 313; Crone, *MI* 227). The pledge of allegiance is performed by way of a handshake between the new leader and the dignitaries of the community, but the pledge is required of all the community, even if a handshake with the new leader is not possible (Bowering et al. 84). The loyalty and obedience owed to the ruler, which *bay'a* entails, are based on the view that Muslims must have a ruler at any given time (Lahoud 55; Akbarzadeh and Saeed 19). The notion of obedience is prescribed in the Quran, which articulates its significance: 'Obey God and obey the Prophet and those invested with command among you' (Akbarzadeh and Saeed 19). Obedience should be granted even if the subject is not satisfied with the leadership or how the nation's affairs are managed. This also holds true even if the ruler is unjust to his people by, for example, providing unfair judiciary (Akbarzadeh and Saeed 19).

The justification for this performative declaration of obedience to an unjust ruler is the Quranic concept that it is more important to maintain his leadership than to fall into a state of disorder, which would endanger the Islamic state (Akbarzadeh and Saeed 19). Muslim medieval philosophers such as al-Mawardi (d. 1058), al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and al-Juwayni (d. 1085) emphasised this wisdom when establishing a shared concept in their respective works; without an imam, the nation would suffer from great disunity, with the potential to lead to its demise (Crone, *MI* 233, 237; Bowering et al. 571). The medieval jurist Ibin Taymiyya (d. 1328) is quoted as saying 'Sixty years of [putting up with an] unjust Imam are better than a single night without a ruler' (qtd. in Lahoud 55). This discouraged the community from enacting potential forms of rebellion against unjust rule and fostered the idea that political leadership in Islam was divine (Akbarzadeh and Saeed 19), hence the view that revolution is not a preferred method for changing unfavourable political systems.[13]

Islam authorises a third unconventional way of attaining political leadership, alongside the two official ways of appointment by election and designation, which is usurpation. This method stands in contrast to Western conceptions of legitimate government (cf. Dowswell 5; Crone, *MI* 233). In Islam, if a Muslim leader asserts authority over a Muslim population by the power of the sword, or by usurping the throne, to which he may not have been entitled, the

[13] Undeniably, the fear of disorder is influential in the work of some Western political thinkers as well. For example, Hobbes argued that the desire for security was a natural need and the state that fulfilled this need was in full harmony with human nature and was capable of avoiding falling into anarchy (Ahrensdorf 579; see also Black, *W* 27). My argument rather applies to the overarching political ideals as applied in the West.

Muslim community is obliged to pledge allegiance to him and acquiesce in full obedience (Crone, *MI* 227; Rosenthal 32; Black, *W* 27). Whenever conflicts over power take place, the Muslim community is expected to conform with the logic of the victor, rather than take an active part in the conflict (Crone, *MI* 229). Obedience, in this case, seeds other forms of ideological obedience in the case of legitimate rule (Akbarzadeh and Saeed 20). Once again, this concept of obedience is instituted at the heart of Islamic jurisprudence as a means of maintaining social stability within the nation, in order to establish a rule of law designed to preserve peace, lives, safety, laws, resources and wealth (Black, *W* 78; Crone, *MI* 237). This way of attaining power is considered poor governance by Western standards—for Paul Dowswell, seizing power by force is a defining feature of dictatorship—but Islam bestows legitimacy upon it while simultaneously denouncing it for being unlawful (Dowswell 5). Gerhard Bowering et al. explain that 'Islamic law and theology generally require obedience even to an oppressive and sinful ruler as long as he outwardly upholds the sharia as the law of the land and Islam as his own religion' (571).

The second difference between Islam and Western political thought regarding the concept of dictatorship is term limits. In Islam, there is no term limit to be observed and no obligation to change leadership periodically. When a political leader attains authority by any of these approaches and mechanisms, the only obligation that he must adhere to is to preserve the main teachings of Islam, as dictated by requirement number four: the leader must govern according to the rule of God. This is the only requirement that may end his rule if not properly maintained, and thus the rule of an imam is not limited to any sort of temporal term. Emphasis is placed on the ruler's ability to perform the duties prescribed by Islamic law, which constitutes the fundamental rationale behind the popularity and appeal of a Muslim leader among his people. Antony Black explains the nature of the Islamic contractual relationship between subjects and the leader:

> The Prophet of Islam provided a more obvious political model of the conduct for Muslims than Jesus did for Christians. Muhammad's combination of military and spiritual leadership was just what was likely to appeal and to succeed. Anyone who gained power tended to have ascribed to them the qualities of Muslim leadership: severity towards enemies, mercy to those who submit […]. One could subscribe to such a ruler without losing one's dignity. The relationship between subject and ruler was conceived in

personal terms of loyalty and love. This was then charismatic monarchy (*W* 77–78).

When a Muslim leader adheres to Islam, he should not fear being removed from office. The relationship between leader and subject is conceived in terms of religious duties that establish loyalty and respect and go beyond the mechanical change of leadership that is common practice in democratic systems.

In addition, the absence of any limits to the length of term can be observed in the terminology used to describe oppressive regimes in Islam. Unlike the Western concept of dictatorship, which involves a tendency to rule without term limits (Baturo 1; Linz 20–21), the Arabic equivalent of the dictator figure, *taghyah* (despot or tyrant), denotes a ruler who is legally unjust and uses brutal force without proper justification, such as executing criminals for minor offences. It does not simply indicate a ruler who stays in power for too long or who refuses to relinquish power (Rosenthal 26). Moreover, when some forms of rule are denounced in Islam, these are condemned for reasons other than length of terms. For instance, in the early centuries of Islam, the term 'king' was negatively perceived as the opposite of caliph or imam (Bowering et al. 571). King in that early usage was denounced because it indicated rule acquired illegitimately (i.e., not according to the two official ways of attaining power), yet it was not decried on account of the open-ended term of sovereign rule (Bowering et al. 571).

Thirdly, and crucially for the argument that I outline in this chapter, Islam differs from Western political philosophy with regard to removing unwanted leaders. The political leader in Islam cannot be deposed on the basis of term limits; he can only be deposed when the Muslim community judges that he fails to rule according to the theological principles of Islam—i.e., by openly not upholding Sharia law or by going against established Islamic rules, for example by rejecting mandatory worship such as prayer and fasting during Ramadan (Bowering et al. 571). A refusal to govern in accordance with such dictates amounts to apostacy in Islam, and there is a universal consensus among Muslim theologians that a Muslim sovereign cannot renounce Islam without being deposed (Crone, *MI* 229). All other lesser violations (according to the Islamic view), such as immorality or tyranny, do not directly warrant deposition. It is worth pointing out that some theologians within Sunni Islam have differences of opinion regarding whether or not it is acceptable to remove a leader who is capricious and oppressive but not an apostate (Crone, *MI* 230–32).[14]

[14] This was a contentious issue during the Arab Spring revolutions (cf. Bowering et al. 572). Since open disobedience to a Muslim ruler is not entirely acceptable in Islam, the Arabs who

In addition to prioritising the stability and unity of the nation, the obligation not to rebel against imperfect rulers is justified by the idea that any deviations by the leader that fall short of a complete rejection of Islam do not matter enough with respect to the daily lives and religious salvation of the public (Crone, *MI* 229). Consequently, Muslim theologians propose that in such cases, rather than being deposed, the ruler should be admonished and reprimanded (Crone, *MI* 229). Muslims should criticise him for his misdeeds (e.g., deprivation or moral and financial corruption) and attempt to persuade him to change his ways (Bowering et al. 571). Muslims are further required to disobey him in situations where he asks for deeds that God did not approve of, but they should practice patience regarding his oppression (Crone, *MI* 229). Islam's inhibition of rebellion against a sovereign is evident in the penalties placed upon rebels in the Quran (Crone, *MI* 230). While the Quran does not state that rebellious subjects are apostates or enemies of God, it refers to them as wrongdoers and the misguided, who should be brought to the right path (Crone, *MI* 230; cf. Bowering et al. 571–72). This view of oppressive leaders and bad government is different from present-day practices pertaining to representational democracy, which give the people the power to remove unwanted leaders by voting.

This disparity between Islamic thought and democratic values was observed by critics such as Lorella Ventura in her commentary on the Arab Spring revolutions. Ventura argues that the interpretation of the Arab Spring protests 'as one popular and democratic "Arab" movement against tyranny' is 'a striking example of the persistence of "Orientalism" (according to Edward Said's definition)' (282). Ventura explains that the protests have automatically attracted the approval and support of public opinion in Western nations because they were interpreted as an attempt to break away from the 'despotic' and 'static' past of the Orient into the 'modern' and 'progressive' future of democracy (289–90). '[Democracy] is one of the most important features of the western view of modernity and, from one point of view, its peak. It is generally held that the Arab protests had a democratic inspiration' (292). However, based on declarations made by the protestors and their slogans, which did not focus on

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participated in the revolutions with the intention of toppling their rulers relied on the controversiality of this point, arguing that Islam allows people to rebel against oppressive rulers. As I outlined in Chapter One, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (like other Islamic parties in Tunisia and Yemen) chose to embrace the interpretation that allowed such revolts. Consequently, the Muslim Brotherhood's mobilisation of the Egyptian people to remove President Mubarak was crucial to the revolution's initial success. In Chapter Five (Islamophobia Curtailed), I explain this point further to argue that the Arab Spring took place within a specific understanding that enabled rebellion against an established Islamic government.

democracy, Ventura argues that such a claim is unfounded (292–93). She goes on to demonstrate that 'the Islamist parties [such as the Muslim Brotherhood] do not hold democracy as a value' because, unlike Westerners, Muslims view democracy only as a means to an end—and that end is determined by religion (295). Ultimately, from a strictly religious point of view, 'democracy is not held as a supreme value to be realized,' and thus the claim that the Arab Spring was an attempt to create democracy is questionable (295).

Other political commentators on the Arab Spring also reached a similar conclusion. In his book, *The Rebirth of History* (2012), Badiou writes that the Arab Spring was interpreted as a '*desire for the West'* (48). He observes that inclusion in Western liberalism is not 'genuine change' and that nothing indicates a desire for the West in the Arab Spring revolutions (52, 54–55). The word 'democracy' never features in the banners and language of the street protestors (55). In his neo-Marxist analysis, Badiou perceives the Arab Spring within a larger movement similar to the 'first working-class insurrection' aimed at giving rebirth to a new history that resists and abolishes the exiting capitalist structures thriving under rubrics such as 'the West,' 'modernisation,' 'reform,' 'democracy,' 'human rights' and 'globalisation' (4–5). In his view, the Arab revolutions are opposed to the West and represent a new communist 'Idea' that is capable of deconstructing 'democracy,' which has become the banner of capitalism (5–6). Similarly, in his book, *Morbid Symptoms* (2016), Achcar writes that the Arab Spring 'was not—or not only or even primarily—a '"democracy transition"' (*MS* 5). He concludes that the term 'democratisation' has been applied indiscriminately to the Arab Spring even though some aspects of the uprisings may indeed be labelled, in part or on the whole, as democratic.

Given that open disobedience to a Muslim ruler is acceptable in orthodox Sunni Islam only if the ruler is classified as an apostate (Bowering et al. 571; Crone, *MI* 229), the Arab Spring protestors' participation in the revolutions apparently violates this restriction. However, as I argue in Chapter One, diverse socio-political circumstances created an ambivalent situation that enabled the Arab Spring revolutions despite religious restrictions. Firstly, contemporary Islamic political interpretations of orthodox Islamic thought created a space to accommodate alternative views that allowed for the possibility of disobeying rulers within Islamic boundaries. There was an adoption of European types of constitutional, representative and democratic governments, which provided a different perspective regarding the appointment of rulers and introduced new political vocabulary such as terms of government and popular participation in political decisions. These new perspectives and political concepts rendered the Islamic prohibition less effective. Secondly, the rise of 'moderate' political Islamic parties in

the early decades of the twentieth century created self-appointed parties representative of Islam. Those political parties, exemplified by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, recently adopted and propagated unorthodox political interpretations of Islamic leadership, paving the way for removing unwanted presidents despite the Islamic prohibition. Thirdly, the Arab revolutions surprised everyone with their spontaneity and speed (Rosiny 1–2; Bayat, "AS" 587). The leaderless revolutions occurred quickly and, within a few months, the protests spread throughout the Arab countries, which left little room for the Arab protestors to pause and contemplate the religious legitimacy of rebellion. Their stance was ambivalent, and it manifested itself in the debates both for and against the protests among the Arab masses at the time.

The differences between Islam and the West regarding notions of political leadership (namely, appointment of leadership, terms of government and deposition) are to be found within the logic and language of post-Arab Spring novels and memoirs. These texts continue to link Arab leaders to the Western understanding of totalitarian dictatorship, comparing them to totalitarian dictators in Western history such as Stalin and Mussolini. This literature portrays Arab leaders, for example, as having unlimited term lengths and mobilising brutal law enforcement agencies against citizens. The texts do not view the Arab leaders from the Islamic perspective, overlooking the viewpoint that these forms of government are properly constituted in Islam. Such depictions, I argue, neglect the culture of the Arab world and the practices of Islamic leadership, reproducing Western-centric representations of Arab leadership that reduce them to a simulacrum of the West. Whether modern or traditional, Arab leadership has its shortcomings and may be imperfect. However, such literary neo-Orientalist descriptions of it are problematic because they continue to prefer the Western model of politics over the Arabic, thus establishing the West as the centre and Arab culture as the margin.

In the following two sections, I discuss how Matar and Soueif misread the revolutions via the analysis of two major representations: firstly, depicting Arab leaders as dictatorial in the Western sense of the word in Matar's work and, secondly, portraying the revolutions as pro-democratic in Soueif's memoir while democracy is not important in Islam and had not been prioritised by the revolutionaries.

3.3 Dictatorship in Hisham Matar's *The Return*

Matar's Pulitzer Prize winner memoir, *The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between* (2016), depicts Gaddafi's rulership as a brutal dictatorship—as the term is used in Western political thought—and celebrates the revolution for enabling the Libyan people to break the dictatorship down and reclaim their freedom although popular revolutions are not endorsed by orthodox Islam as a legitimate path to remove unwanted rulers. The text portrays Gaddafi as a Western dictator such as Louis XVI and Mussolini by means of using a narrative focused on the atrocities that Gaddafi brought on the Libyan people. For example, Matar compares his long years of exile and diaspora to his father's (Jaballa) confinement in a prison cell—both father and son were detached from their society, tribe, relatives and country because of Gaddafi. Matar's images and motifs regarding Gaddafi's dictatorship borrow from Western political and cultural literature on the subject, neglecting Islamic politics and vocabulary of leadership: nowhere does Matar refer to the Islamic concepts regarding the ruler's duties to be just to his subjects or the requirement to rule according to the guidelines of Islamic jurisprudence in his description of the atrocities that Gaddafi committed against the Libyans. In addition, according to Islamic theology, Gaddafi was still a legitimate leader despite being objectively unjust towards the Libyan population. However, Matar celebrates the revolution as a viable means of removing Gaddafi, overlooking the question of the legitimacy of his rule. As such, Matar's text misreads the Libyan Spring in a way that marginalises its Islamic political history and prioritises a Western cultural framework.

Matar's memoir records the author's return from exile to search for his missing father in the dungeons of history and Gaddafi's Abu Salim prison—a theme that he explored in his previously published novels, *In the Country of Men* (2006) and *Anatomy of Disappearance* (2011) (Levy 6; Mirdha 22; Kakutani). Matar chooses the memoir to narrate his story because personal storytelling genres such as the memoir have a history of motivating human rights movements. As K. Schaffer and S. Smith observe, 'this linkage between stories and actions extends back to the earliest discussions of an international rights movement. [I]t was a memoir that spurred the adoption of the Geneva Convention of 1864' (15, 18). Matar's genre of choice (the memoir) is well-suited for his subject since he explores 'living with the un-knowledge of what happened to his father after he was arrested in 1990' as a theme that demonstrates Gaddafi's violation of human rights (Brant 6). In his attempt to 'trace back [and rewrite] the history of political oppression' in Libya, Matar explores how Gaddafi erased national memory by means of producing 'narrow reductionist accounts or conventionalised falsehoods about major historical events,' revealing a history of Libya that is poorly known

(Jemia 32, 34). Matar, however, cannot find much information about his father, which makes his search turn from attempting to find the father to an investigation into what happened to him and his cellmates in the notorious Abu Salim prison.

As in Haddad's novel *Guapa* and Alrawi's *Book of Sands* (discussed in Chapter Seven), Matar's memoir uses the journey into the Oriental wilderness as a metaphor to resist Western hegemonic discourse. The father, Jaballa, recalls Joseph Conrad's depiction of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (1899), who disappears in the jungles of the Congo and is discovered by Marlow, the protagonist and narrator. Conrad's text contrasts the superior abilities of Kurtz as a colonial European with the primitive darkness of the Congo. Like Marlow, Matar gradually discovers details of the life of his father after the father has disappeared in Gaddafi's prisons. As Matar advances in his search, Jaballa is increasingly revealed to be cultured, humane and noble: for example, he recited poetry to soothe the horrors of life for his cellmates (Brant 7). Jaballa's portrayal is marshalled to provide commentary on Libya as an African country within the context of European colonialism: the Libyan desert has a culture of its own that has been, as Matar states in an interview, stifled by oppression (qtd. in Micklethwait 172). In order to advance the theme of oppression and colonialism in Libya, the text develops a type of Wordsworthian thematics of the child being father of the man, where the child (Hisham) becomes father to the father (Jaballa) because of Hisham's life-long dedication to search for his father, which constitutes a story of patriarchy revealed via filial history (Brant 7). The patriarch is also the dictator (Gaddafi) who is revealed in this Wordsworthian and Freudian symbolism as a brutal father for all the Libyans. Comparing Libya to a family functions to emphasise that the brutality of the father/dictator is incredibly traumatic. The Romantic theme foregrounds the innocence of the child (Hisham), the gravity of his burden and the inevitability of patriarchal and colonial authority.

Matar's complex relationship with his father and ancestors is symbolic of the problematic relationship that he embodies in his thinking about Libya: the unresolved quandary of the history of his ancestors connotes that 'his relation with and his sense of belonging to the native nation is never complete' (Jemia 45). Libya's colonial past and years of dictatorship torment its children. This theme is reemphasised by the plot: the past in Matar's narrative coexists with the present so that a chronologically linear structure of the story becomes impossible (Nyongesa et al. 2). The structure of the plot, which is continuously interrupted by flashbacks (Nyongesa et al. 2), represents the ontological fissures that define the author's relationship with his country. Matar's dichotomous identity is revealed above all in the feelings of longing and optimism versus grief and pessimism (Garcia). *The Return* is a

haunting memoir about a son's search for his missing father, the conflict with the unrelenting dictatorship and the consequences that the son has to bear (Kakutani).

The plot focuses on the oppression perpetrated by the figure of an autocratic leader against the Libyans, narrated using vocabulary derived from Western visions of dictators and human rights, rather than the Islamic political concepts that define the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. The narrative develops this as a lacuna in its delineation of the Libyan Spring. Jaballa was one of the main opposition figures abroad in the 1980s, and what occurred to him is intertwined with national history:

> In any political history of Libya, the 1980s represent a particularly lurid chapter. Opponents of the regime were hanged in public squares and sports arenas. Dissidents who fled the country were pursued—some were kidnapped or assassinated. The '80s were also the first time that Libya had an armed and determined resistance to the dictatorship. My father was one of the opposition's most prominent figures (4; Jemia 33).

From the beginning, Matar sets the scene of the conflict: his father, himself and Libya in a prolonged confrontation with and resistance to 'dictatorship.' This started with the *coup d'état* led by Gaddafi in 1969, but the culmination of the oppression was the 1980s. Jaballa, because of his wealth, connections and political commitment, spearheaded the resistance, which put him on the radar of Gaddafi's intelligence (61). For Matar and his family, the personal became political: their father's plight came as a result of his attempt to change this 'lurid' chapter of contemporary Libyan history and his choice to free it from the grip of autocracy. This resulted in the family's exile and the father's imprisonment and eventual disappearance.

Instead of criticising Gaddafi for failing to perform and embody his religious duties as an Islamic ruler, Matar moves on to highlight the constraints and consequences of what he describes as dictatorship in Libya. This description bears the main features of twentieth-century Western totalitarian regimes that Friedrich and Brzezinski outline: an oligarchy centred on a strong military man with absolute power, a brutal law enforcement agency, control over information and communications, and control of the economy (21–22, 31, 36). Juanita Garcia asserts that three elements, which are in line with Friedrich and Brzezinski's analyses, are available in the depiction of Gaddafi's rule in the memoir: a weak civil society, state control of national wealth and a coercive apparatus (Garcia). What happened to Jaballa and other Libyans had certainly been painful, and Gaddafi's rule had been defined by catastrophic forms of governance. Nevertheless, the image that Matar constructs of Gaddafi

relies upon a Western understanding of authoritarianism and his misreading of the Libyan Spring.

Gaddafi is revealed as having absolute and ruthless power, as well as control of a terrifying secret service. His regime wanted to bribe into silence and to intimidate Jaballa, who loved and served the King Idrees monarchy and later organised a training camp in Chad and secret cells inside Libya to resist Gaddafi (4–5, 30–32, 61). This made him always on guard, always carrying a gun, checking car chassis for explosives and peering through windows for any unusual signs (5). He knew that critics of the regime like him were assassinated by state agents outside Libya, in cafés and train stations in Rome, Athens and London (5–6). It was a proclaimed campaign to hunt down exiled critics, announced by the regime's head of foreign intelligence Moussa Koussa, and which did not spare the families of those targeted as enemies of the State. Matar's brother Ziad, who was a fifteen-year-old student in Switzerland when the family was in exile in Cairo, had to return to the family after narrowly escaping from Gaddafi's men (6–9). After years of being on the run, Jaballa was kidnapped from Cairo in March 1990 by the Egyptian police, delivered to the Gaddafi regime and imprisoned at Abu Salim in Tripoli (10). This prison was known as 'The Last Stop' because it was where the regime sent those 'it wanted to forget,' so Jaballa would most likely never get out of this prison alive (10). After this point, Matar's life turned into a search for his father and a prolonged investigation into his fate, which was another example of Gaddafi's absolute ruthlessness.

Gaddafi's dictatorship is emphasised not only by what happened to Jaballa but also by the consequent forced exile of Hisham and his inability throughout his adult life to establish the facts of his father's disappearance. The memoir begins with Matar at the airport, heading back to Benghazi. Matar's ruminations before arriving in Libya reveal that exile had exerted a toll on his life and that his return to the country could not be complete. He writes: 'I am reluctant to give Libya any more than it has already taken,' and 'Returning after all these years was a bad idea' (2). He explains that his family left in 1979, thirty-three years before. For him 'This was the chasm that divided the man from the eight-year-old boy I was then' (2).

In the memoir's metafictional design, Matar draws upon a literary style and tradition of allusion to further comment on what home and return meant for men of letters such as Brodsky, Nabokov and Conrad, who were right to decide never to return and attempted instead to cure themselves of their countries (2). Alternatively, Shostakovich, Pasternak and Mahfouz were also right when they decided to 'never leave the homeland' (2). They knew that if you leave, 'your connections to the source will be severed. You will be like a dead

trunk, hard and hollow' (2). The latter is what occurred to Matar when he went to his relatives and tribe after returning to Libya: he felt that he did not belong to them, to the place or to their time: 'I was experiencing a kind of distance-sickness, a state in which not only the ground was unsteady but also time and space' (118). To further expose Gaddafi's atrocious rule, Matar compares his years of exile and detachment that caused this chasm between him and his home to imprisonment: 'The only other individuals I met who seemed afflicted by a similar condition [of detachment] were ex-prisoners' (118). Like his father, Matar cannot return and what Gaddafi did to the father was similar to what he did to the son: both were cut off from Libya forever.

In addition to describing Gaddafi using Western models of autocratic and liberal leadership, Matar explicitly compares Gaddafi to Western dictators such as Louis XVI and Mussolini. A comparison of this sort further illustrates Matar's dependence on Western political history to reflect on Libyan politics during the Arab Spring. For example, in one of Jaballa's letters that were smuggled out of Abu Salim in the 1990s, he mentions that 'The cruelty of this place far exceeds all of what we have read of the fortress prison of Bastille' (10). In this comparison of Abu Salim to the notorious prison of eighteenth-century Paris, Matar appeals to European history (the French Revolution) rather than the singular experience of Arab historiography. In another letter, Jaballa links his situation to French history again—this time ironically comparing the furniture of his cell to the style of Louis XVI: 'As for furniture, it is in the style of Louis XVI: an old mattress, worn out by many previous prisoners, torn in several places' (10).[15] Jaballa's bed is like a king's throne on which he is supposed to stay until his death—an ironic denunciation of long terms in both imprisonment and kingship and a subtle reminder that Jaballa would stay in prison as long as Gaddafi stayed in power.

These comparisons to revolutionary France reveal a recurrent motif; namely, that the 2011 Libyan revolution was propagated by the same inhumane injustices that fuelled the French Revolution. Matar writes that the Abu Salim massacre (like the Bastille) was 'the incident that all those years ago had started a chain of events that ultimately led to the overthrow of Qaddafi' (242). This motif, in which Matar compares the Libyan revolution to the French revolution of 1789, is problematic because it further demonstrates that he neglects the Islamic ban on revolution—an outright delegitimization of Gaddafi's rule—and that he depends on a

[15] In his analysis of the Libyan revolution, Achcar implicitly denounces Gaddafi as the only Arab autocrat that can be compared to Stalin and Louis XVI. Achcar links Gaddafi to Louis XVI's phrase 'I am the state' (Achcar, *PW* Provisional Balance Sheet 5).

Western historical and cultural framework, creating a mismatch between the Libyan people's Islamic political experience and Matar's literary discourse.

This fleeting comparison between Gaddafi and a European dictator (Louis XVI) is not the only one in the text: an overarching comparison between Gaddafi and Mussolini also runs throughout the narrative. Matar emphasises that Mussolini was not only a ruthless colonialist leader, but also a fascist dictator within Italy itself and against the liberal Italians.[16] Matar refers to significant episodes in Libya's colonial history to show that the atrocities committed by the Italians continued to plague the Libyans after independence in 1951. For instance, Matar details the massive genocides that Mussolini committed against the Libyans who led a campaign to resist Italian colonisation (151–55). 'Between 1911 and 1916, more than 5,000 men were banished from the city [of Tripoli] and sent to small Islands scattered around Italy [and] kept in prisons there. [O]ne in every six inhabitants of the Libyan capital was kidnapped and made to disappear' (152). When Mussolini seized power, instances of depopulation, genocide, torture, starvation, illness and humiliation became common (Mirdha 28). Some of the atrocities were recorded by the only Western journalist travelling in Libya back then, Knud Holmboe, who was outraged by what he witnessed (Mirdha 28). Holmboe wrote a book that was banned by the Italians, who also arrested him and probably murdered him (153–55).

In addition, Matar demonstrates that Italy, a European colonial power, was itself in the grip of a fascist dictatorship that persecuted and exiled Italian artists. Matar's choice to use Italian artists to make this comparison is due to the fact that he defines himself in his memoir as an artist (252). The architect Guido Ferrazza, planner of Benghazi and designer of its cathedral, is referred to at length as a notable example (121–26). Matar traces Ferrazza's career as a major architect in the colonies and his move to England in 1943, after Italy was devastated in the war, to join the exiled resistance there. After the fall of the Fascist regime in 1945, Ferrazza was granted an honourable return to Italy (124). The main junctures of Ferrazza's life—being an artist, exile, resistance to dictatorship and return—resemble Matar's and his father's lives. This mingling of colonialist and colonised lives under dictatorship reveals that Libya under Italian colonialism suffered a double form of oppression: colonisation and Italian dictatorship. In effect, it highlights that colonialism inscribed dictatorship into the fabric of Libyan politics and that Gaddafi continued to rule Libya in the footsteps of colonialist dictators such as Mussolini. While other postcolonial regimes maintained the worst practices

[16] It is worth noting that 'fascism was a form of colonialism brought home to Europe,' as Young observes in his book, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001) when discussing Aimé Césaire's work (*PHI* 2; Césaire 36).

of their colonialist masters—hence, the comparison between Gaddafi and Mussolini may appear commonplace—this comparison is unique because unlike the more democratic imperial European powers such as France and Britain, Italy at the time was under a fascist and dictatorial regime.

Matar's Western views of dictatorship and his misreading of Arab and Muslim culture—in the way that he portrays Gaddafi as a Western dictator—can also be perceived in his celebration of the Libyan revolution as a viable means of removing Gaddafi, justly punishing him and establishing a new government. Matar overlooks the fact that popular mass mobilisation against leadership of this kind is not permissible in Islam. An example of Matar's endorsement of revolutions is the vignette in which tangible progress in his father's case was only achieved due to the revolution. When in Benghazi, Matar met a man who had claimed he had seen his father alive in 2002. Matar describes the meeting as one of the blessings of the revolution:

> We immediately shared our amusement at the fact that, as though by magic, there we were speaking in the open, without fear of being overheard, in a café in Libya. […] And the fact that we were now not disembodied voices over the telephone but flesh and blood, […] where it was possible for him to reach across and squeeze my shoulder […], seemed to be yet another confirmation of the advantages the present had over the dark past. The present was physical and real; the past, Qaddafi's Libya, was the nightmare from which we had finally awoken (238).

The fear that had gripped Libya ever since Gaddafi took over no longer haunted the Libyans after the uprisings began. People could meet and speak without having to be vigilant of government espionage activities, and human interaction, which had been suppressed for years, turned Libya humane once again. The past was so grim that it looked like a nightmare that was shattered when the Libyans stood up to overthrow Gaddafi. The revolution enabled this sort of progress from the hateful past to the promising present and future.

In the same vein of glorifying the revolution, the events of the uprising against Gaddafi are narrated via the story of two martyrs who, along with other fellow revolutionaries, courageously hunted Gaddafi and his troops down from town to town. The celebration of their martyrdom denotes Matar's unquestioned support of the mass action against Gaddafi—a support which he does not qualify in view of the Islamic prohibition of revolutions. Izzo, who was a young cousin of Matar's, and Izzo's fellow fighter, Marwan, took part in the fighting

that started in Izzo's town, Ajdabiya (88, 91). When Ajdabiya was secured, the fighters travelled eighty kilometres east to Brega, which sat on the Mediterranean Sea, to join the freedom fighters there. After winning Brega, they travelled six-hundred kilometres west to Libya's third largest city, Misrata, in which some of the bloodiest battles occurred. However, while fighting in Zlitan, Izzo and Marwan were shot dead (101–02).

They did not live to see Gaddafi fall, but their martyrdom was portrayed as a symbolic victory over Gaddafi. In a vivid scene, Matar visited the Benghazi Courthouse, which on the 15th of February 2011—only two days before the beginning of the revolution—witnessed a symbolic rally organised by lawyers and judges in response to the regime's crackdown on journalists and human rights activists (110–11, 241). When Matar walked in, the Courthouse was completely transformed from the site where only a shy attempt at protest was made into a holy place liberated by the revolutionaries:

> Inside, it had become a shrine to the fallen. The corridors […] were lined with Photoshopped posters of young men who had died in the revolution. […] They were montaged in a sequence, with the man's name printed across, prefixed by the word MARTYR. […] Like pictures of saints, the images of these young men had replaced those of the dictator. Where the various stern and smiling faces of Qaddafi had been, we now had martyrs (241–42).

Thanks to the revolutionaries, the Courthouse regained its function within a just legal system, becoming the place where justice is served symbolically to Gaddafi and his regime. Since the martyrs' pictures now occupied the Courthouse, justice was transferred to the revolutionaries and was no longer monopolised by Gaddafi. This is significant to Matar as he searched for his father: it symbolises his confidence that the revolutionaries will punish those responsible for his father's disappearance. Like saints who provide blessings to their visitors, the martyrs' faces transformed the grim face that Gaddafi bestowed on Libya, replacing it with the pleasant faces of the free and victorious Libyans.

In Matar's memoir, the Western concept of dictatorship, in particular totalitarian dictatorship, is prevalent in his delineation of the Arab Spring in Libya. Matar does not refer to Islamic culture or Islamic rules for leadership, and this omission constitutes an ideological and theological blank spot in the narrative that serves to perpetuate Orientalist misreadings of Arab political reality. Instead, he chooses to depict Gaddafi's absolute rule, the brutality of his law enforcement agencies and his control over information and the economy. For example, Matar conveys to the reader how much Gaddafi's oppression of his father gave him a life of

exile and diaspora that matched in heinousness the imprisonment of the father. In addition, the fact that Matar directly compares Gaddafi to Western dictators such as Louis XVI and Mussolini reveals that he has Western political history in mind when he describes Gaddafi. Matar also neglects the Islamic ban on mass revolutions and disobedience, choosing to follow a trend in Western political thought that endorses revolutions and popular protests as viable means of overthrowing unwanted rulers. This is evident in the sort of prosperity that Matar depicts as thriving in Libya due to the revolution and the justice that the revolutionaries brought with them. In his memoir, Matar misreads the Libyan revolution by choosing to leave aside its Islamic cultural background. His production thus deliberately Westernises the events by way of perceiving them from an exclusively Western tradition.

3.4 Democratic Aspirations in Ahdaf Soueif's Memoir *Cairo: My City, our Revolution*

In her 2012 memoir, Soueif misreads the Egyptian revolution by means of emphasising a democratic impetus of the event, suggesting that the revolutionaries had a primary goal of achieving Western-style representative and constitutional democracies, which, I argue, disregards the Islamic cultural and political background of the Egyptians. Soueif overlooks the fact that Islam does not view democracy with the same enthusiasm with which it is viewed in a certain trend in Western political thought which reveals that she relies on a Western political framework in her text. The plot delineates how the great civilisations of Egypt (the Pharaonic and the Islamic) had been kidnapped for many decades by contemporary autocracies such as Mubarak's, but now the revolutionary Egyptians were regaining their free and democratic country. This narrative that suggests that the uprising was democratic in nature is conveyed firstly explicitly through a representation that demonstrates that the revolution was realising democracy for the Egyptians. Secondly, this narrative works implicitly via motifs revealing that the Egyptians in Tahrir Square practised the democracy they attempted to create during the protests through a sense of collectiveness, togetherness and equality. I argue that Soueif's noticeable emphasis on collectiveness and unity at Tahrir Square is symbolic of the sort of democratic transition that her text portrays as being created by the revolution. However, her uncritical portrayal of democracy which overlooks the Islamic dimension of Egyptian culture that treats democracy lightly indicates her Orientalist misreading of the mass mobilisation and her marginalisation of the Egyptian Islamic culture.

Two impulses define Soueif's motives for writing the memoir: pride in the revolution and an attempt to carry on achieving the goals of the uprising after Mubarak's expulsion. These impulses reflect the gravity of the transition that Cairo went through during the revolution:

namely, from a pre-democratic existence to a democratic future. Soueif wrote her memoir within shifting cultural relations in the aftermath of the revolution, which allowed her to intimately explore her real and imaginative relationship with Cairo, the city in which she lived. 'Many years ago,' she writes, 'I signed a contract to write a book about Cairo; My Cairo. But the years passed, and I could not write it. When I tried it read like an elegy; and I would not write an elegy for my city' (*CM* xiii). After the revolution, she was able to write about her free and democratic city without fear of writing an elegy about a city in captivity.

Soueif not only wanted to proudly record the ongoing revolution, but also to take part in it via the act of writing in order to further the aims of the revolution. She wanted her book to be 'an intervention, rather than just a record' (*CM* xiv; Chambers 4). She writes that the demonstrations continue and need every one of the Egyptians to take an active part: 'So I tried to "revolute" and write at the same time' (*CM* xiii–xiv). Claire Chambers observes that the neologism 'revolute' reflects Soueif's frustration with the existing vocabulary of resistance and its inability to express the fluid form of the protests (4). It can also be perceived as a linguistic transformation that expresses the sort of change that the revolution brought about; i.e., the departure from the dreadful and autocratic past and the arrival in the democratic future.

Soueif's literary contribution to propel the revolution is evidenced by writing in English, rather than Arabic (her first language), to a global readership.[17] Soueif's prioritisation of English readership (read as Western) reveals that she proceeds from Western values and expectations. The memoir is an appeal to international readership to become acquainted with the enormity of the ongoing events:

> eighteen days [(from the 25th of January to the 11th of February)] that brought out the best in us and showed us not just what we could do but how we could be. And it was this way of 'being,' as well as what it achieved, that captured the imagination of the world; that made the Egyptian revolution an inspiration for the people's movements that are crystallising across the planet […] So it's with pride and humility and confidence and fear […] that I put this book before you (*CM* xiv).

[17] Soueif's literary canon was viewed by critics within a category of international Anglo-Arab literature written for English-speaking audiences (Nash, *AA* 11–13; Kamal 579; Moolla 72–73).

Soueif capitalises on the global reach of her writing, perceiving her role in the business of representing, interpreting and contextualising the events (Chambers 4). She wants English readers to know how proud she is of her free city, which contrasts with her shame of the previous years over the fact that the city was under authoritarianism. Now Egypt is inspiration for the rest of the world, and the transformation that occurred within eighteen days revealed the true potential of the free Egyptians. The events not only reflect the actions of the Egyptians, but also an aspect of their identity: 'how we could be.' The revolution and the democratic transition it created are part of the identity of free present-day Egypt.

Her attempt to 'revolute' explains her choice of the memoir as a literary genre rather than the novel for which she is best known. As explained with respect to Matar's work, the memoir is closely connected to Soueif's political endeavour to both show pride in the revolution and participate in it through writing. As an autobiographical form in which the 'I' integrates with a newly reimagined Egyptian collective, it allows Soueif to connect her family's past to Egypt's history in order to push her message forward (Mazloum 213; Elbowety 80). The novel as a literary form does not allow Soueif to do this. In her 2012 article in *The Guardian*, entitled 'In Times of Crisis, Fiction has to Take a Back Seat,' Soueif observes that whenever an author tries to write a novel to further a cause, what is produced will not be a novel but 'a political tract with a veneer of fiction' ("IT"; Bromley 222; Brown 77). The memoir is configured as the literary mode *par excellence* to carry Soueif's attempt to make a contribution to the national history of Egypt via writing to a global audience.

The plot demonstrates that the Egyptian revolution was primarily an attempt to achieve Western-style liberal democracy, revealed, above all, in Soueif's explicit recognition of democracy as a destiny for revolutionary Egypt. Initially, she views the revolution itself as a genuine act of democratic proportions. For instance, Soueif narrates that in one of her interviews with an Indian television channel (aimed at promoting the revolution), she called the uprising a democratic change: 'It really does not look as if the government is going to allow a peaceful and *democratic change'* (*CM* 8 my emphasis). In another vignette, when Soueif expresses some of the concerns that the revolutionaries had at an important juncture in the revolution, she states that the Egyptians on the streets were settling the democratic question: 'The questions that are being settled on the streets of Egypt are of concern to everyone. The paramount one is this: can a people's revolution that is determinedly democratic, grassroots, inclusive and peaceable succeed?' (*CM* 148). In addition, Soueif stresses that the revolution was aimed at achieving democracy. For example, when Mubarak fell, the people at Tahrir agreed to leave the square only after the Supreme Council of the

Armed Forces (SCAF) promised to implement democratic changes. She writes: 'with tanks on our streets, [SCAF] stepped forward, saluted our [martyrs], declared its belief in our revolution and promised to protect it and the people and the transition into democracy. We left the [Square]' (*CM* 63).

Soueif also reveals that large segments of the revolutionaries expressly wanted to create democracy. This is apparent in the episode in which she narrates that the square becomes 'a space for debate' when the clashes subsided and the streets were quiet (*CM* 148). The debates showed that both the old generation and the young wanted to create a functional democratic rule, although they differed in their views regarding the nature of that democracy. On the one hand, 'Older people are still hopeful of a democracy, longing for the clean elections, the representative government they've longed for all their lives' (*CM* 148–49). On the other hand, 'Some of the [young] argued that we're beyond […] the old forms of democracy,' calling for a sort of democratic practice that could not fall into repression again (*CM* 149).

In addition to explicitly proclaiming that the Egyptian revolution was mainly about the implementation of a democratic government, Soueif indirectly suggests this in the way the Egyptians practised democracy via their collective efforts, unity and the atmosphere of equality that ensued among the diverse constituents of the revolutionary community in Tahrir. Again, this depiction functions to demonstrate that the revolution was a transition to democracy. Critics interpreted Soueif's portrayal of communal cooperation between the revolutionary Egyptians in diverse ways. For example, Hala Kamal observes that Soueif's experience 'is set in communal terms' in the way that she is always accompanied by members of her family such as her two nieces when she is in Tahrir (589–90). Kamal believes that the shifts from the personal 'I' to the plural 'we' indicate the author's tendency to merge and identify with the demonstrators so that 'a new identity emerges—the self as "part of the masses"' (590). Rana Elbowety analyses how Soueif's sub-title, *my City, our Revolution*, reflects how she mixes the personal with the collective so that 'Her narration demonstrates a sense of cohesion among the protestors' (80). This is emphasised by using the pronoun 'we,' which serves to stress and consolidate 'an image of unity and cohesion in the national fabric' (81). While Soueif's emphasis on motifs depicting collective effort indeed conveys the sort of national unity that Kamal and Elbowety allude to, I contend that it also reveals her democratic vision of the nature and outcome of the revolution. Her text conveys to the reader that the revolutionary Egyptians were practising democracy while in Tahrir because their unity and cohesion bear democratic traits such as being inclusive, open-sourced, participatory, communal, diversified and unified.

Soueif conveys this sense of collectiveness via a host of themes and symbols. Firstly, her narration of her participation in the revolution emphasises how she merged into the crowds, which is symbolic of being part of a larger group. Right from the beginning of the story, Soueif was not alone but always with others. The story begins when she and her two nieces were on a boat on the river Nile trying to join the protestors over the Qasr el-Nil bridge—one of the entrances leading to Tahrir. Soueif was within a family (her two nieces) running towards the crowds: 'we […] appeared suddenly in the Qasr el-Nil underpass among the Central Security vehicles […] we skittered through the screeching vehicles to a spot where we could scramble up the bank and join the people at the mouth of the bridge' (*CM* 5–6). This collectiveness also appears when people work individually, stressing the duty that each individual bore in order to further the revolutionary cause. For example, when the government shut down all communication (the internet and mobile networks) to curb the protests, Soueif asserted that, in response, 'each person was in one place, totally and fully committed to that place, unable to be aware of any other, knowing they had to do everything they could do for it and trusting that other people in other places were doing the same' (*CM* 6). This emphasises that even when they were alone, the protestors worked as if they were in one team whose purpose was to propel the revolution.

Secondly, Soueif conveys the sense of collectiveness by means of emphasising that the youth were a major driving force of the mass action. Instead of the English word youth, and as a skilful experimenter with language, she uses the Arabic equivalent *shabab.* In her definition of the word *shabab*, she highlights their hopefulness and positive attitude towards life and their communal togetherness: the word 'carries the signification of "people, men and women, who are at the youthful stage of life with all its energy, hope, optimism, vigour, impulsiveness and love of life, and who are acting communally, together"' (*CM* 196). Their protection of the Egyptian Museum during the revolutionary mayhem, which is the first delineation of their role in the revolution, illustrates these traits. She writes: 'the shabab, have linked arms and are surrounding the building, cordoning it with their bodies' (*CM* 27). Their positive role is also emphasised through the symbolism of the building that they protected and the fact that they used their bodies as a gesture of selfless sacrifice. The Egyptian Museum is where Egyptian Pharaonic history is kept, and the youth's protection of it is symbolic of their keenness to preserve Egypt.

Thirdly, in order to further demonstrate collectiveness, Soueif gives detailed descriptions of the large numbers of protestors in Tahrir. Descriptions of the population at Tahrir is a crucial aspect of Soueif's narration because numbers express the will of a people in egalitarian

systems such as democracy. For instance, Soueif comments on the millions that she joined in Tahrir on Tuesday the 1st of February, emphasising the sort of awakening that Tahrir bestowed upon the Egyptians. Once again, Soueif uses the Arabic word 'millioneyya' to refer to the million-man march in this vignette because it is more intimate and closely attached to the Arab people's experience than the English word. She writes: 'The military say two million in Tahrir. Four million across Egypt. And all these millions look like people who've awoken from a spell. We look happy. We look dazed. We turn to each other to question, to reassure' (*CM* 55). That is how it feels to be in a millioneyya: happy but worried. The revolutionary Egyptians find solace in themselves and in their numbers. They ask themselves about worrying issues with respect to their destiny, and they reassure themselves that they are on the right path.

Fourthly, to further her theme of collectiveness, Soueif stresses the diversity among the large numbers of the protestors. She reveals the inclusiveness of diverse segments of Egyptian society in the protests, who, despite apparent differences, continue to uphold the goals of the revolution. For example, a continuously contentious issue in Egyptian history is the Christian minority who live in the predominantly Muslim society. The text portrays harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims, indicating that Tahrir had religious diversity. The million-man marches had become a custom on Fridays and Tuesdays. Soueif describes how the Muslim prayer on Friday the 4th of February was followed by Christian Mass 'with everybody joining in both sets of "Amens"' (*CM* 147). She comments that for the first time she was moved by a Friday sermon, in which Sheik M. Shaheen voiced the people's opinions and linked their actions to religious values. In addition, Shaheen addressed his sermon not only to Muslims, but to all the 'Egyptians' and used Christ's example to preach. Shaheen ended his sermon with prayers to God that stressed unity, a love of Egypt and the people's rights, to which 'Our great communal "Amens" roll[ed] through the [Square]' (*CM* 147–48).

Furthermore, Soueif demonstrates that Tahrir had political diversity, revealed, for example, in the calls for all the revolutionary political forces—the Islamists, the liberals, the left and the progressives—to work together on the protests on Friday the 29th of January (*CM* 86). The days leading up to that Friday saw an atmosphere of distrust and confusion between political actors: 'The leadership of the political forces are like cells gone mad, they swim around frantically, they divide, they coalesce with other cells and then divide again' (*CM* 86). Soueif believes that this is 'normal, healthy' for political life in revolutionary Egypt, especially given that people during the Mubarak years were not 'used to working together politically because

anyone who tried […] was destroyed' (*CM* 86). Soueif comments that the revolutionary factions were doing what they should and that this democratic process would take time.

Cairo: my City, our Revolution commemorates Soueif's participation in the protests, introducing the reader to Cairo and Tahrir during the crucial eighteen days that led to Mubarak's downfall. Its underlying theme is that the revolution enabled Egypt to return to its true and great self once again. The revolution was now correcting the wrongs and remedying the ills brought about by authoritarianism. My analysis demonstrates that Soueif's narration of her story at Tahrir reveals a democratic teleology, where the revolution is portrayed as an attempt to realise a Western-style democracy. She delivers this theme via two main narrative techniques: firstly, she explicitly states that the revolution had a democratic impetus; and, secondly, she implicitly demonstrates via an emphasis on the motifs of collectiveness, unity and diversity that the revolutionaries acted democratically. However, Soueif's story neglects a crucial aspect of the history of the Egyptian Spring, which is its Islamic cultural background. Democratic political practice is not important in Islam, but Soueif chooses not to narrate the political reforms imagined by the Egyptian protestors within Islamic culture, describing the revolution as if it occurred in a Western, rather than Arabic, socio-political context. Soueif's delineation of the revolution as a quest to create a democracy misreads the events by means of using Western forms of government to interpret the political history of the Arab Spring.

In conclusion, the revolutions of the Arab Spring were misunderstood by the authors of post-Arab Spring literary writings. I argue that idioms borrowed from Western political thought, rather than Islamic political principles, are used to read the Arab Spring revolutions. The Arab Spring is described and celebrated, for example, as a legitimate attempt to establish the equivalent of liberal and representative forms of democracy; thus coming into ideological and theological conflict with orthodox Islam, which often looks with suspicion at acts of disobedience to the ruler. There is a lack of awareness of the differences between strands of Islamic political thought and Western political philosophy in the representations of the Arab Spring. These misrepresentations can be mapped across two main indicators as revealed in Matar and Soueif's memoirs: 1) describing Arab regimes as dictatorial and despotic while dictatorship and tyranny in Islam have different connotations from those in the West; 2) arguing that the Arab revolutions are aimed at achieving Western-style liberal and representative democracies and political systems while evidence suggests that economic aims were prioritised by the Arab protestors. In the literary narratives, there exists the erroneous assumption that Islam and the West have identical interpretations and practical applications of the concepts of dictatorship and democracy.

In the next chapter, I explore the inclusion of the Arabs in the West, demonstrating how narratives of globalisation are used to describe the Arab revolutions as familiar and adjacent while at the same time undermining the agency of the Arab protestors by means of portraying them as needing Western political and technological tutelage. In order to do so, I analyse the significance of the literary authors' extensive use of metaphors, themes and tropes of globalisation, multiculturalism, internationalism and hybridity, exploring the intricate interrelationship between globalisation and postcolonialism and imperialism. Globalisation ostensibly abolishes all national affiliations, and, thus, it constitutes a problem for postcolonial analysis since the concept of the nation-state is a crucial component of postcolonial theory. I argue, following Simon Gikandi, that postcolonial critique is relevant in the age of globalisation because the nation continues to function in cultural production, which, for Gikandi, has become a touchstone for social reality. I also discuss configurations of globalisation during the Arab Spring revolutions, demonstrating that the uprisings embodied global features that include the use of social media and the rise of the global citizen-journalist. In the last two sections, I closely analyse the literary texts, demonstrating that they can be grouped into two main categories that reveal how the Arabs are portrayed as in need of the West: 1) narratives in which the Arabs are led by 'White' leader figures towards a figurative revolutionary success or a philosophical understanding of the revolution; 2) narratives in which the Arabs are dependent on Western technologies such as Twitter, Facebook and Western mainstream media outlets to overthrow unwanted presidents. The first category is exemplified by Bassingthwaighte's novel, *Live from Cairo,* while the second is discussed in Hamilton's text, *The City Always Wins*.

Chapter 4: Not the 'Other' but 'our Other'

4.1 Familiarity of the Arab Spring

Using themes of globalisation and multiculturalism, post-Arab Spring literary narratives depict the Arab revolutionaries as belonging to the West, abandoning the Orientalist estrangement of Arabs as anti-Western and anti-modern. Because the Arab revolutionaries embraced idioms familiar to Western conceptions of resistance against unjust regimes—promotion of revolution, freedom, liberalism and democracy—they seemed familiar and adjacent to observers in the Western hemisphere. Familiarity signifies that the political language of the Arab revolutionaries was understood by people in Europe and North America while adjacency indicates that a common ground existed between the Arabs and their Western observers due to a shared political understanding of the motives and aims of the revolutions. Thus Post-Arab Spring literary narratives portray the Arab Spring within the context of globalisation and a globalised world of values, ideas and technologies such as Facebook and Twitter. This globalised world is purportedly built on principles of hybridity, syncretism, difference and multiculturalism, which favour rhizomic and diverse experiences. Nevertheless, despite including the Arabs in the West, these texts continue to configure the Arabs as in need of the West, Western technology and Western political influence. Accordingly, this discourse establishes that the 'glorious' revolutions of the Arab Spring, without Western assistance through ideology and technology, would not have taken place in a region that is stereotypically categorised as sedentary, backward, submissive and despotic.[18] Consequently, the revolutions are depicted not as belonging to the antithetical Other of the West but as belonging to the familiar Other of the West. The inclusion of the Arabs in the West is the first element that indicates that a new form of neo-Orientalism is established after the Arab Spring which I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. The second element that indicates this transformed discourse to refer to Arabs is the absence of Islamophobic sentiments, which is discussed in the next chapter, 'Islamophobia Curtailed.'

The Arab Spring revolutions constituted a unique epistemic convergence between the East and the West that signalled a complete departure from post-9/11 perceptions of the Arabs as anti-Western and anti-modern and the advent of what I term post-Arab Spring neo-

[18] I argued in the previous chapter that orthodox Islam does not bestow legitimacy upon revolutions against Muslim rulers. In this chapter, I argue that even though in Western political practice revolutions are considered legitimate, the glory that revolutions bring about is denied Arabs in the literary texts under discussion.

Orientalism. The revolutions were perceived by the world and observers in Europe and North America as being legitimate acts of civil disobedience against political opponents reimagined as tyrannical and oppressive. The revolutions are narrated as legitimate, logical, just, familiar and adjacent. I argue that the Western European and North American response to the Arab Spring was for the greatest part unanimous in its approval, respect and appreciation. Achcar quotes Francis Fukuyama's praise of the uprisings as a wave of democratisation (*MS* 4–5). For Achcar, Fukuyama 'has been particularly successful at expressing the mainstream Western Zeitgeist,' and, therefore, his words convey a Western endorsement of the Arab Spring (*MS* 5). Achcar adds that Fukuyama's words have been 'enunciated innumerable times by countless Western commentators during the first months of 2011' (*MS* 5). There was certainly concern among European and US commentators that the Arab Spring may eventually produce radical Islamic governments and the fear of terrorism that accompanied such anxiety in the post-9/11 moment. However, the figure of the Arab protestor defied attempts to be conceptually configured in the reductive visual and discursive images that postcolonial critics have identified as being a hallmark of literary writing on the Arab world. The Arabs appeared as singular actors who enacted transformative social change. Simultaneously, however, this portrayal of the Arabs remains indebted to classical Orientalist discourse in the way that the Arab revolutionaries are depicted as in need of Western technologies and political influence.

I argue that the literary discourses surrounding the Arab Spring constitute a point of departure from earlier representations of the Arab world, especially those of post-9/11 neo-Orientalist stereotypes in which the Arabs were completely alien to Western 'modern' life. Said wrote extensively on this sort of alienation that defined Orientalist discourse:

> For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, 'we' lived in ours (*O* 43–44).

This Saidian imaginative gap between the familiar and the strange is no longer sustained when mobilised in the literature of my chosen field as the Arab revolutions fell within the realm of the familiar. In the narrative strategies employed in the literary texts under investigation, Arabs and Westerners are brought into contact within globalised contexts (multiculturalism, hybridity, immigration and diaspora). This era of globalisation is defined as 'a time in which the sovereignty of nation states has declined and modes of exchange operate

with increasing ease and speed across national boundaries, producing configurations of power that exceed the boundaries of the nation-state' (Israel 1). Such narratives frame Matar's *The Return*, for example, with the primary plot tracing Matar's return to Libya after years of exile in London, Paris and Rome. The revolution has made Libya safe (much like London or Paris) for the Western-educated novelist and political dissident (1–4). The transformative impact of globalisation upon Libya is narrated by Matar in terms of an homogenising force that reproduces itself in the world's cityscapes.

The Western endorsement of the Arab Spring revolutions is borne out by the semantic designation 'Spring,' which has been attached to the Arab revolutions to indicate their democratising and liberalising impetus. 'Spring' has been used in contemporary American circles to designate political upheavals aimed at liberalising regimes such as the 'Prague Spring' in Czechoslovakia in the years 1966-68 (Massad, "AS"). The name 'Arab Spring' alludes to the Revolutions of 1848 which swept throughout Europe—also referred to as the Springtime of the People (Weyland 917; Massad, "AS"). Due to a culmination of social, economic and political crises (Price 1), the revolutionary wave of 1848 took place following an uprising in France and extended to Germany and the Habsburg Empire (von Strandmann 1; Weyland 917–18). These movements centred on themes such as resistance to the *ancien régime* and demand for greater political participation and reform (von Strandmann 4; Moggach and Jones 6).

The optimism which these hopes raised amongst the contemporaries of the 1848 upheavals was felt on several levels. For example, the 'ecstatic' Karl Marx wrote in a 'prophetic' letter which he sent to his co-editor three years prior to 1848: 'I am delighted that you are resolved to turn your thoughts from backward glances at the past toward a new understanding' (qtd. in Dabashi, *AS* xv). Naming Paris 'the new capital of the new world,' Marx repeatedly used the phrase 'new world' to describe what he thought to be the dawn of a new era for Europe (Dabashi, *AS* xv). In 1852, however, Marx wrote *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* to describe the seizure of power in France by Napoleon III and his (Marx's) disappointment at the betrayal of the revolution (Dabashi, *AS* xv; Kramer and Yaphe 49–50). In this text, Marx reiterated Hegel's remark that history repeats itself (once as a tragedy and the other as a farce) which would foreshadow events such as the Arab Spring (Marx 31; Dabashi, *AS* xvi). The revolutions of 1848 led Marx and Engels to write the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) (Dabashi, *AS* xv) in which they describe the grievances engendered by capitalist systems, calling for the workers of 'the world' to unite (Marx and Engels 58).

The revolutions of 1848 were particularly significant with regards to the development and practice of notions related to democratisation such as the formation and expression of popular will (Moggach and Jones 6). The demands, actions and aspirations of the rural peasantry were central to the revolutions (Sperber xiii). The 1848 revolutionaries debated and contested subjects like 'The extent and qualifications of suffrage, the establishment of civil equality, the forms of the democratic state, the division of powers within it [and] the need to check executive power' (Moggach and Jones 6). Central to their discussions was the notion of political representation and whether a central representative government or a local self-government was feasible (Moggach and Jones 6). 'Parliamentarisation and democratisation of the government were everywhere among the core demands of the revolutionary movements' (Haupt and Langewiesche 3). Despite the complexity of the events and disparate contexts among different European nations, a majority of European societies in 1848 were faced with the question of the democratisation of the political system and finding a solution to social problems (Haupt and Langewiesche 3). Moreover, the years around 1848 witnessed an intensification of the discussions of fundamental political topics such as nation and nationalism (the emancipation of European nationalities from large empires), civil society and the state (reconfiguring the relationship between the two), religion (questions of conservatism and progressive religious views) and emergent ideological patterns such as republicanism and socialism (Moggach and Jones 8, 10–12). The latter included radical politics in which Marx was a prominent figure: Marx helped set the groundwork for the socialist principles of redressing economic inequality and exploitation (Moggach and Jones 13).

Linking the Arab revolutions to 1848 was directly expressed by many Western historians and political analysts. For example, Eric Hobsbawm watched the unfolding of the events of 2010-2012 with excitement, stating that 'It was an enormous joy to discover once again that it's possible for people to get down in the streets, to demonstrate, to overthrow governments' (qtd. in Whitehead). While still acknowledging the regional and cultural differences among the Arab territories, Hobsbawm observed that 'It reminds me of 1848—another self-propelled revolution which started in one country then spread all over the continent in a short time' (qtd. in Whitehead). Other intellectuals set out to analyse the connection between the Arab revolutions and Europe in 1848 such as Steven Kramer and Judith Yaphe who capture the basis of the comparison between the two historical events which they analyse:

> The vision of the Arab world as not quite ready for Western political values or practices that had been shaped to a great extent by Western 'orientalist' and Eastern 'anti-colonialist' stereotyping was suddenly challenged. The

> students, women, youth and intellectuals who filled Cairo's Tahrir Square resembled the heroes of the barricades of 1848 in Paris and other European cities in education, background, and class. They were the inheritors of what had happened in Europe in 1848. The fall of the authoritarian and repressive regimes of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak was the triumph of Western political values (45).

Kramer and Yaphe perceive both revolutions as being driven by intellect and economic struggle. The Arab protestors are now equal to bourgeois Europeans who stood in 1848 for the political values in which they believed. The Arabs were able to adopt Western political tactics to liberate themselves from the autocracies of Ben Ali and Mubarak. This occurred despite Orientalist claims regarding the political passivity of people in the Arab region.[19]

The Arab mass movements stood for a bold and noble cause that could be understood within pre-existing North American and European discourses concerning political dissent, civil disobedience and resistance. The revolutions appealed to Westerners due to being a natural human response to unfavourable political conditions (Salaita 141–42; Spanos 86). Hobsbawm's enthusiasm for the revolutions originates from his conviction that they were popular and were carried out for legitimate aims: 'People turning up in the streets, demonstrating for the right things' (qtd. in Whitehead). This is further evidenced by the fact that the Arab revolutions inspired the Occupy movements across different cities in the Western hemisphere (Salaita 141). The Occupy Wall Street in the United States, for instance, invoked the new politics, tactics and ideas of the revolutionary Arabs in what was considered a sign of the growing global interconnection between the North and South (Hatem 402). The Occupy Madison used slogans such as 'We Are Tahrir Square,' 'A Child of Tahrir Square,' 'The Midwestern Tahrir' and 'Where's Our Tahrir Square?' (Salaita 141).

The enthusiasm surrounding the Arab Spring in North American and European political and academic discourses also underlies treatments of the Arab Spring in the literary texts under investigation. For example, in *Kapow!*'s ironic and meta-fictional mode of narration, the unreliable, caffeinated and doped narrator is unsure about his criticism of the hopes Faryaq (the Arab informant who helps the narrator write the history of the Arab Spring) attaches to

[19] Despite their claim to distance themselves from Orientalist discourses, Kramer and Yaphe fall into Eurocentric bias when they argue that the fall of what they call dictators 'was the triumph of Western political values.'

the revolutions. Using references that echo Marx's disappointment at the fate of the 1848 revolutions, the narrator declares:

> While in London Faryaq talked to me about a new dawn. I found this phrasing cute. It was like the way Marx had it. Revolutionaries were comical. They said they were creating a new world and then they just got out the same old posters. A time machine! For instance, I was still buying the world newspapers, and in one newspaper photo a girl was wearing a headband with a Che Guevara print […] I mean seriously? Che? Are you kidding me? This image of Che was repeated in all the era's revolutions—on the posters in Libya, in the graffiti found in Yemen. But then again, I know, I know, it might look the same but who was I to say? It's never obvious when things are different (*K* 21).

The narrator alludes to Marx's phrase that history repeats itself, once as a tragedy, the other as a farce, via the trope of temporal travel. The time machine is a metaphor of the repetitive nature of revolutions and alludes to the fate of the Arab Spring; i.e., failure like that of the 1848 revolutions. Faryaq and his co-revolutionaries are incapable of realising historical truth. Guevara alludes to the global nature of the revolutions: he was an emblem of revolutionary Marxist Latin America but became an international signifier of revolutionary selfless bravery. However, using Guevara's image in recent revolutions becomes banal, which is an allusion to the triviality of revolutionary hopes of change. The Arab Spring, 1848 and other revolutions are categorised as one global history in Thirlwell's novelette.

Such an endorsement of the Arab revolutions in the West, I argue, indicates the first feature of post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism; namely, the inclusion of the Arab protestors in a Western-dominated global community and the disappearance of the stereotype that Arabs are anti-Western. Despite being a specifically Arab phenomenon, the Arab Spring was reported via media platforms so that the distance between the territories where it occurred and where it was reported was less important. This has the effect of de-territorialising the binaries of East and West, which, in the context of cultural globalisation, 'implies the growing presence of social forms of contact and involvement which go beyond the limits of a specific territory' (i Martí 91–92). Contemporary postcolonial theory continues to discuss the terms by which it wishes to express itself and, in recent years, mainly under the Warwick Research Collective's turn towards world systems theory (Wallerstein), globalisation has emerged as a crucial term in contemporary debates covering identity and nationality. I argue that in their preoccupation with themes of globalisation, post-Arab Spring texts present a transformed version of post-

9/11 neo-Orientalism in which the Arab revolutionaries are joined with the West. In what I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse, the Arabs appear not as the 'Other' of Western culture, as is the case in Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism, but as the 'familiar Other;' as 'our Other' of the West. This departs from pre-Arab Spring configurations of the Arab as the antithetical 'Other' of Western culture.

Nevertheless, this de-territorialisation of the categories of East and West does not engender unbiased portrayals of Arabs that are completely free from Orientalist paradigms. I argue further that the Arab revolutionaries enter into the arena of the familiar, but they remain there ambivalently because they are not treated as equal to Westerners themselves. While in post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse, Arabs exist side by side with Westerners, they are depicted as requiring Western tutelage. Metaphors and motifs depicting globalised contexts are used in the literary texts particularly to indicate the predominance of 'White' culture or 'White' technologies. This can be observed in the use of two main literary narratives: 1) narratives in which the Arabs are led by 'White' leaders toward a sort of figurative revolutionary success or philosophical understanding of the revolution. Charlie in *Live from Cairo,* for example, leads the Arabs in a revolution against the bureaucracy of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, which parallels their failed revolution against Mubarak's deep state and reveals Charlie's tactics as superior. 2) The Arabs need for the West also appears in narratives in which Arabs are dependent on Western technologies such as smartphones, Twitter, Facebook, and Western mainstream media outlets to carry out their dreams of the revolution. This is exemplified by the main narrative line of Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*. These two texts are explored in detail in sections Four and Five of this chapter. In the following section, I analyse the various configurations of globalisation in the literary narratives of the Arab Spring and the connection between literary globalisation and postcolonial theory.

4.2 Globalisation in the Literary Narratives of the Arab Spring

Post-Arab Spring narratives are underpinned by various socio-cultural configurations of globalisation, a term and concept that has been used in contemporary critical discourse to designate a myriad of economic, political, social and cultural developments. This global sociocultural evolution is problematic for postcolonial theory—with its focus on the nation-state as a basic unit for its analysis—because globalisation describes a change in the organisation of the social relations across the globe where the nation and national boundaries become less important in a world in which communities and individuals have access to global

sources of culture and knowledge (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 127). This is borne out by the fact that the concept of globalisation remains under-theorised in postcolonial theory today (Acheraïou 171–72; Connell 78; Loomba 213, 218). Although globalisation has roots in previous centuries—postcolonial critics turned to Marx to read European imperial expansionism in terms of a proto-globalisation—it is commonly thought of, by figures such as Bill Ashcroft et al. and Simon Gikandi, as emerging as a social and cultural phenomenon in the 1980's (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 127; Israel 1; Gikandi 627). The widespread deployment of the word 'international' in the eighteenth century was a sign of the development of global perspectives as a result of European colonisation of various parts of the world and the rise of capitalism (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 127; Lunga 195). However, in the globalised world of today, notions such as identity, gender, citizenship and space become less stable and the tensions between a deterritorialised world and locality have become intensified as contemporary postcolonial criticism has refocused away from historical legacies toward globalised paradigms of understanding: the international rich, for instance, living side-by-side with the local poor (Lunga 196).

Since the nation-state plays a less important role in today's globalised social and cultural structures, it is important to revisit postcolonialism in order to adequately analyse imperialism in this era of globalisation. Gikandi's theorisation is fundamental for my analysis of post-Arab Spring literary texts because he demonstrates that globalisation does not completely abolish the cultural structures of nationalism, and, consequently, the postcolonial frameworks regarding imperialism, hegemony and anti-colonial resistance continue to be important for any postcolonial understanding of globalisation in literature (635, 640). Thus the narratives of globalisation in the texts featuring the history of the Arab Spring reproduce Orientalist discourses despite increasing cross-culturalism and the diminishing influence of the nation-state.

The underlying dynamics of globalisation in the economy, politics and culture have become extraordinarily complex. Economic globalisation 'points to a shrinking world, a world that is becoming more interrelated, interconnected and interdependent—a totally interconnected marketplace, unhampered by time zones or national boundaries' (Lunga 195–96). At a purely economic level, globalisation is understood as the expansion of capitalist markets, global markets and the global organisation of production that has accompanied this redrawing of the global economic order (Connell 79). In politics, globalisation manifests itself in the declining monopoly of the state under the increasing encroachment of international governmental and quasi-governmental bodies such as the European Union and the United Nations (Connell 79).

The globalisation of politics and the economy engendered social changes such as the relocation of people through the migration of workers (Connell 79–80). Culturally, the spread of globalised technologies of interconnectivity enabled vertical and horizontal social integration, producing patterns of cultural consumption whose content is hard to regulate by the state (Connell 80). The culturo-political and socio-economic revolution instigated by globalisation transformed all forms of political, economic, social and cultural relations, and resulted in an ontological reclassification of an old order in the collective mythology, or, as Benedict Anderson would frame it, in the 'imagined' national identity that previously structured individual identity.

Post-Arab Spring literary narratives, then, engage critically and theoretically with globalisation through a varied set of motifs, characters and situations, alluding to three major perceptions of globalisation.[20] My work reimagines the literary/theoretical relationship by outlining how my primary texts offer a discursive vision of the globalised order that can be used to advance contemporary scholarship in the disciplinary field. Firstly, Thirlwell's *Kapow!* is preoccupied with globalisation as theorised by Anthony Giddens: '[Globalisation is] the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (Giddens 64). Thirlwell sets the scene at the beginning of the novelette where the mood of the narrator—who is located in 'the new coffee laboratories of East London—' is influenced by revolutions which are being started 'everywhere' (*K* 5). Depicted as operating in a caffeinated state, the videos of the international events trigger a chain of imaginative associations that place the narrator in 'a blissful state of suspension' (*K* 5). The narrator thus begins to contemplate the intertwined histories of Europe and the Middle East in order to philosophise the relationship between revolution and narration.

Secondly, several post-Arab Spring texts engage with globalisation as defined by Martin Albrow in his book *The Global Age* (1996): '[globalisation refers to] all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society' (88). The notion of the 'global city' is characteristic of globalisation due to the weakening of the nation as a spatial unit, and names denoting cities are used in the titles of three texts: *The City Always Wins*, *Cairo: My City, Our Revolution* and *Live from Cairo* (Sassen, *GC* xviii–xix). The stories of these texts reinforce the notion of the emergence of the city as a global

[20] Following Suman Gupta's lead, and due to the lack of a comprehensive definition of the term 'globalisation' in varied discursive contexts, it is useful when studying the link between literary texts and globalisation not to adhere to a specific definition of the term (Gupta 5–6).

space that stages transnational encounters and replaces the nation-state. Bassingthwaighte's *Live from Cairo*, for instance, experiments with the hybrid identities and communities engendered by globalised cities. In Cairo, Charlie is a White American expatriate working as a resettlement officer at the Refugee Relief Project (36, 87). Charlie's co-workers at the RRP include Aos, an Egyptian Islamist translator, and Michael, a British lawyer who has a British-Egyptian girlfriend (39, 48). The loyalties (allegiances and devotion) of these characters are determined by their multicultural relations which supersede their biological or national affiliations.

Thirdly, Haddad's *Guapa* mobilises a configuration of globalisation as laid out in Roland Robertson's *Globalisation* (1992): '[Globalisation is] the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (8). Haddad outlines how such a compressed consciousness can find articulation, for instance, in the realisation of Rasa's revolutionary, sexual and homosexual consciousness, formed, in part, via an interaction with globalised news media outlets such as CNN and other European television (*G* 24–25, 92, 98–99). Rasa identifies these Western outlets as sources of a new awareness that has been unavailable to him in a previous period of his life and, therefore, is encouraged to imagine a conception of identity not predicated about a narrow nationalism in terms of his position as a globalised citizen within this emerging interconnected globalised framework. Rasa's identity formation is not complete until his exposure to international television, through which he realises that his local community lacked the vocabulary necessary to articulate his gay identity. This highlights the insufficiency of local resources of knowledge in the age of globalisation for the Arab protestors.

Using first wave or even a second generational postcolonial theoretical framework to interpret such themes of globalisation in the literary texts is inadequate because untangling the complex relationship between globalisation and postcolonialism requires a new level of theoretical sophistication (Gikandi 628).[21] Recent postcolonial theoretical work have proposed a dialectical relationship between globalisation and the legacy of imperialism: in particular, whether globalisation has made redundant the vocabulary of postcolonial critique (Gikandi 629; Appadurai, "DD" 295–96). Violet Lunga, for instance, observes that the presentation of globalisation as an ahistorical phenomenon serves to naturalise and universalise it, thus 'concealing the trajectories of uneven distribution of resources and exploitation of the poor by

[21] The first wave of postcolonial thinkers included Aimé Césaire, W. E. B. Du Bois, Franz Fanon and C. L. R. James while the second wave included Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and others (Go 21, 40).

the more powerful nations' (197). Fredric Jameson closely associates globalisation with postmodern culture which he defines as 'the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world' (*PC* 57; Connell 84).[22] Jameson develops his analyses of globalisation from an economic perspective later in his 2002 book, *A Singular Modernity*, contending that a fundamental meaning of modernity is 'worldwide capitalism' (*SM* 12–13). Jameson argues that modernity (which has paradoxically been revived in the age of postmodernity) has a homogenising effect: as globalised capitalism in its third or late stage involved in a standardisation project which 'casts considerable doubt on all […] pious hopes for cultural variety in a future world colonised by a universal market order' (*SM* 6–7, 12–13). For Jameson, globalisation follows Marx's formulation that it is invested in a project of manufacturing ever expanding markets, which, in the process, elides national difference in the creation of homogenised global cultural and economic landscapes.

In their book, *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri analyse the deterritorialising impulse innate within global capitalism, but, in contrast to Jameson and true to their neo-Marxist principles, discern a more optimistic and radical potential within the architectonics of globalisation. Their work holds that a new deterritorialised and decentred form of Empire (a universal republic, a sovereign power) is being constituted which is imperial but not imperialist (xi–xii, 182). Imperialism, they contend, stems from paradigms centred on the nation-state, while the new global power is constituted of various political and economic institutions that reside beyond the traditional boundaries of a sovereign state (166–67). The new global power, whose evolution depends on the US Constitution (due to its imperial tendency), will be concerned with spreading peace, resolving conflicts and eliminating inequalities amongst nations: 'This imperial expansion has nothing to do with imperialism, nor with those state organisms designed for conquest, pillage, genocide, colonisation, and slavery' (166–67, 182).[23]

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[22] The relationship between postmodernism and globalization is not easily defined as Jameson's decontextualised remark may suggest. Some critics have argued for the need to clarify the relationship between the two while others viewed both phenomena as belonging to one category (O'Brien and Szeman 605–07). Identifying the United States as the global hegemonic power has also been problematised by other critics for being 'fraught with theoretical and empirical difficulties' (O'Brien and Szeman 608).

[23] Hardt and Negri's thesis has been critiqued by, for instance, Timothy Brennan who observes that *Empire* has nothing to say about the peoples of previously colonised regions (338).

These competing views of globalisation render configurations of imperialism less visible in contemporary global cultural. For Hardt and Negri, for example, the governmental structures of the contemporary global order—the United Nations, the European Union, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and others—have come to occupy the exclusive, legislative and judiciary spaces vacated by the previous iteration of economic history. It is in their understanding of the term and concept of Empire as a supra-national designation that they are then able to locate transformative possibilities for those toiling under class inequity. Once again demonstrating the influence of classical Marxist philosophy on their thinking, Hardt and Negri suggest that similar to the Bourgeois revolution of the nineteenth century, the interconnected nature of Empire can be turned back upon its elites by the formation of groupings that they term as the 'multitude' (xv, 393–95). Agreeing with Jameson that globalisation exerts a homogenising influence on territorial and cultural difference, their work ultimately outlines a potential mode to destabilise the globalised world order in a manner that recalls Marx's famous sorcerer from *The Communist Manifesto*.

Nevertheless, when examined from the perspective of literary studies (rather than the social sciences or anthropology), the relationship between older tropes of imperialist discourse and the dislocated narratives of globalisation can be mapped out. Gikandi theorises the link between globalisation and imperialism through a series of readings of literary works. He argues that literature demonstrates that globalisation proves to be ultimately 'a discourse of failure and atrophy' (as evidenced by the rise of neo-colonialism since the 1950s and the 1960s) although it tends to vacillate between a narrative of success and economic prosperity, as seen in Japan and South Korea, and failure such as under-developed countries in Africa (636–39). Gikandi questions Hall, Arjun Appadurai and Bhabha's argument that globalisation—as perceived in culture and literature—produces global hybridity and difference that exhaust the vocabulary of imperialism and colonialism (636). There are narratives and images in the context of globalisation, according to Gikandi, which do not fit the theoretical apparatus of hybridity and diversity (639).[24] Globalisation ultimately proves to be a narrative underpinned by racial, social and national inequality which, in turn, comes to resemble for postcolonial theorists the Eurocentric paradigms of modernism and categories of anti-colonial discourse. The resurgence of these categories in literary texts deconstructs

[24] Bhabha and Appadurai's multi-faceted and multi-layered texts provide readings which may conflict with Gikandi's. Patricia Pisters, for instance, explains that Bhabha's hybridity concept illustrates how culture can be a contested location (open for complex negotiations) but does not mean that culture in the postcolonial world corresponds to this idea (Pisters 305–06; Bhabha 245–51).

globalisation as a cultural discursive formation that is not affected by questions of Western hegemony over the Orient.

Gikandi explains that this literary and cultural outlook of globalisation established by leading postcolonial theorists has gained prominence on account of the literary turn in the studies of globalisation; namely, discussions of globalisation since the 1980s have become a major topic in cultural theory, moving away from political economy, anthropology and the social sciences (632–33). Initially, the social sciences were unable to provide the conceptual terms to account for forces and practices produced by the rich and varied local and popular discourses of postmodernised and globalised society (Gikandi 633). The challenge for sociology in the 1980s, as Mike Featherstone explains, was to theorise frameworks of investigation which can systematically explain forms of global social life that rendered problematic the primary topic for sociology; namely, society, perceived mainly within the boundaries of the nation-state (2; Gikandi 634).

Additionally, with the emergence of postmodernist theories of culture and their espousal of Jean-François Lyotard's notion of eclecticism (conceived as a basic element of contemporary culture), transnational culture became dissociated from nationhood (Gikandi 634–35).[25] Theories influenced by postmodernism foregrounded decentred formations of identity produced, for example, in the diaspora which sublated the boundaries of the nation-state (Gikandi 634–35). 'The key assumption in what one may call the cultural version of globalisation is that […] the nation has become an absent structure' (Gikandi 635). The traditional link between culture and locality can no longer be maintained (Gikandi 638). Thus the postcolonial espousal of culture (the imaginary, literature) as representative of social life in the age of globalisation is appealing because it breaks the deadlock felt in sociology when attempting to define the nation in a globalised society: 'The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order' (Appadurai, *ML* 31; Gikandi 638). Globalisation thus became installed within literary and cultural theoretical production as a concept of primary fascination.

Gikandi's most notable contribution to the literary theoretical work on globalisation is his argument that the category of the nation, which has lost significance in the social sciences

[25] Lyotard famously characterised eclecticism as 'the degree zero of contemporary general culture,' by which he meant the deterritorialization, diversity and broad range of sources of cultural products, styles, beliefs tendencies and methods (76; Bentley 206–07). He alludes to the tawdriness of contemporary capitalist public art as it catered to a 'confused' consumer taste, arguing that eclecticism is not a postmodern idea but a manifestation of the realism of capitalism (Malpas 45; Malick 695–96; cf. Green 40).

since the advent of globalisation, continues to hold sway in literary production. He adds that since the category of the nation is central to conceptions of imperialism, the theoretical frameworks of the postcolonial still apply to the literary discourses of globalisation. The nation, Gikandi maintains, continues as an ambivalent idea that exerts profound symbolic authority over the collective imagination of the globalised subject, while becoming an apparatus which engenders 'a continual slippage of categories' (Gikandi 635; Bhabha 201). He goes on to argue that 'the nation becomes both the form that structures modern identities and the sign of their displacement and alienation' (635). Gikandi reaffirms that

> No doubt, the most powerful signs of the new process of globalization come from literary texts and other works of art. For critics looking for the sign of hybridity, heterogeneity, and newness in the new world order, there cannot be a better place to go than Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* [(1988)] or Gabriel García Márquez's *El cieno años de soledad* [(1967)] (632).

Ironically, however, while these texts are considered seminal in literary narratives of globalisation, they are underpinned by an imaginative reliance upon outmoded notions and references to the nation-state: 'What needs to be underscored here, then, is the persistence of the nation-state in the very literary works that were supposed to gesture toward a transcendental global culture' (Gikandi 632). Gikandi contends that literary narratives of globalisation provide a problematic reading of globalisation focused via the theoretical prism of failure and loss: 'there seems to be a powerful disjuncture between the global narratives and images that attract postcolonial critics and another set of narratives and images which do not exactly fit into a theoretical apparatus that seems bent on difference and hybridity' (639). He concludes:

> My argument is that although they seem to have been exorcized from the postcolonial scene of interpretation, such older categories of identity as religion and nationalism […] continue to haunt and to shape the idea of culture and literature even in the spaces in between nations and traditions (640).

Accordingly, narratives of the global in literature, including texts centred on hybridity and heterogeneity such as the literary works of Rushdie's and Marquez's, reintroduce patterns of representation underpinned by colonialism and its aftermath whose rationale can only be interpreted using a postcolonial theoretical framework. Gikandi's argument lays the groundwork for my analyses of the global in the post-Arab Spring literary texts from a postcolonial perspective. My reading of the literary texts reveals that imperialist structures of

domination and subordination are at work with respect to the position of the Arab in the themes of globalisation in these texts.

4.3 Globalisation and the Arab Revolutions

As a moment in international political history, the Arab Spring revolutions, tactics, and actors embodied various—at times conflicting—configurations of globalisation as theorised by scholars of contemporary culture such as Hardt and Negri. These two authors' ideas of Empire (as a transnational system of governance) and the multitude (which resists the inequalities engendered by that system) find application in the 2008 financial meltdown (perceived as a crisis created by a global neoliberal model) and the protests which ensued since then (viewed as comprising a response by the multitude) such as the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements (Hatem 402–04). The globalised world system and the ensuing protests are predicated on the widespread use of digital technologies. Hardt and Negri assert: 'The development of communications networks has an organic relationship to the emergence of the new world order—it is, in other words, effect and cause, product and producer' (32). Hardt and Negri also argue that, through mass communications, global power 'creates subjectivities, puts them in relation and orders them' (33). The Arab Spring was a product of the great boom in digital technologies in the way that it was reported in real time through smart devices which compressed distances and temporalities. Simultaneously, the Arab Spring was a factor in the creation of new globalised networks and subjects; it increased the potential of social media and influencers, allowing cyber activists such as Egyptian Wael Ghonim to become international figures. The Arab Spring was thus a historical event that had been the product of various forces of globalisation (like the 2008 financial crisis and the global use of technologies) and, simultaneously, an event that fostered other dynamics of globalisation such as influencing the Occupy Movements and the creation of global subjects.

New technologies and the role of the 'citizen journalist' have remarkably changed the way revolutions are performed and perceived during the Arab Spring. The Arab revolutionaries spoke to the world through smart devices, thus transforming local events into a global concern. Although these developments are not unique to the Arab Spring in recent years, the volume and complexity of the use of technology by ordinary Arabs was unprecedented. For example, in the 2009 Iranian revolution (The Green Revolution)—considered the largest and most formidable threat to the Islamic Republic since 1978-9—the youth protestors used modern technologies to organise and document the mass action (Alimagham 2–3, 24). A frequently quoted example used to demonstrate the speed with which social media delivered

the moment-by-moment events on the Iranian streets is the incident in which a student was shot dead and his photograph was, within fifteen minutes, on President Obama's desk (Mortimer 68). Nonetheless, nothing could have prepared the world for the magnitude of the footage which was sent from the Arab revolutionary cities (Mortimer 68). Whether or not social media 'created' the Arab Spring has been widely debated, but there is a general consensus that the volume of images, tweets and posts during the Arab Spring signalled an unprecedented development in social media technology as an organisational and documentary feature of political uprisings (Mortimer 68; Korany and El-Mahdi 12). Through their small gadgets, the Arab protestors transformed their uprising into a global event that was broadcast directly to a global citizenship.

The universalising effect of technologies was evidenced in the domino effect which characterised the revolutionary movements across the Arab countries and beyond in Western cities as perceived in the Occupy movement. In her book, *Roots of the Arab Spring* (2013), Dafna Rand argues that 'the Tunisian "Jasmine Revolution" of December and January 2011 inspired the subsequent Egyptian and Libyan revolutions, and all three inspired the Moroccan, Syrian and Bahraini protest movements' (10). Cross-country Facebook and Twitter pages and vigorous online cooperation between activists propelled the revolutionary movement in different regions (Rand 10). In Egypt, for instance, calls for the first major protest were initiated by three main groupings in opposition to Mubarak: the political parties movement (including the Muslim Brotherhood), the labour movement and the Youth movement (Shehata 119). When the day of the 25th of January was agreed upon, the Youth activists, inspired by the Tunisian revolution, advertised the date and the slogan 'Bread, Freedom, Human Dignity' on the well-known 'We Are All Khaled Said' page on Facebook (Shehata 119; Carapico 213). The call gathered great momentum to the degree that the organisers were surprised to see their call for a protest turn into a revolution (Shehata 119; Carapico 213).

In October 2011, Reuters' political risk correspondent Peter Apps expressed the global effect of technology succinctly when he wrote: 'Protestors in a lengthening list of countries including Israel, India, Chile, Britain, Spain and now the United States all increasingly link their actions explicitly to the popular revolutions that have shaken up the Middle East' (Apps). This link is clearly perceived in the fact that the Occupy movements in the United States invoked the new politics, tactics and ideas of the Arab revolutionaries in Cairo and other Arab cities (Hatem 402; Salaita 141). For example, taking public squares as the centre of the protests, although by no means unique to the Arab revolutions, was a particularly influential idea as evidenced by the slogans used by various Occupy movements across the

United States: ‘Wisconsin: America’s Tahrir Square’ and ‘Where’s Our Tahrir Square?’ (Salaita 141). While the main factor contributing to the widespread protests across the world was the global economic crisis of 2008, digital technologies represented a means to foster the spread of political reform, with greater calls for social equality, justice and a more even distribution of economic prosperity. In this regard, then, a line of political association can be made that aligns the protestors who congregated in Zucotti Park in Manhattan in what became known as the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protests, and those who gathered in Tahrir Square. Although involved in very different political endeavours, both made use of digital technologies as a means to self-organise and to gather a global, collective interest in their campaigns.

These technologies created, to borrow Hardt and Negri’s term, the global figure of the Arab protestor who, as a ‘citizen-journalist,’ presented herself as a claimant of justice, rights and political reform while reporting her daily revolutionary activities. Chibli Mallat and Edward Mortimer explain that Twitter and Facebook remain mere tools; what mattered was the streets of active Arab actors (18). ‘[T]he street will be moved by information, and the technology of the 2010s is one where the citizen–journalist–witness is a click away from reporting an event, expressing his disagreement and connecting with soulmates’ (18). Wael Ghonim, the founder of the ‘We Are All Khaled Said’ page, represents the Arab protestors who became global figures (G. Wood). Ghonim’s cyber activities made him a target for the Egyptian authorities, who arrested and interrogated him for twelve days (G. Wood). After his release, Ghonim was interviewed by television channels such as the Egyptian Dream TV and CBS NEWS’s Sixty Minutes (G. Wood; Smith). In both interviews, Ghonim presented a mediagenic personality, stressing that the protestors have a dream, that they are honest and, although oppressed by the regime, they are determined to win (G. Wood; Smith). Using the language of peaceful change understood by international viewers, Ghonim became a hallmark of modern, global revolutions.

As such, the Arab Spring revolutionaries came to represent universal citizens who, together with the Occupy protestors, ciphered and resisted supra-natural political authority which stood for a world government. Mervat Hatem argues that the Arab protestor provided an example of the global subject (the multitude) theorised by Hardt and Negri (402; Hardt and Negri xv, 393–95). Hardt and Negri argue that the deterritorialised and decentred Empire will be challenged by the equally fluid category of the multitude (Hatem 403; Hardt and Negri 393–95). The multitude will critique global capitalism’s exclusionary definitions of citizenship and demand the development of more inclusive citizenship rules (Hatem 403). The multitude will

take the place of the proletariat, but, unlike the proletariat, it will not be a bounded or closed category because there will be no outside forces which would foster the differences among nations (Hatem 403–04; Hardt and Negri 113, 393–95). Hatem perceives the Arab actors in the Arab Spring and the others who took part in the Occupy movements as combating the same global capital power and the super-rich corporate elite which, she argues, comprise a world system (403–04). Hatem believes neo-liberalism has been a common enemy for North and South and has been responsible for economic and political crises in the Arab world in the last three decades (for example, the concentration of wealth at the top) which function as a backdrop to the Arab Spring (404). Similarly, the deep economic recessions in 2008 in the United States and Europe shaped the concerns and agendas of the Occupy Wall Street (404). According to Hatem's view, the Arab Spring emerged within a political and economic dynamic of a global scale.

As a testament to the global status of the Arab Spring, *Time* magazine chose The Protestor as its 2011 Person of the Year. The cover page provided the comment: 'From the Arab Spring, to Athens, from Occupy Wall Street, to Moscow' ("2011 PT"). While this ought to be celebrated as a sign of a Western progressive multicultural and diversity agenda in which optimistic views of globalisation prophesied, nonetheless, such a position is, ultimately, exposed as being paradoxical. At the time in which there was celebration of the Arab protestor in American media, NATO launched a military intervention in Libya on the 19th of March 2011 in order to implement the UN Security Council resolution No. 1973 which imposed a no-fly zone over the country (*SCA*). If this military action was not motivated by Western imperialist ambitions in the region but was meant to protect the Libyan protestors from Gaddafi, why was there no similar military intervention against Bashar in Syria?[26] This and other complexities such as Europe's anxieties over Turkey's EU membership and the movement of refugees from the south only indicate that available theoretical work on contemporary culture cannot fully account for the various dynamics of globalisation.

Yet such theories on the totalising tendency of the contemporary system of global interconnectivity (technology, culture, finance and so on), fail to account for the Arab Spring as a unique event in terms of Arab political history. Gikandi's contribution with respect to the literary narratives of globalisation, nonetheless, remains valuable as it demonstrates that

[26] Jeremy Bowen was one of those who attempted to explain why the international response to the Syrian crisis was different from that in Libya. He argued that Libya was 'big and relatively isolated, without the same ethnic, political and religious grid that runs through Syria and its neighbours' (280). However, his analysis can hardly justify the silence of the international community to the bloodshed spelt by the Assad regime.

global culture is codified as Western and White. This finds direct application in the novels and memoirs of the Arab Spring. In the following two sections, I explain that tropes of globalisation in the novels by Bassingthwaighte and Hamilton reiterate Orientalist and neo-Orientalist positions regarding the superiority of Western paradigms of knowledge and the inability of the Arab revolutionaries and Arab culture to effectively engage in revolutions for democratic change without Western tutelage. The first theme is found in Bassingthwaighte's novel, and it conveys to the reader that the Egyptian revolutionaries are included in a globalised community, but they remain inferior to the White protagonist who leads that community. The second is one of the main themes of Hamilton's novel, and it reveals that the Egyptian protestors take an active part in the globalised community created by social media. However, their revolution is portrayed as being the product of Twitter and Facebook, which are instruments provided to them by the West. Both novels, while depicting the Arabs as almost equal to Westerners in the globalised world of today, reiterate Orientalist tropes in which the Arabs need the West.

4.4 'White' Leaders of the Arab Masses in *Live from Cairo*

Bassingthwaighte's novel, *Live from Cairo* (2017), mobilises the first major theme that conceptually elides the singularity of the Arab revolutions while perceiving Arabs as part of a globalised world in which they are almost, but not quite, equal to Westerners. The characters exist in a global city (Cairo) which is peopled with multicultural global communities purportedly founded on the principles of equality and diversity. However, this representation continues to undermine the Arab revolutionaries' agency; they are described using Orientalist vocabulary as in need of Western tutelage with respect to their uprising at Tahrir. This description is reminiscent of Rudyard Kipling's metaphor of the 'White man's burden' whose role is to guide non-White races towards progress and civilisation. In the main storyline, Charlie, the White American, leads his group of Arab and Egyptian friends in a revolution against the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) bureaucracy that parallels the Egyptian revolution at Tahrir. Charlie's resistance to the UNHCR, which occurs in order to help Dalia, the Iraqi refugee, obtain asylum in the United States, is portrayed as being more humane, progressive and ethical than the Egyptian revolution against Mubarak's old regime, which functions to privilege Charlie's way of resistance. For example, Charlie emphasises that he has planned carefully for what he is doing, calmly explaining to Aos, an Egyptian Islamist translator at the Refugee Relief Project (RRP) and diehard revolutionary, how smoothly the plan will be executed: 'It's less complicated than you think' (129–32). By

contrast, the Egyptian revolution on the streets is almost always described as chaotic and 'hadn't been going well' (30, 215, 247). In the sub-plot, Charlie also provides guidance to the revolutionary Egyptians in Tahrir regarding the tactics that the regime uses to undermine their revolution, which the Egyptians do not comprehend without Charlie's explanations. The Arabs are thus discursively represented as a 'familiar Other' as evidenced by the Arabs' inclusion in a global and multicultural setting in which they exist as almost equal to Westerners but are revealed to be inferior to the 'White' Westerners represented by Charlie who is depicted as having more superior mental faculties than his Arab friends.

Based on the real-life experiences of Bassingthwaighte as a legal aide in Egypt, the novel tells the story of refugees (primarily Sudanese and Iraqi) who are forced to flee to Cairo to apply for asylum in the United States through the UNHCR (L. Philpott; Prastien). The text brings to the fore the inhumanity of the bureaucratic system at the UNHCR which is so flawed that it no longer functions to help inordinate numbers of refugees (Prastien). It also foregrounds Cairo as a city at the centre of a war-torn and revolutionary Middle East. Charlie is a resettlement lawyer at the RRP who decides to help Dalia navigate the resettlement process in order to allow her to join her husband, Omran, in the United States. Charlie needs the help of his friend Aos and thus the story of refugees and revolutionaries are intertwined (Prastien). Despite depicting the Arab refugees sympathetically, Bassingthwaighte's debut novel reveals a Eurocentric position in which Charlie is discursively superior to the rest of his Cairene friends.

The text conveys this representation by means of a plot device in which the Egyptians are led by 'White' leaders towards a figurative revolutionary victory and an understanding of the revolution. Charlie, the White American protagonist, leads his Arab friends in a quasi-revolution against the bureaucracy of the UNHCR, which parallels their 'failed' revolution against the old regime of Mubarak. This parallel narrative reveals that Charlie's internal revolt outshines the Egyptian uprising in Tahrir Square. Charlie's resistance is conveyed through the main plot while the sub-plot describes the events at Tahrir. Both plots animate two competing approaches towards changing unwanted hegemonic political authority. Within a globalised context of multicultural and diasporic communities, the process of racialisation is at work: Charlie's approach to resistance sets the standard for appropriate and progressive acts of disobedience and depicts the Egyptian resistance at Tahrir as ill-executed.

Charlie's character recalls the sort of the White imperialist figure found in Kipling's trope as explained by Said: being a White Man in the colony meant 'speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations and even feeling certain things and not others. It

meant specifically judgements, evaluations, gestures' (*O* 227). As a White Man, Charlie helps navigate the group throughout the ideological pitfalls of the novel in a manner that suggests that he possesses revolutionary foresight and wisdom, enabling him to perceive 'things' and make unerring judgements and evaluations which are not available to his Egyptian friends. For example, when Sabah (an Egyptian junior lawyer at the RRP) brings the news that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has planted grass in Tahrir Square, she is not certain why SCAF has done so (292). Charlie confirms her suspicions that this is a move by SCAF to bring an end to the uprising. Sabah believes 'It's sabotage!' suggesting that the next day SCAF will erect a sign that says: 'Don't step on the grass.' She looks at Charlie and asks 'What do you think is going to happen?' He explains that

> *Don't walk on the grass* means 'Don't congregate.' Get it? The grass is a barrier between the people and their ambition to live in a free Egypt. Their right to gather and shout loudly about the changes they wish to see in their lifetimes (295).

Charlie explains that this ploy by SCAF is meant to end the revolution by subtle means unnoticed by the Egyptians. Charlie's gestures indicate his impatience with his revolutionary friends: he is resentful of their hopefulness that the revolution can change their lives which blinds them from seeing SCAF's tactic. He says: 'All you see is Tahrir! Tahrir, Tahrir, Tahrir! It's just a traffic circle!' (294). He is resentful that his friends do not understand that they are protesting in vain. He proves to them now (after SCAF has planted the grass) that he has been correct from the beginning that SCAF uses indirect counter-revolutionary tactics, but his Egyptian friends have not believed him. His resentment is evidenced by his language when he asks: 'Get it?' (295). As if he is schooling them, his language indicates the naivety of his friends and his sophisticate thinking.

This racialisation embodies and recalls Gikandi's thesis that outmoded imperialist discourses resurface in the age of globalisation. The novel engages with various aspects of globalisation such as the overarching presence of supra-national organisations such as the UNHCR and the RRP.[27] Most importantly, the novel foregrounds the theme of Cairo as a global city by means

[27] There is a strong association between the UNHCR, as constituting a form of world government functioning on behalf of Western powers, and the authoritarian old regime of Mubarak. This reading of the neo-colonialist role played by the UN is embedded in Kwame Nkrumah's thesis regarding neo-colonialism but argued in other works such as Mark Mazower's *No Enchanted Palace* (2009), Mark Langan's *Neo-colonialism and the Poverty of 'Development' in Africa* (2017) and Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (Nkrumah ix–x; Mazower 14; Langan 199; Hardt and Negri 309–14). In the novel, Margret is a liaison between the UNHCR

of embedding its name, rather than Egypt, in the title. The global city is used as a setting that enables the author to shed light upon the transnational communities formed there and the ensuing solidarities and loyalties. The concept of the 'global city' was theorised by Saskia Sassen in her 1991 book, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo,* to account for the concentration of international economic activities in certain geographies, including the opening up of foreign investment, privatisation, deregulation and digitisation (*GC* xviii; *CW* 34; van der Waal 11). One of the components of global cities is immigration as global cities attract tourists, corporate professionals, investors, foreign students and other categories (Chin 16; van der Waal 20; Sassen, "GCS" 83, 88). Sassen explains that the 'international businesspeople' are the new users of the global city and that the multiculturalism engendered by such encounters is a fundamental aspect of globalisation ("CC" 630, 635; "GCS" 80, 83, 91). She further explains that

> through immigration, a proliferation of originally highly localised cultures now have become presences in many large cities […]. An immense array of cultures from around the world, each rooted in a particular country or village, now are reterritorialized in a few single spaces, places such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London and most recently Tokyo ("GCS" 89).

She goes on to argue that the global city is a strategic site for a new type of 'political formation,' which is 'the formation of identities and loyalties among the various population segments that explicitly reject the imagined community of the nation. With this come new solidarities and notions of membership' ("GCS" 88, 90).[28] This understanding of the global city as a product of the globalisation of the economy, politics and society and producer of new identities, loyalties and solidarities is a key element of the representation of Cairo in this novel.

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and the notoriously repressive Interior Ministry of Egypt, which indicates cooperation between the two to repress and control (11). The Western support for totalitarian governments such as Mubarak's is made clear in the novel in the episode in which Hilary Clinton calls Mubarak a family friend (186). It must be noted, however, that Charlie does not resist the UNHCR because he is anti-colonialist, rather he does so because he is anarchist (Young, *EC* 128).

[28] As Sassen explains, these analyses of the global geographies constituted in the global cities also apply to what she calls 'the electronic space' ("GCS" 80). This means that the formation of multicultural communities in global cities can also take place in electronic communities engendered by social media. I use a similar analysis in the next section to illustrate that Arabs and Westerns share the virtual spaces provided by social media, which signals the acceptance of the revolutionary Arab into Western 'modernity.'

The text captures the Cairene community's cultural and political alignments which surpass the nation as an outdated category of self-definition in the age of globalisation. I argue that the alliances and loyalties created between members of the group surrounding Charlie clearly indicate the acceptance of the Arab revolutionary into Western culture. Both Westerners and Arabs form and participate in the multicultural community of Cairo almost equally—only Charlie ultimately stands out as being superior. Some of the characters are immigrant labour such as Charlie and Hana (a Christian Iraqi-American) while others come through other migration pathways such as Dalia who is a war refugee and Charlie's brother, Tim, who is a US soldier deployed to Iraq in 2007 (48–49). Charlie's co-workers at the RRP include Aos, the Egyptian Islamist, Michael, a British lawyer, and his British Egyptian girlfriend (39, 48). The UNHCR personnel with whom Charlie works include the German Margret (11–12). The diversity of these identities reflects how careers and wars are moving people across the planet in multi-directions and the degree to which these identities' fates are intertwined. Tim's deployment to Iraq is portrayed as causing a flow of Iraqi refugees such as Dalia whose lives are made miserable by the US invasion of that country (49). In addition, Margret implements the UNHCR screening of refugees, preventing Dalia from going to the United States although Margret is not Iraqi, Egyptian or American but a European. Margret and the others' transnational identities are not bound by any national concerns.

Charlie is particularly representative of this sort of global affiliation. He has a troubled relationship with his home country because of the war in Iraq and with his brother, Tim, for taking part in it (49). The reader is reminded that only four years after the US invasion of Iraq, it has already reserved its place in the top list of the Failed State Index (48–49). Charlie is unequivocal in his resentment: 'Timothy Wells, brother and army specialist, off to make things worse. In Charlie's opinion, at least' (49). Because the war has incited an inordinate migration, Charlie works so hard at the RRP to help the refugees: 'he tried to undo what his brother had done' (49). When Tim leaves Cairo after a short visit, Charlie is happy that his brother is gone back to Iraq: 'Good riddance, he thought. Also, and reluctantly, good luck' (125). Charlie's strained relationship with his brother and his country is contrasted to his love of the group of friends he forms at work. At the end of the novel, Charlie considers Aos 'As his true brother' and their group of friends as the 'family' (283). The novel's emphasis on the breakdown of traditional kinship and the formation of new global alliances and solidarities portrays the Arabs as being almost on a par with 'White' Westerners.

Nevertheless, the main plot in which Charlie challenges the system of the UNHCR reveals that Charlie's endeavour is more humanistic, progressive and ethical than the Egyptian

revolution. The word ‘humanistic’ indicates that Charlie’s plan is motivated by an unselfish concern for Dalia and her husband’s welfare while ‘progressive’ describes the plan as employing enlightened, modern, innovative and avant-gardist ideas as opposed to conventional and traditional planning. The ‘ethical’ aspect is revealed via Charlies’ adherence to a system of moral principles and concern with the rightness of his conduct. Initially, Charlie demonstrates his humanitarian concern for Dalia when he receives her rejected application: ‘The latest calamity had arrived that morning in the form of a rejection letter from the UNHCR […]. He hoped that by the time he finished reading the letter, the world would have ceased to exist. Sucked into a blackhole. Burned up in the sun’ (40). He calls the rejection letter a calamity as if he himself, rather than his client, is rejected, and his feelings for Dalia’s case are hyperbolically described. His belief in a global universalist solidarity is obstructed by the UNHCR’s dehumanising bureaucratic decision-making process. Although the narrative articulates a degree of sympathy with Dalia’s case on account of the sexual violence that she has endured, the faceless bureaucracy prevents Hana (who processes Dalia’s application at the UNHCR) from helping her in a way that extends beyond the institutional or mechanistic: ‘[a] single-file queue almost a million people long appeared in Hana’s mind. Dalia was an invisible dot in the distance, with no chance whatsoever of leaving Egypt’ (25). Hana’s thoughts reveal the situation in which Charlie finds himself and the impossibility of getting Dalia asylum in the United States through the regular bureaucratic process at the UNHCR. Charlie’s humanitarian resolve is thus tested—and foiled—by the ruthless bureaucracy of the UNHCR.

Charlie’s humanity is also contrasted with Aos’ (the Arab Egyptian) senseless practicality. When Charlie tells Aos that he will not appeal Dalia’s case (before revealing that he would start a new forged application), Aos reacts with relief that nothing more can be done: ‘[Aos] ultimately thought it was the right decision; there was no time to waste on a lost case, disheartening that may be’ (127). When Charlie informs him that he is not leaving Dalia’s case altogether but would start a new forged case from scratch, Aos is surprised and resentful: ‘What do you mean, a new case? Dalia’s case was rejected. That’s it. We move on’ (127). Aos cannot accept that they will break the law in order to forge a file for Dalia. Aos withdraws in resentment to his desk: ‘He gripped his pen with such rancour that Charlie assumed Aos was writing through the paper and on the desk. Soon he’d be writing on the floor. Not even wood could endure such irate scribbling’ (128). His resentment reveals that he does not appreciate the sacrifice Charlie is going to make for Dalia.

Additionally, Charlie pursues innovative means of resistance: he decides to subvert the bureaucracy of the UNHCR from within (128). This choice illustrates Charlie's unconventional tactic to revolt against the UNHCR which generates antagonism between him and Aos. Their conversation reveals that Charlie embodies a rational, knowledgeable and progressive mentality that is indexed to ideas of Western rational empiricism that is presented in contrast to Aos' ignorance and conventional reasoning. Charlie has a clear vision, knowing that he cannot openly confront the system: '[w]e can't reform the system […] The only thing we can do is subvert it […]. Subversion is the only way to even the odds when you have no money and no power' (128). This is contrasted to the open confrontational revolutionary tactic followed by Aos and the Egyptian revolutionaries. Charlie initially mistakenly assumes that the Egyptian revolutionaries adopt a similar nonconfrontational tactic. While such a tactic appears to follow a consistent logical trajectory, Aos' words, nevertheless, reveal that he is completely ignorant of this type of resistance. Charlie's mistake highlights that he should not have expected Aos to understand progressive means of subversive resistance. In addition, Aos is not only ignorant of subversive resistance, he also believes that subversion leads to disorder. Aos mistakenly understands that Charlie is calling for anarchy, which Aos rejects: 'Without rules, there'd be chaos. I love rules. I follow rules' (128). Charlie's progressive ideas with respect to subversion are thus privileged over Aos'—Aos is relegated to a lower position in the social order than Charlie in the hierarchy that Bassingthwaighte's text becomes increasingly reliant upon as the narrative develops.

Furthermore, the contrast between Charlie's stratagem of resistance to the UNHCR and the Egyptians' opposition to the Mubarak regime is made apparent via Bassingthwaighte's interrogation of questions of morality that are linked to the ethical/political legitimacy of acts of resistance. Since Charlie plans to 'forge' a new application in which he seeks to prove that Dalia is terminally ill, he is conscious of and troubled by the illegality of this course of action (127, 231). While working on the medical report for Dalia, Charlie reminisces over the lawyers' oaths to which he has sworn, concluding that that law can be subverted at a certain point. The text reads: 'How could he uphold the law when that law upheld injustice?' (185). Charlie's moral justification is based on the idea that by helping Dalia illegally, he would be 'reducing, not increasing, the number of refugees in Egypt' (123). Conversely, Aos is unaware of the morality of his support of the Egyptian revolution—he needs Charlie to tell him. In their conversation, Charlie is deeply critical of the Egyptian revolution while Aos is incapable of defending the revolution and claims neutrality instead. For instance, Aos says: 'I shouldn't have gone there [to the Square]. It is not my business' (128). Charlie gives him a

moral justification to take part in the protests and indicates that neutrality is not a morally justified position in this case: 'Injustice is everybody's business. You of all people …' (128). Charlie resorts to a generalisation to make a point that all people should be concerned when they see injustice. However, he singles Aos out for having the obligation to resist injustice because he works in the RRP whose main goal is to relieve people's grievances.

Live from Cairo reiterates Orientalist tropes such as that of Kipling's 'White Man' in its narration of the history of the Egyptian revolution, reproducing the power relations that further the hegemony of the West over the Arab world while maintaining a sort of transnational kinship between Arabs and Westerners established via the theme of the global city. In the global deterritorialised and multicultural setting of Cairo, which is populated with transnational communities, Charlie and his friends are portrayed as almost equal. Throughout the story, Charlie's plan of resistance to help Dalia creates a parallel narrative that places his Egyptian friends and their revolution in a less sophisticated position and prioritises the high functioning of a Western approach. Charlie's form of resistance to the UNHCR is portrayed as being more humane, progressive and ethical than the Egyptian revolution against Mubarak's old regime. Bassingthwaighte's text, thus, reiterates traditional Orientalist tropes in the context of globalisation, reintroducing the Orientalist dichotomies of 'us' versus 'them' which maintain the discursive Western hegemony over the East.

4.5 Tweeting the Revolution in Omar Hamilton's Novel *The City Always Wins*

In Hamilton's tripartite novel *The City Always Wins* (2017), digital technologies emerge as the second central narrative device denoting globalisation within post-Arab Spring literary production and are used to depict the Arab stereotypical dependence on Western political influence gained via social media during the Arab Spring. In Hamilton's textual configurations of the globally interconnected world via smart devices and social platforms, the Arabs draw on social media as the main resource for their revolutionary activities. In this discourse, the Arab revolutionaries belong to a deterritorialised world influenced by Western ideals and technologies, and consequently, they are discursively rendered as less alien to Western culture and more peaceful than they are in post-9/11 neo-Orientalist discourse. However, their agency is undermined because of their ostensible dependence upon Western technologies such as Facebook and Twitter to protest against autocracy. For example, the protagonist, Mariam, uses Twitter to compel the police to release a young protestor. When learning that the boy is detained illegally, she and her friends go to the police station, threatening that the 'media will be alerted,' and, consequently, the West may exert more

political pressure upon the Egyptian authorities (*CA* 35). Her friend Rania 'composes tweets and emails and saves them in drafts, waiting for the signal to go public' (*CA* 35). Mariam and her friends succeed in releasing the boy from custody (*CA* 36). Using peaceful tools like tweeting and blogging which carry the potential to harness a global constituency who sympathises with their cause, Mariam and her friends (as citizen-journalists enabled and organised by digital networks), appear to be in harmony with a trans-global community across territories and localities. However, social media platforms possess an illusory aspect that configures them as reaching everywhere but located nowhere; when, in truth, the hardware required to power this vast interconnected network of communication is to be found situated in the West Coast of America (Dick and McLaughlan). Hamilton's text, thus, subverts the Egyptians' political independence and free-will because it depicts their revolution as stemming exclusively from the digital instruments provided to them by the West. This depiction is predicated upon an Orientalist world view that continues to marginalise the Arabs.

Hamilton, a British-Egyptian novelist and son of renowned author Ahdaf Soueif, records throughout the narrative the history of his participation in the Egyptian revolution via the Mosireen media collective—a cluster for media production, journalism and political and cultural activism which he co-founded and whose name is a pun indicating both 'Egyptians' and 'determined' (Yassin-Kassab, "CA"; Shenker; Chambers 2). Hamilton's text also reflects upon the political activism of his family during the revolution. His cousin (Soueif's nephew), Alaa Abd el-Fattah, is a prominent blogger and pro-democracy activist who was sentenced in 2017 to five years in prison for participating in the protests at the Al Shura Council (the upper house of Parliament) on the 26th of November 2013 and opposing the clampdown on dissent launched by President Sisi ("AA"; "EPVB"; Malsin). This governmental clampdown is recalled throughout the final section of the text, including a description of the tragic use of gunfire and bloodshed at Rabaa Square in Cairo when more than nine-hundred protestors were massacred by the police in the cleansing of the sit-ins (Yassin-Kassab, "CA"; Hamilton, *CA* 202–06). Hamilton dedicates the book to Alaa in a gesture that also pays tribute to all those who fell to Sisi's heavy hand.

The novel captures the struggle between the peaceful and tech- and media-savvy Egyptian youth and the repressive and violent regimes of Mubarak, SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood (President Morsi) and President Sisi. For Hamilton, the revolution is summed up in this struggle, and the young protestors exhibit a mature realisation of the various dimensions of

the conflict. Malik, a diaspora returnee who is back to build the new Egypt, articulates the inter-generational aspect of the revolution:

> It's a fucking generational war […]. It's all-out fucking *war* and if we don't *do* something we're gonna be down on our fucking knees until we're fucking dead! […] We've got no choice but to rip it from them, the *old*. […] It's not about right or left anymore—they're all the same. It's about young versus old (*CA* 54).

Malik acts as a cipher for the fervent and angry youth who are now impatient with the politics of their country. This is evidenced by the repeated use of expletives, the images of the young falling on their knees and the young 'ripping it' from the old. Describing the left and the right of Egyptian politics as 'the same' demonstrates that the young are exasperated by the hypocrisy of the politicians and that as long as the old are running the country, nothing will ever change. Emphasising the words *'war,' 'do'* and *'old'* reveals the gist of Malik's message which he wants his co-revolutionaries to understand: it is a war, they must be ready to take action and that the old are responsible for creating the unacceptable situation in which the young live.

Hamilton, thus, uses the political divergence between the generations to emphasise the difference in the choice of weapons that are deployed. The younger generation is equipped with new, innovative and peaceful technologies that are not available to the politically and mentally stagnant older generation with its old and violent infrastructure. The protagonists Khalil, Mariam and their fellow protestors, with smart devices (not guns) in their hands, cluster around Chaos, the media network fashioned after Hamilton's own Mosireen group (Yameen), which they use to combat the successive Egyptian authoritarian regimes. The text links the new generation to smart devices:

> We are in the middle of a media war […]. They can't keep up with us, an army of Samsungs, Twitters, HTCs, emails, Facebook events, private groups, iPhones, phone calls, text messages all adjusting one another's movements millions of times each second. An army of infinite mobility—impossible to outmanoeuvre (*CA* 11, 20).

The young revolutionaries understand that digital technologies enable them to outmanoeuvre the slow and conventional tactics of the old regime. They realise that their strength rests on the fact that they are comprised of a new collective of digital natives or citizen-journalists connected to an infinite resource of information and other revolutionaries who are ready to

provide support.[29] Nevertheless, the text undermines the ability of the revolutionaries to challenge the regime by means of restricting their potential to networked activism. In Hamilton's portrayal, the revolutionaries exist solely via the smart devices and online platforms named here: Samsung, iPhone, Twitter and Facebook. The sort of democratic resistance they enact is thus enabled by these Western-made instruments. In this depiction, the Arab revolutionary is indebted to the West for the progressive political transformation that is taking place during the Egyptian Spring. This is a problematic representation because it undermines the agency and free-will of Arabs.

Such narratives overlook the reality of the Arab mass action including the fact that the Arabs courageously rejected continuous unemployment and economic inequality, demanding that the political system that produced this situation must be changed. The Arab Spring represented the free and autonomous act of resistance initiated by an Arab community defined by a non-hierarchical, linear form of political organisation epitomised by those who took the

[29] Possible theories were proposed by analysts in various academic disciplines regarding how social media were used to mobilise the Arab masses. S. Bhuiyan explains that social media allowed people 'to bypass government censorship, spread the words of political reform and break the barrier of fear,' igniting the people's demand for democracy and social and political reforms (14). He adds that the Egyptian revolutionaries used Twitter and Facebook to organise the protestors on the streets and YouTube to report what was happening to the world, concluding that without communicating with the outside world, the Egyptian government would have been able to suppress the protests quickly (15). N. Eltantawi and J. Wiest explain that social networks were historically used to implement collective activities, create groups, communities and a collective identity among marginalised strata of the society, establish open political spaces, initiate connections between other social movements and go public in order to obtain support from the international community (1207). The authors add that social media has an additionally important function which is to act as a resource for actors who lacked the means (financial and otherwise) to promote their cause to large numbers of people (1208). Social media, they argue, were a prime resource which was available to the Egyptian revolutionaries, contributing to the birth and sustainability of the revolution (1212). Social media provided speed and interactivity which were lacking in traditional mobilising tools, for instance, leaflets, posters and faxes, thus fostering social-networking groups and discussions (1213). In the same vein, Emad El-Din Shahin argues that mass mobilisation was the key factor behind the success of the Egyptian revolution (60). The number of active protestors who took part in the demonstrations which led to the downfall of Mubarak was estimated at fifteen million, and to mobilise those huge numbers of people, the organisers depended on various instruments that included social media (60). Anti-regime online pages had large numbers of followers such as the 6th of April Movement (which had 70,000 members), ElBaradei Group (300,000) and We Are All Khalid Said (400,000) (61). These groups gave full guidelines, detailed information and direct instructions regarding planned protests to their members (61). Finally, S. Khamis and K. Vaughn argue that social media's non-hierarchical structure provided a democratic platform, foreshadowing the type of democratic political system sought by the protestors (21–22). They observe that social media was inclusive of marginalised social categories such as women, empowering them to participate in the demonstrations and to act as citizen-journalists (21–22).

early flame of the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution from its cradle city, Sidi Bouzid, to the other Tunisian cities. Those unnamed protestors could not fully conceive of their hopes for justice ever being fully materialised. The planning and implementation of the protests carried out by millions of Arabs was under intimidating circumstances. For example, the Syrian protestors were tortured, mutilated and killed; Hamza al-Khatib was only thirteen when he was detained, tortured and murdered in 2011 near Deraa, becoming a symbol of the Syrian uprising (Bowen 214–15). The Arab Spring provides remarkable examples of indigenous acts of defiance and determination. Such a free agency along with other complex social, economic and political factors that determined the course of the political action are side-lined in this literary discourse, which, in turn, prioritises North American and European technological and political influence upon the Arab world. Social media and smart phones are portrayed by post-Arab Spring literary authors as the enabling factor that determined the Arab mass action. The ability of Arab revolutionaries to act independently of Western influence in this pivotal moment in Arab History is undermined in the literary narratives and consequently, the Arabs were denied the glory of the revolutions.

To further illustrate this stereotype—namely, that international coverage gained through the Western world, acquired via social media campaigning, has sustained the Egyptian revolution from the beginning—Hamilton's text demonstrates that in order for the young revolutionaries to win the information war, they should harness the global reach of social media. Reporting the atrocities of the old regime to the outside world in the West is revealed to prevent the regime from further repressing the protests. This constitutes the motif of the competition over the media between the revolutionaries and the regime. For example, in response to the regime's denial concerning its use of gas in one of the protests, Khalil interviews a doctor on the street, makes a news brief and uploads it to the internet. It makes an instant effect:

> Within minutes the hashtag #egywarcrimes is born; by midnight half of the nonstate TV show hosts in the country are talking about it and grilling the military spokesmen; by morning a dozen foreign news websites are quoting the doctor; […] a U.S. State Department spokesman denies any security assistance funds to the Egyptian government were ever used for the purchase of tear gas (*CA* 49).

This passage illustrates how social media tools are portrayed and experienced as empowering mechanisms that join an individual Arab protestor to a vast trans-global network of supporters. Due to Khalil's work, debates are staged on independent television, a hashtag is made for the online discussions and Washington is observing the situation. The Egyptian

military is embarrassed and surrounded by people interrogating its spokespersons regarding its use of physical violence. To further demonstrate the effect of Khalil's digital work on average Western citizens, Khalil receives a message on Facebook from his ex-girlfriend in the United States informing him that she is following his posts and 'impressed with the bravery and courage you're all showing' (*CA* 54). Other European capitals show a sympathetic response as well: 'Strength and solidarity from Athens to my Chaos Comrades!' (*CA* 56). This reassures Khalil that 'the whole world is watching' (*CA* 54). @ChaosCairo's posts on social media networks result in mounting pressure on the Egyptian Army (*CA* 54). Such collective efforts by Chaos lead eventually to the Egyptian Army (SCAF) ceding power to a civilian leadership: SCAF announces the day of the elections (*CA* 83).[30]

When the revolutionaries lose the battle against the military *coup d'état* led by Commander-in-Chief Sisi towards the end of the novel, they believe the main reason behind the defeat is that they have lost the battle over Maspero (the headquarters of the Egyptian Radio and Television) while SCAF has been in power at the beginning of the novel.[31] This narrative episode re-emphasises that if the revolutionaries take control over state-run television (Maspero), they will be more capable of gaining world attention via social networks. The importance of the Maspero protest is evidenced by the fact that the novel begins on the day of the events. To foreshadow the regrettable destiny of the revolution, the first scene describes the morgue and the bodies of those who have been massacred. The description centres on the cries of the bereaved and their calls for justice, and the quick burial of the dead (*CA* 5–7). This is followed by a narrational intervention by the narrator—defined by a non-sentimental tone and an insistence upon the factual—which reflects the gloominess of the scene: 'The march was to Maspero. To the state television and radio building. The army opened fire. No hesitation. They crushed people under their tanks' (*CA* 7). The Maspero news edition that the Chaos team issues is a success: it has been downloaded by seventy-thousand people and by a

[30] While the sympathetic international world is mostly located in the colonial West, in one reading, the novel indicates that the revolution fails at the end because the colonial city, Cairo, is siding with the repressive regimes. The ambivalent position of the West (being both supporter of the revolution and of the autocratic Arab rulers) and Fanon's concept of the colonial city urban planning in the novel are analysed in Chapter Seven of this thesis.

[31] In the actual events at Maspero on the 9th of October 2011, twenty-two protestors and three police officers were killed and three hundred people were injured when clashes broke out between thousands of protestors and the police supported by army soldiers stationed at the Television and Radio Building in downtown Cairo (A. Hassan; Mackey; El Gundy). This building had been the target of several demonstrations because of the state-television's objectionable editorial line and coverage; it was perceived as an arm of the regime which propagated the counter-revolutionary cause (Gaber).

dozen foreign papers. Nonetheless, the team are portrayed as anxious in this textual moment, due to the fact that the Egyptians are exhausted and, therefore, are unable to take to the streets against SCAF this time. The narrator ventriloquises the feelings of the Chaos team: 'But if Maspero is not the spark, then what? How many people do they have to kill? When will the unconquerable numbers return to the street?' (*CA* 20). The Chaos team continue to hope that they can drive adequate numbers back to Tahrir Square throughout the text until they realise at the end that they lost the media war when they lost the battle at Maspero.

In the Third Section of the novel and after the dispiriting realisation that the counter-revolution has maintained the status quo, Khalil repeatedly says that the revolutionaries should have taken Maspero. Entitled 'Yesterday' to indicate the regression to pre-revolutionary Egypt, this section covers the period following the *coup d'état* staged by the counter-revolution led by Sisi on the 30th of June 2013. Narrated in the stream-of-consciousness mode, Khalil's ruminations reveal a rationale as to why Chaos and the other revolutionary group have failed to realise the energy of the revolutionary moment and, ultimately, succumbed to the military might of the counter-revolutionary forces. Initially, Khalil concludes that information alone is not enough and that they need militarised units to create the reality they want on the ground. The first use of such a force should have been to occupy Maspero which would have enabled the revolutionaries to win the media war and silence the old regime permanently:

> What can we do with information or facts when the only currency that counts is guns and lies [?] [Y]ou need to meet their violence with your own. You can overwhelm them with numbers or you can kill them with precision. One unit [of militarised revolutionaries], maybe that's all it would have taken. Get into Maspero, take it over and broadcast the new voice of the revolution. […] It was lost from the start, lost from the moment we didn't take Maspero (*CA* 287–88).

The narrative mode, however, reveals the ambivalence of Khalil's position and that he is unsure that information alone is not adequate. It gives him freedom to contradict himself, fluctuating between both the need to control the media and the need for violence. It also enables him to vent his frustration regarding the futility of peaceful protesting via social media. The hyperbolic call for violence serves to point out that the enemy uses unmatched violence. The rhetorical hyperbole reaches a threatening peak when Khalil calls for Islamic jihad to aid the revolutionaries: 'Next time we'll see the real revolution. Next time we'll see ISIS and we'll see organisation and precision and the end of patience' (*CA* 288). The use of

force is justified in Khalil's mind in the light of the harsh reality in which the revolutionaries find themselves: they are faced with the hideous cruelty of the old regime to the degree that the global influence that digital social platforms bring is not enough. Khalil, nevertheless, is certain that winning the media war is vital since he wishes to use force only to occupy Maspero.

Disappointed and bewildered by the chain of events that have occurred in the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary experiment, and as he walks the quiet streets of Manhattan at night (New York is his diasporic hometown), Khalil reaffirms a commitment in the emancipatory potential of social media as a means to facilitate transformative forms of peaceful protest. This refers to the period following the 30th of June 2013 when the Chaos group, suppressed by the counter-revolution, stopped publishing on social media platforms for fear of arrest, a weakening resolve among a global audience and inadequate content (*CA* 219, 223–24, 233). To support his reasoning, Khalil refers to America's propaganda in the nineteenth century when paintings such as Albert Bierstadt's *Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains* (1868), shown in galleries in Rome, London and Paris, were used to raise interest in immigration to the United States (Honour and Fleming 633). Khalil asks the questions: 'Did we lose when we stopped selling ourselves? Was there a point in our tiredness and moral superiority and inexperience when we stopped trying?' Calmer now than in the previous passage, Khalil realises that 'America never stopped selling itself, never stopped needing new bodies to crush into the dream's cement. And if America can't stop, then who are we to?' (*CA* 289). Khalil thus articulates at the end of the novel that among the various factors that have caused the revolution to fail, the lack of active promotion of the revolutionary cause on social media and lack of fervent Western support are the most important.

Hamilton's novel depicts the collective efforts of the Egyptian protestors from the angle of social media and the Western political influence they provide to the protestors. The text fails to depict the independent and free determination of the revolutionaries and attributes the success of the revolution to Western influence via technologies and politics. Through such an omission, Hamilton undermines Arab agency in this historical moment, conveying to the readers the Orientalist trope that the Arab Spring is dependent on Western social media platforms. Simultaneously, the text portrays the Arab revolutionaries within a technologically globalised world in which they exist almost equally with Westerners, signifying their inclusion in Western modernity. Through the use of digital technologies and virtual social networks, the Arab characters do not appear as alien to Western ideals and values, such as freedom of speech and assembly. While the text favours such deterritorialised and global

interactions that are purportedly based on principles of equality and diversity, it nonetheless centres Western influence over Arabs in these spaces. The text falls into what I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism in which the Arabs exist as the 'familiar Other' of Western culture.

Throughout this chapter, I argued that in post-Arab Spring literary narratives, the revolutions were portrayed not as belonging to the antithetical Other of the West but as belonging to its familiar Other. This is the first feature of the new form of Orientalist discourse that has emerged after the Arab Spring which I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. This way of perceiving the Arab Other marks a significant transformation compared to post-9/11 neo-Orientalist depictions of Arabs and Muslims as anti-Western and anti-modern. The literary texts by Bassingthwaighte and Hamilton use themes of the globalised world of values, ideas and technologies, including Facebook and Twitter, to demonstrate that the Arabs belong to the West. Nevertheless, since I establish that these texts continue to depict the Arabs as requiring Western guidance and technology, the Arab revolutionaries are denied agency and political independence. The glory of their revolutions is attributed to Western influence, and the West remains superior. In the following chapter, I discuss the second feature that indicates a transformation in the neo-Orientalist discourses that emerged after the Arab Spring; namely, the curtailment of Islamophobia. There is an abandonment of stereotypes depicting Islam as violent and terroristic which comes as a result of the peacefulness of the Arab uprisings and the participation of Islamic parties in the democratic process. The literary texts by Haddad and Hamilton reflect this discursive transformation in their representation of various aspects of Islamic culture including the Islamists' engagement with politics (rather than armed struggle or terrorism) and the liberalism that Muslim women embodied during the protests.

Chapter 5: Islamophobia Curtailed

5.1 Post-9/11 and Post-Arab Spring Islam

In this chapter, I argue that Islamophobia cannot define the relationship between the Arabs and the West in post-Arab Spring literature. This transformation with respect to how Islam is perceived in the West constitutes the second element that indicates a departure from post-911 neo-Orientalist representations of the Arabs after the Arab Spring. My analyses in this chapter expand on my argument in Chapter Four; namely, that the Arab Spring appeared familiar and relatable in the West within the context of globalisation, and, as a result, the Orientalist stereotype that Arabs are anti-Western became less dominant. I argue further that post-9/11 Islamophobia, which centred on the clash of civilisations thesis and the incompatibility between Islam and Western civilisation, is shunned in the representations of the Arab world in post-Arab Spring novels and memoirs. Instead, violence and terrorism are rarely associated with Islam. This change in the discourses concerning Islam reflects the transformation in the historical position of revolutionary political Islam towards the West during the Arab Spring. Islamic political parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Ennahda Party in Tunisia adopted the language of democratic transition and a tolerant rhetoric towards Western countries.

Concurrently, the transformed post-Arab Spring discourses regarding Islam do not engender neutral representations of it. In this regard, I provide an alternative view to Arat-Koç's '*new* new Orientalism' thesis in which she argues that the Arab Spring engendered Islamophilic tendencies in Western foreign policies (1656–57). Islam still stands as a problem in this discourse on account of its perceived historical and cultural difference and threat. Consequently, in order to represent post-Arab Spring Islam as compatible with Western civilisation in post-Arab Spring literary narratives, aspects of Islam that were traditionally deemed to be problematic are neutered rather than demonised. This process involves pacifying Islam's threat and adapting its difference. Thus post-Arab Spring literary authors such as Haddad and Hamilton do not alienate Islam altogether from Western culture but assimilate it within broader Western cultural and social formations. Islam is Westernised in the way that, for instance, its political and cultural threat is perceived within Western representational politics as exemplified by Haddad's novel. Islam is also secularised in the way that its orthodox rules regarding women, for example, are recast using the Western notion of liberalism. This representation is found in Hamilton's novel in which Mariam, as a Muslim woman, embodies liberal femininity. This image of Islam is neo-Orientalist on

account of the fact that it approves of Islam only when it is Westernised and secularised instead of acknowledging its uniqueness and difference. It maintains a view of the superiority of Western civilisation as a scale against which progress and modernity should be measured. This, nevertheless, constitutes a step forward towards a less stereotypical and realistic representation of Islam compared to post-9/11 neo-Orientalist discourse.

With the advent of the Arab Spring, the shifting neo-Orientalist discourse that took hold of the political and literary descriptions of the historical events featured the possible compatibility between Arabic and Islamic culture and Western civilisation. In addition to a globalised view of the relationship between the Arabs and the West that was structured in terms of a system of binary oppositions, such discourses diluted existing narratives that described Islam as a threat to Western culture and political practices and predicted a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West. Within the globalised discourse in which Western observers such as politicians, journalists and novelists identified with the goals and aspiration of the Arab protestors, the West's political agendas in the region were mapped out on the basis of cooperation with Sunni Islam. Such political, journalistic and literary output saw Islam as a religion that was not hostile to the West, and Islamophobia was curtailed, as evidenced by the literary texts under investigation in this study.

An important marker of transformed Western politics after the Arab Spring was the US support for political Islam ('moderates') rather than for its old and long-serving ruling allies in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Western politicians have always differentiated between so-called 'moderate' and extremist Islam, with the belief that moderate Muslims ought to be aided—financially, militarily and politically—by Western powers to win the ideological and theological civil war within the Islamic world against jihadi extremists (Jackson 411). This strategy of supporting moderate Islam was widely adopted during the Arab Spring to the degree that the Obama administration, for instance, opposed the prolongation of the rule of protégés such as Mubarak and the Egyptian military and was well disposed to the Muslim Brotherhood's ascension to power (Achcar, *PW* 195–96; Bordenkircher 6; "OBW"). The media reflected this transformation in the Middle East policy devised by Western nations to accommodate moderate Islam. On the eve of the Egyptian elections, *The Economist* titled its editorial release 'A Muslim Brother is Better than a Mubarak Crony' ("VBM"; Achcar, *PW* 196). These discourses depart from the post-9/11 Islamophobic views of Islam as a terroristic and anti-Western religion. This discursive shift constitutes a unique way of dealing with Islam that was not previously a common feature of neo-Orientalist representations of the Arab world.

The 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre in Manhattan, the subsequent War on Terror and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq shaped a decade-long Islamophobic perception of Islam in the West as a violent, militaristic and threatening ideology (Mohamed and Mohamed 64; Al Atom 83; Allen, "OKI" 11–12; Awan 522). Indeed, anti-Muslim sentiments existed prior to the attacks, but the intensity of these sentiments dramatically increased after the events, which provided a new ground for discomfort over Islam in major North American and European countries. Eid Mohamed and Emad Mohamed observe that 'Whereas some may have thought before 9/11 that Islamophobia was illogical and inexcusable, the situation is different after 9/11. Now, these feelings of fear and most of the time, hatred are justified after the traumatic attacks of 9/11' (64; Esposito, "IR" 17).

The main theme of Islamophobic labelling also changed after 9/11: Islam was increasingly associated with radicalism, violence and terrorism (Bukhari et al. 24). In the labelling of Muslims as terrorists, 'Islamic terrorism' was distinguished from older forms of terrorism that had more overt political motivations, such as nationalism, fascism or communism, rooting it simply in 'Islamic fanatism' (Kundnani 4). Arun Kundnani explains that public discussions of terrorism after 9/11 were curbed considerably due to the prevalence of the assumption that 'there could be no explanatory account of terrorism beyond the evil mindset of the perpetrators' (4). Such a simple formulation gave rise to catchphrases that speculated how the 'terrorists were motivated by a hatred of freedom or by a fanaticism inherent to Islam' (4). No further analysis was needed regarding the roots of terrorism when it was ascribed to Islam. Kundnani observes that

> terrorists and those perceived to be their ideological fellow travellers in Muslim communities were unreformable and no political or economic change could stem their hatred. Only overwhelming force could be successful against this new enemy: thus, the greater evil of terrorism justified the lesser evil of 'shock and awe' in Iraq and incarceration at Guantanamo (4).

The religion of Islam was thus reimagined within a collective American imaginary as an evil ideology that required suppression via military force, a simplistic belief that ignored the fact that terrorism is not specific to any religious group but can be found in different sects and religions.

US foreign policy and the rhetoric that defined political proclamations on the perceived threat of Islamic terrorism were defined by a logic that nourished Islamophobic sentiments within the American population. Bush's neoconservative brand of foreign policy employed what analysts termed the Bush Doctrine. Simply put, Bush's response comprised four aspects: the belief that America is the sole hegemonic super-power and democratic system in the world; the use of pre-emptive military force whenever needed; unilateralism; and the promotion of democracy (Schmidt and Williams 195–99; Buckley and Singh 4).[32] The Bush Doctrine informed grand defensive strategies, such as counterterrorism and pre-emptive wars, with the Islamic world being the central geographical area in which those policies were implemented. In application, George W. Bush made a strategic decision to refer to his counterterrorism campaign as a 'war' on terror rather than an act of retaliation against a criminal act (the attacks on the World Trade Centre), and he cast several states as 'the axis of evil' (Singh 17; Halper and Clarke 207). This framing and the use of pre-emption and unilateralism facilitated the war on the Muslim countries of Afghanistan (which hosted Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden) and Iraq and put Syria and Iran on the list of possible targets (Singh 17; *NSS* 14).[33] This policy enhanced the climate of polarisation, of 'us' versus 'them' according to states' positions with respect to the War on Terror, which established the Islamic world as being in opposition to the West. This represented a clear threat to Islamic countries such as Iraq and Syria but also gave international powers an opportunity to side with the 'free' world (the United States) against the supposedly 'unfree' and terroristic world (Singh 17).

In addition to the pre-emptive warfare and unilateralism used to chase al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, another feature that defined the Bush Doctrine was the promotion of democracy. This policy established a link between the Muslim Arab countries and a perceived deficit of democracy. The Bush administration became increasingly convinced that security in the Arab region and the United States was indexed to increased democratisation throughout the Arab world (Singh 18–19). The invasion of Iraq was, in part, justified through a neo-colonial logic in which the light of democracy was to be imported into the darkness of the Arab world while the other justifications systematically linked Iraq to (biological/chemical) weapons of mass

[32] The Bush Doctrine reveals the influence of neoconservatism on the Bush administration. Charles Krauthammer argued that the Bush Doctrine was synonymous with neoconservatism (Krauthammer).

[33] Indeed, the axis of evil included North Korea as the only non-Islamic country. Nevertheless, the inclusion of North Korea in Bush's 29th of January 2002 State of the Union Address had been contested, as many believed that it was 'the odd man out:' it served as a smokescreen in relation to Bush's intentions in the Middle East (Olsen, "BUS" 8; Olsen, "AOE" 184; Peña; *SUA*).

destruction and terrorism (Schmidt and Williams 197–98, 200; Siracusa and Visser 98, 103; Leffler 201–02). The Bush administration defied the will of much of the international community (and the United Nations' Security Council from which it failed to obtain a consensus) and invaded Iraq in March 2003 in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Brian Schmidt and Michael Williams explain that bringing democracy to Iraq was considered to be a justifiable goal of US foreign policy: 'A democratic Iraq, it was argued, would result in a dramatic change in its foreign policy and would remove the terrorist threat that was (erroneously) argued to emanate from Baghdad' (200). It was predicted that, after Saddam Hussein, democracy would flourish in Iraq much like in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union (200). In addition, Iraq was seen as the first step in the democratisation of neighbouring Arab and Islamic countries (200; Siracusa and Visser 122; Mearsheimer 3). In 2003, President Bush declared that 'Iraqi democracy will succeed—and that success will send forth news, from Damascus to Tehran—that freedom can be the future of every nation' ("PBD").[34]

Despite the shaky empirical data that these claims were predicated upon, the Bush administration was not deterred by the protests against its invasion of Iraq both inside the United States and abroad—around 400,000 people took to the streets in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Seattle and an estimated 750,000 gathered in Hyde Park in London, Berlin and Paris (Siracusa and Visser 118, 121; McFadden; Isakhan 4–5). The administration went further in pursuit of its 'Freedom Agenda—' the promotion of democratisation and human rights in non-democratic countries—in conjunction with its most important allies in the region, albeit this time with little coercion. The promotion of democratic reforms in the Islamic countries fostered the link between Islam and dictatorial regimes, establishing Islam as the antithesis of Western civil society and individual and political freedoms. The administration exerted pressure on countries like Egypt and Saudi Arabia to introduce democratic reforms. Luiz Alberto and Moniz Bandeira observe that 'Bush believed that more political freedom could dispel Islamic forces and fundamentalist indoctrination; that a democratic Middle East would be less vulnerable to extremism' (44;

[34] In her study of the memoirs written by key figures in the Bush administration, Melvyn Leffler argued that the war on Iraq was waged in order 'to deal with a range of perceived threats—not to promote democracy, not to transform the Middle East' (202). Factors other than securing the United States, such as democracy, were of secondary importance but rose to prominence after major military operations ended in April in order to cover for the failure to fined weapons of mass destruction (202, 208; Isakhan 1).

Sharp 1).[35] This belief was expressed by Bush in his second inaugural address and in the 9/11 Commission Report. In Saudi Arabia, for example, municipal elections were introduced for the first time in decades as an emerging reform movement essential for a deeper democratic overhaul (O. Hassan 280; Youmans 1225). The Freedom Agenda pursued by the Bush administration, however, was later abandoned due to ideological justifications and geopolitical considerations (O. Hassan 281; Youmans 1225; Lilli 8). Primarily, the success of the Islamists in the Saudi and Egyptian elections—deemed hostile by the Bush administration—made the administration realise why US foreign policy had historically backed friendly autocratic Arab regimes (O. Hassan 281; Youmans 1225; Coll). Evidence suggests that by 2006, the Bush administration ceased to exert serious pressure for democratic reform on countries like Egypt, Yemen and Jordan (O. Hassan 281; Youmans 1225). However, the association made in major US policies between representative Muslim countries, for instance Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and a lack of democracy still widened the gap between Islam and the West.

The principal ideas of this discourse, which is underpinned by Islamophobic sentiment, lost vigour by the end of the decade after the Obama administration instituted a discernible shift in the counterterrorism rhetoric upon assuming office in 2008, the death of Bin Laden in 2011 and the Arab Spring (Obama, "OR"; McCrisken 781). These events instigated a move away from such reductive narratives that directly associated Islam with terrorism and anti-Westernism, towards a focus on what was called 'moderate' Islam—a trend that was designed with the intention of considerably curbing Islamophobia as evidenced by some of Obama's speeches after his inauguration.[36] Only six months into his presidency, Obama visited Egypt and delivered a speech entitled 'A New Beginning' in June 2009, in which he addressed the relationship between the Muslim world and the United States with the aim of 'repairing' the ties with the Islamic world which, as Reuter's Ross Colvin reported, were severely damaged during the Bush years (Colvin; Alberto and Bandeira 108).

In the speech, Obama indicated that he saw a greater opportunity for peaceful coexistence instead of perpetual conflict during his upcoming presidency. Obama conceived of Islam as sharing the Western values of progress and learning, which contrasts with the post-9/11 Islamophobic discourse in which Islam was anti-modern, unsecular, unscientific and irrational

[35] Interestingly, Alberto and Bandeira ascribe the Arab Spring revolutions to Bush's Freedom Agenda (57).

[36] In addition to his speech in Egypt, which is discussed below, Obama's outreach to the Islamic world includes 'Inaugural Address' (2009) and 'Remarks by President Obama to the Turkish Parliament' (2009) (Lilli 4).

(Jackson 406). For example, he immediately linked Al-Azhar (the foremost Islamic university for the study of Islamic theology) which he called 'a beacon of Islamic learning' to both tradition and progress (Obama, "RP"). Obama stressed that the relationship between Islam and the West was one that was defined by centuries of cooperation and coexistence while also acknowledging that there were times, especially in recent history, of conflict and war ("RP"). When elaborating on the tensions between Islam and the West, Obama was careful to emphasise and make explicit the history of Western aggression against the Arab world. The West, he said, had recently created grievances in the Islamic world: 'tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations' ("RP"). He also added the encroachment of modernity and globalisation as a reason that led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to Islam ("RP"). Islam was revealed as a religion that was transgressed upon rather than the transgressor. Most importantly, Obama differentiated between Islam and terrorism when he ascribed the 9/11 attacks to a small group of Muslims: 'Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks […] led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights' ("RP"). The apologetic undertones in Obama's remarks reveal his intentions to clear the misunderstanding between the two cultures, evidenced by his remark: 'this cycle of suspension and discord must end' ("RP"). As the title of his speech indicates, Obama expressed a 'new beginning' with respect to the Islamic world. This was based on mutual respect and mutual interests between parties (Islam and the West) that were not exclusive or in competition.

It should be noted that some critics have accused Obama's rhetoric of not always aligning with his policy agendas. Shadi Hamid, a fellow at the Brookings' Centre for Middle East Policy and whose work is discussed below, went so far as to write in a 2017 *Foreign Policy* article that 'Today, the Cairo speech is discussed, if at all, as a symbol of the gap between what the Obama administration might have been and what it actually was' ("OGI"). Hamid, however, had in mind the progress in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the situation in Iraq when he argued that there was a distance between Obama's words and his actions in the Middle East. These, he argued, were sources of anti-Americanism in the minds of many people in the Arab world.[37] While Obama's policies did not meet the expectations created by his words,

[37] Such accusations are not new and not limited to the Obama administration. Eugenio Lilli observes that there has always been a disconnection between the United States' announced

they, I argue, represent a radical departure from the sort of aggressive Islamophobia that characterised Bush's foreign policy approach in the Middle East. Long-lasting crises in Palestine and Iraq are not the most suitable measure to fathom Obama's political legacy in the Middle East: these proved difficult to resolve for consecutive US administrations. The paradigmatic shift in Obama's policies is discernible in his support of the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring—including political Islamic parties—rather than siding with autocratic allies in the region like Ben Ali and Mubarak. Hamid overlooked the fact that the Bush administration halted its Freedom Agenda specifically because it promoted Islamic parties to positions of power, while the Obama administration adopted a bolder strategy designed to encourage this outcome. Viewed from this angle, Obama's policies certainly met his rhetoric in the Cairo speech that America would seek a new phase of relations with Islam.

The Obama administration saw that an alliance between the United States and the Islamic parties was feasible and would not compromise US interests in the region. This is in line with a trend in post-9/11 American political discourse which argued that there existed a strand of Islam called 'moderate' Islam, which could be strategically developed by the West in order to help the West in its fight against other Islamic 'extremist' and 'terrorist' groups. This had been expressed by think tanks such as the RAND Corporation, whose 2007 report, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, maintained that 'moderate' Islam was a majority and that 'radical' Muslims (with dogmatic interpretations of Islamic texts) constituted only a small minority but possessed extensive networks throughout the Islamic world and beyond, which gave them an advantage (iii). The report asserted that Bush's Freedom Agenda failed to create a consensus over potential partners, failed to support them and had no explicit policy to construct networks of cooperation between the United States and moderate Muslims (xvii, 3). The report urged the United States to use its vast experience to create pro-democratic networks in order to help the moderates win the ideological war. It also proposed a road map, created to enable moderate networks in the Islamic world (iii, 3, 65).

Other commentators on the Middle East proposed similar policies regarding how the US administration should exploit the difference between moderate and extremist Islam. Zeyno Baran, the director of the International Security and Energy Programmes at the Nixon Centre,

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policies and its practices in the Middle East. He takes Bush's abandonment of the Freedom Agenda as an example of his administration's lack of consistency (8). Like Hamid, and contrary to my argument, Lilli contends that 'there was no compelling evidence supporting the argument that President Obama actually set a new beginning in US-Muslim relations' (11).

explained in *Foreign Affairs* (2005) that the West was not yet involved in a clash of civilisations with Islam and that it should not be drawn into the clash between two competing ideologies within the Muslim world—the moderate and the extremist (68). Moderate Muslims believe that Islam is compatible with civil liberties and secular democracy while extremist Muslims, like al-Qaeda, believe that a new caliphate must be revived in order to replace the current world order (68). The latter used violence in order to draw the West into a clash of civilisations and draw moderate Muslims to their side. In his analysis of the terms, assumptions, labels and discourses of 'Islamic terrorism,' Richard Jackson explains that this narrative embraced by the RAND report and authors such as Baran implies that there is an identifiable line between moderates and extremists and that the problem of terrorism is internal to Islam (411). Obama's policies reveal a clear adoption of this strategic position to identify the moderates, as evidenced by the policies' tendency to side-line narratives that linked Islam to extremism in favour of the view that moderate Islam was the predominant ideology that the Obama administration could work with.

In 2011, the level of support that the Obama administration offered to moderate Islamic actors in the Arab world took a dramatic turn. During the Arab Spring, the administration untypically supported the protestors' democratising demands and the emerging Islamic political parties that rose to prominence during the demonstrations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Ennahda Party in Tunisia and the Congregation for Reform (Islah) in Yemen. In many cases in different Arab countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the administration did little to support the old autocratic and nepotistic friends of the United States. In his study of the Arab Spring, *The People Want* (2013), Achcar analyses how the revolutions diminished the old allies of the United States in the region, such as Ali Abdullah Sale, Mubarak and Ben Ali (*PW* 194–95). Achcar explains that there was a long tradition of 'realistic' US policy in the Middle East in which the United States refrained from advocating democracy and respect for human rights, except for some pro forma declarations that remained unarticulated (*PW* 87–88). These policies were justified, in part, on the basis that democracy and Islam were incompatible and that the United States had to respect Muslim theocracy, politics and culture. The US administrations had strong relationships with many autocratic and long-serving rulers in the region. Consequently, such a disregard for democracy and human rights was perceived as a matter of innate cultural differences.

Achcar goes on to point out the ramifications of the US abandonment of this political tradition during the Arab Spring. For example, the Obama administration was linked to the departure

of at least two of the Arab leaders—Ben Ali and Mubarak. In Tunisia, Achcar contends that, although the details are not clear, 'It is certain that the United States was involved in Ben Ali's departure' (*PW* 192). Evidence suggests that Washington urged General Rashid Ammar, Chief of Staff of the Tunisian Land Army, to step in (*PW* 192). In Egypt, Obama intervened directly. In his recently published book, *A Promised Land* (2020), Obama writes that he pushed Mubarak to cede power: 'for me to allow the recipient of [taxpayer dollars], someone we called an ally, to perpetrate wanton violence on peaceful demonstrators, with all the world watching, that was a line I was unwilling to cross' (qtd. in "OBW"). Achcar believes that the US administration warned Sami Anan, Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Armed Forces who was on an official visit to the United States when the revolution began, against army involvement in suppressing the protests (*PW* 192–93). In other Arab countries, the Obama administration understood that it was in its interests not to oppose the protests publicly, stressing the notions of 'orderly transition' and protection of human rights in various addresses by Obama and the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (Achcar, *PW* 192).

When the old regimes that were once friendly to the United States fell, the Obama administration did not seek to reinvent non-Islamic autocratic rulers who had been keen to maintain US interests in the past. Instead, it deemed that it was safe to deal with the emergent political forces that were winning the battle on the streets: the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates (Achcar, *PW* 195). This was in sharp contrast to the foreign policy agenda of the Bush administration, which favoured non-Islamic protégés. In Egypt, for instance, when Mubarak stepped down, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power to fill the political vacuum created by Mubarak's departure. SCAF was an ally of the United States and received US$1.3 billion annually from Washington, but it was not elected by the revolutionaries (Austin-Holmes). Consequently, the Obama administration opposed the prolongation of its interim government, demanding the start of parliamentary and presidential elections (Achcar, *PW* 195–96). As David Kirkpatrick and Steven Lee Myers explain, the US administration warned SCAF against holding on to power: 'After months of mixing gentle pressure with broad support for the ruling military council, the Obama administration has sharpened its tone […], expressing concern that failure to move to civilian control could undermine the defining revolt of the Arab Spring' (Kirkpatrick and Myers). When the post-Mubarak free presidential elections took place in 2012, Washington could hardly hide its preference for the Brotherhood's candidate Mohamed Morsi (Achcar, *PW* 196). After proclaiming Morsi as president of Egypt, the United States was hopeful that the Brotherhood possessed the ability to restore order in the country (Achcar, *PW* 196). Washington similarly

supported Ennahda in Tunisia and Islah in Yemen at important junctures in their revolutions (Achcar, *PW* 196).

In conclusion, the political discourses surrounding the Arab Spring document how Islamophobic sentiments in the West were curtailed in the years that followed the departure of the Bush administration, which contrasts with the climate that had followed the attacks on the World Trade Centre a decade earlier. This, I argue, is a marker of what I called post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourses that reveals their difference from classical Orientalist and post-9/11 neo-Orientalist discourses regarding Islam. During the Bush years, the events of 9/11 were not blamed on Bin Laden alone but on religious, political and social conditions in the Islamic world as a whole. In the words of Charles Krauthammer, a prominent American political commentator, the '"monster behind 9/11" was not Bin Laden, but the "cauldron of political oppression, religious intolerance and social ruin" of the Arab-Islamic world' (qtd. in P. Porter 34). The Bush administration, in its pursuit to implement the Bush Doctrine to secure the country, pitted the Islamic world against the West. Both the War on Terror and democratisation agendas associated Islam with violence and anti-Westernism, which fostered discomfort with Islam as a dangerous and anti-modern ideology. Nevertheless, the Obama administration curbed the atmosphere of fear that surrounded Islam since 9/11 with the promise of a new beginning. In his rhetoric, Obama stressed that Islam and the West shared values of progress and enlightenment and had a long history of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Times of conflict and war between Islam and Western nations were the exception to the norm. Obama's policies ventured to deal with Islamic political forces as potential allies in democratisation projects in the region. During the 2012 Egyptian elections, the administration's support for the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate, Morsi, was barely veiled. The administration also provided support for groups that defined themselves as Islamic in other Arab countries, such as Tunisia and Yemen. The rhetoric and behaviour of the US administration during the Arab Spring muzzled Islamophobic sentiments in Western political discourses, constituting a departure from classical Orientalist feelings towards Arabs.

5.2 Islam's Transformation after the Arab Spring

During the revolutionary upheaval of the Arab Spring, Sunni Islam appeared to the international community as transformed, modern, progressive, peaceful, dynamic and unorthodox as evidenced by Islam's endorsement of the revolutionary cause and the political and individual rights of the Arab protestors. This evolution of Islam enabled recent post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism and the less Islamophobic discourses that dissociate Islam from

violence, terrorism and anti-Westernism. Islam's transformation is evidenced by the revolutionary rallies that regularly started from mosques and religious scholars, such as Sheik Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who stood by the demands of the people (Kirkpatrick; Nakissa 406). Islamic political parties were the main proponents of the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. The Yemeni Congregation for Reform (Islah), Yemen's widely influential Sunni Islamic coalition comprising the Yemeni Muslim Brotherhood and a group of powerful tribes, provided logistical support for the revolutionary Yemeni youth against Islah's own historical ally President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and have subsequently emerged as one of the most influential political actors in Yemen in the post-Saleh years in 2012/2013 (Brehony 238, 241; Lackner 126). Similarly, the Tunisian Ennahda (Renaissance) Islamic party led by Rached Ghannouchi, not only led a democratically elected post-Bin Ali Tunisian government, but adopted a neoliberal economic outlook, which was understood as being indicative of an openness to international trade and open markets (Achcar, *PW* 218, 221–22; Achcar, *MS* 163). Most importantly, revolutionary Islam appeared to be more accommodating towards the West. Ghannouchi himself (Co-founder of Ennahda and a major political theorist on Islam) spent more than twenty years in exile in the United Kingdom until Ben Ali's removal ("IL"). Consequently, post-Arab Spring Sunni Islam appeared to have overhauled itself to cope with the 'modern' era despite instances of unrest that gestured to the development of a more problematic relationship, such as the rise of ISIS and the terrorist attacks it launched in Europe and America including the coordinated attacks in Paris in 2015.

Political Islam rose to prominence during the revolutions. Occasionally referred to as Islamism, it stands for social and political activism that is grounded in the belief that Islamic principles should guide society and politics (Poljarevic; Hegghammer 1; Ayoob 2; Bayat, "PL" 5). Political Islam is different from variations of 'violent,' 'jihadist' or 'militant Islam' (including doctrines adopted by al-Qaeda and ISIS), as the former espouses political and social change via peaceful means while the latter seeks to impose its political agendas by means of violence. The term Islamism is a neologism that occasionally functions as an erroneous shorthand to refer to both political Islam and jihadist activities, although political Islamist parties condemn and are at odds with most jihadist groups (Bowering, "PI" ix; Wright 2).[38] Political Islam is an ideology rather than a novel elaboration of Islamic theology which seeks to incorporate the politics of the Western civil state into Islamic political practice

[38] Consequently, the terms 'political Islam' and 'jihadism' are used to differentiate between the two ideologies throughout this thesis, thus avoiding the confusion created by the term 'Islamism.' However, I make use of the term 'Islamists' to refer to exponents of political Islam.

(Chamkhi 454; Ayoob 2). In other words, political Islam seeks to provide political responses to contemporary challenges that are derived from reinvented and reappropriated traditional Islamic concepts (Ayoob 2).

This vision of Islamic politics, which underpinned various forms of political, social and cultural activism, was initiated in 1928 in Egypt when twenty-two-year old Hasan al Banna created a religious movement concerned with education, preaching and the recruitment of members in response to the political vacuum engendered by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the Westernisation of Arab culture, which, in time, would develop into the Muslim Brotherhood (Wright 4; Bowen 79; S. Hamid, *TP* 9). During the early stages of its evolution, however, political Islam's theoretical and practical philosophy was marked by a rejection of democracy as a non-Islamic form of government, establishing that Islam provided all that Muslims required and adopting the slogan of 'Islam is the Solution' (Esposito et al. 13). Despite the novelty of its experience and the unfeasible and idealistic pursuit of the Islamic state, political Islam in this initial phase established the notion of statehood based on Islamic principles in the minds of contemporary lay Muslims. The idea of an Islamic statehood independent from colonial hegemony, from which Arab societies suffered for centuries, would emerge as an increasingly potent vision within Arab politics throughout the remainder of the century.

In recent decades, the evolution of Islamic parties throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds involved revising orthodox Islamic political opinions with the aim of enabling participation in the modern civil-state.[39] Instead of attempting to establish Islam as the sole provenance of social, political, cultural and economic practices, political Islam at this stage, according to Bayat, 'searched for a kind of modern polity that could secure a place for pious subjects' ("PL" 11; Gerges, "IM" 391). Arguably, this phase started in the 1990s with the *coup d'état* led by Islamists Hassan Al-Turabi and Omar Bechir in Sudan and the establishment of the first Islamist-secular government by Necmettin Erbakan in Turkey (Chamkhi 461; Bayat, "PL" 10–12; Esposito et al. 15–16). Al-Turabi had a significant influence on many Muslim Brotherhood leaders in the region including Ghannouchi himself, while Erbakan's short-lived experience paved the way for Recep Tayyip Erdogan to inaugurate a more solid Islamic

[39] This phase was given different names by certain scholars: Asef Bayat called it post-Islamism, Tarek Chamkhi referred to it as neo-Islamism and John L. Esposito preferred the term Islamic revivalism (Chamkhi 457–60; Bayat, "PL" 9; Wright 9; Esposito, *IT* 6, 20–21). They argued that this stage was distinctly different from earlier phases of political Islam. This argument and the new terminologies, however, have not been firmly established among scholars and will not be adopted in this study.

movement when he established the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001 (Chamkhi 461; Bayat, "PL" 10–12). Erdogan had close ties with Muslim Brotherhood movements in the Arab world and supported their causes (Chamkhi 461; Bayat, "PL" 12).

It was only with the advent of the Arab Spring, however, that political Islam started to wield an ideological and political influence on Arab politics while gaining global attention. Robin Wright explains that with the Arab Spring in 2011, this new phase of Islamic political activism 'was launched by unprecedented displays of peaceful civil disobedience in the world's most volatile region' (7; see also Esposito et al. 18–20). What was so unconventional regarding these political and intellectual transformations in Islam during the Arab Spring, was the explicit and audacious intermingling of democratic principles with the structuring principles of Islamic governance. Wright emphasises that this epoch of political upheaval in the Arab countries was 'defined by two forces that to the outside world often seem contradictory: democracy and Islam' (7).[40] The removal of the old regimes in several Arab countries was the moment that inaugurated both the local and the international rise of political Islamic parties and the Islamists, which, in turn, enabled a transformed image of Islam.

Political Islam's rise to prominence on the geo-political stage provoked a reaction from numerous critics who were quick to signal its uniqueness in history, including the director of the Middle East Centre, Fawaz Gerges, whose 2013 article, 'The Islamist Moment,' observed that:

> For those scholars interested in social movements, particularly religious-based movements, what is taking place in the Middle East is historical—an Islamist moment par excellence. Islamists or religio-political forces are poised to take ownership of the seats of power in a number of Arab countries in the coming years ("IM" 389).

Gerges' argument is centred on the ideas that Islam was now shaping politics in the region and the marriage between Islam and democracy. He maintains that Islamists are unlike hard-line conservatives such as the Salafis who believe that Islam should control all aspects of life including politics: Islamists 'are centrists and modernists and accept the rules and procedures

[40] What democracy means for Islamic parties varies depending on the local context. Shadi Hamid theorised that the sort of democracy practiced by such parties in Egypt and Tunisia was 'illiberal democracy.' Borrowing Fareed Zakaria's concept, Hamid emphasised the distinction between 'democratic' and 'liberal' in the rhetoric and practice of Islamic groups, arguing that Islamic parties practiced illiberal democracy that was tied to their religious ideologies rather than their will to consolidate power (*TP* 25–26, 180–81; Zakaria 17).

of the democratic game' ("IM" 389). Such a configuration reimagines Islamists as being able to balance the secular push of democracy with the theological pull of Islam.

The relative success of the political Islamists during the Arab revolutions to ascend to positions of authority in parliaments in Tunisia and Egypt, win the presidency in Egypt and run the government in Morocco, Jordan and Kuwait consolidated the image of Islam as a modern and peaceful religion while also abating residual concerns in the West relating to an Islamist inability to work under democratic systems. The active role of political Islam in the region following the initial phase of the uprisings and its level of success to engage in the subsequent political process varies in different countries. In Egypt, for instance, several sections of Salafis, who have greatly transformed their views regarding the religious validity of engaging with electoral democracy after the revolutions, created parties such as the Nour Party (the Party of the Light), al-Asala Party (Authenticity) and al-Binaa wa al-Tanmia Party (Building and Development) which participated in the 2011/2012 parliamentary elections, winning 120 seats collectively (Alqudaimi 23–24, 41; Essam El-Din). This success, however, was not sustained throughout the experience of political Islam in the post-Mubarak landscape of Egypt. The rule of the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate for presidency, Morsi, ended after only one year with a military *coup d'état* in July 2013, led by army Commander-in-Chief Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi. Such a short-lived presidency renders it difficult to critically evaluate Morsi's leadership, but a majority of Egyptians expressed a sense of disappointment in him and his party (the Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood) (Gerges, "IM" 398). Gerges explains that the Muslim Brotherhood lacked the political acumen and the experience to work closely with other political forces to solve Egypt's deeply-rooted structural challenges ("IM" 406). Although the military coup was unpopular among Egyptians as evidenced by the subsequent mass demonstrations and the infamous Rabaa massacre on the 14th of August 2013 against Morsi's supporters, the army's removal of Morsi was endorsed by a significant number of Egyptians and was celebrated throughout the country (Masoud 5; Feldman xviii). While Morsi's rule engendered mixed feelings among the Egyptians, the Muslim Brotherhood's overall engagement with the democratic process was impressive, especially when compared to the undemocratic *coup d'état* of their political rivals.

Tunisia remains exemplary for the success of its experience of political Islam despite the volatile and rugged political process of the post-Ben Ali era. Noah Feldman, who visited the country several times to study the constitutional process and provide advice, observes that all parties and institutions involved in the creation of the government, both secular and Islamist,

exhibited an ability to negotiate and offer compromises in the long-term and slowly evolving political negotiations (xxiii, 129–30, 136). While this and other factors such as its strong civil society certainly saved Tunisia from the fate of Egypt or Syria, the country was also fortunate to have Ghannouchi as the head of its main Islamic party, Ennahda. Ghannouchi was able to guide his party towards a remarkable synthesis of democracy and Islam (130). One of Ghannouchi's numerous contributions to the stability of Tunisian politics was instigated during the aftermath of the elections of the constituent assembly in the fall of 2011, which resulted in a significant victory for Ennahda. The victory sparked anxiety amongst the secularists who were concerned that it represented a frightening repudiation of their national secular character—Tunisia has long prided itself on being secular. Conversely, Ennahda's victory invited overconfidence on the part of the Islamists who saw in it a vindication of their belief that Tunisians remained profoundly religious (136). The competing sentiments came into public view in February 2012 in the form of street protests when a draft constitution to Islamise the law (which had been circulating in Ennahda's inner circles) was leaked to the public (138). The draft invoked Sharia as the basis for the law in Tunisia—Sharia was not the main source of legislature in the previous constitution (138). Large protests both for and against the draft constitution erupted in early 2012, and a split in the Ennahda leadership occurred between those who wanted to meet the demands of their voters and those who wanted to avoid a confrontation with the secularists (139). Ghannouchi, who belonged to the latter camp, threatened to resign the party leadership if the adoption of Sharia was not renounced—he announced the renunciation of Sharia on the 26th of March 2012 (139–40). Feldman explains that the announcement was stunning because it was made by a party that won a comfortable plurality in the constituent assembly, adding that a 'major conflict in the Tunisian constitutional process had been averted' (140–41). The pragmatism of the Tunisian Islamists produced the only post-Arab Spring political system in which the tenets of democracy were melded with Islamic principles in a way that provided a political blueprint for other movements in the region.

The remarkable rise of political Islam that significantly improved the image of Islam by means of undermining the stereotype that Islam and democracy were inherently incompatible was accompanied by a parallel revision within 'Islamic jihad' that further dissociated Islam from violence and anti-Westernism. Nawaf Alqudaimi explains that the most significant change the Arab Spring created within intra-Islamic debates regarding self-governance and the relationship with the West was the symbolic end of the era of Bin Laden and the beginning of the era of Bouazizi (23). This paradigmatic shift took place on an intellectual

level in the Salafi school which was taken by surprise by the revolutions (23). Salafism, which literally refers to 'the argument that only the body of norms that originated in the patristic community of the Prophet could be regarded as authoritative in Islam,' had always refrained from engaging with politics, preferring to deal with novel political incidents and trends by means of fatwas (legal opinions) (23; Bowering et al. 468). The Salafi intellectual space had been preoccupied with the idea of political change by means of 'armed struggle' throughout the preceding decades, specifically since the bombings of the World Trade Centre in 2001, which had been adopted by Salafi jihadism—a radical branch of Salafism that endorsed the creation of the caliphate (the Islamic state) by means of armed struggle and included groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS (23–24). Salafism dealt with the politics of armed struggle efficiently because it possessed the necessary intellectual tools to either reject or accept proposals of militant action depending on legislative and theological principles such as 'obedience to the ruler,' 'oath of alliance to all Muslims,' 'maintaining covenants with non-Muslims' and 'legal welfare' which allowed only actions that warranted the welfare of Muslims (24). Based on interpretations of these theocratic ideals (which centred on the idea that there was no separation between religion and state in Islam) and assessment of various aspects concerning the use of violence, Salafism was divided over the question of the use of armed struggle for political gain into three distinct positions: 1) radical Salafists accepted that political change can be achieved violently and provided the necessary religious justification from Islamic tradition for their position; 2) another radical group accepted the use of violence only in certain situations; for instance, when it is used against Westerners in their countries but rejected it in Muslim countries; 3) a group that completely rejected the use of violence for political change (24).

Alqudaimi asserts that when Arabs (Salafis in particular) witnessed the example of Bouazizi (whose self-immolation had deep political repercussions), they increasingly abandoned the idea of 'violent change' as the only means for political change—the approach historically adopted by jihadi Salafism (24). The Arab uprisings of 2011 fell into 'a theoretical vacuum' in Salafi thought because its ideas of 'armed struggle,' 'terrorism,' 'the caliphate' and the 'imam' could not accommodate peaceful political change via popular protests and concepts such as 'constitutional institutions' and 'the separations of powers' (25). The theoretical vacuum was discernible in the uncertainty that hit the Salafis after the Arab Spring: they were divided again into several positions that ranged from an utter rejection of the revolutions and the political systems they produced to a wholesale adoption of the demands of the Arab streets (26). Even hardline jihadi Salafism witnessed this change: only one week before his death on

the 2nd of May 2011, al-Qaeda leader Bin Laden welcomed what he termed 'winds of change,' calling on the Arab youth to engage with the new movements of the Arab Spring (28). The second in command within al-Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, viewed the events in Egypt as part of the change al-Qaeda sought to create in Iraq and Afghanistan (28). These transformations, notably within hardline Salafism, indicate the influence of the Arab Spring upon political Islam.

The recent evolution of political Islam was largely responsible for the transformed image of Islam and the curtailment of Islamophobia during the Arab Spring. In conjunction with the inclusion of Arabs in the West, this enabled the new form of reference to the Arabs that I termed post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. The Islamists were not the only political power in the Arab Spring as the liberals, secularist, Marxists and other leftist political forces were active in the theorisation and organisation of the mass action. For example, Arab liberals such as Shakir al-Nabulsi and Muhammad Shahrur were quick to appreciate the Arab revolutions, presenting them as a natural outcome of the liberals' historical struggle and as a manifestation of the advent of the Arab citizens and their rights (Hatina 26, 212). The political gains of the Arab Spring, however, were reaped by the Islamists, and they thus shaped the political landscape after the fall of the *ancien régime*. In the process, political Islamic parties not only influenced the Arab uprisings and subsequent politics but were also influenced by it. Ennahda's revision of the draft constitution and the removal of references to Sharia in order to avoid clashes with the secularists reveal a deep embodiment of democratic principles. Ennahda effected an exceptional political outcome in order to maintain the welfare of Tunisia and proved that political Islam would not attempt to create an Islamic state but a modern civil state based on Islam. In addition, the hardline Salafis' transformed position with respect to the participation in politics further detached Islam from violence. Taken within the context of the fall of the idea of jihadi Salafism (symbolised by Bin Laden's death), this was tangible evidence that post-Arab Spring politics in the Arab world can accommodate even orthodox Islamic and Salafi jihadist groups which had always remained aloof from what they believed to be non-Islamic politics. Islam thus appeared as transformed, modern, progressive, dynamic and heterodox during the Arab revolutions—an image that contrasts with dominant configurations of Islamophobia in the West following the events of 9/11.

5.3 Problematic Representation of Islam in Post-Arab Spring Narrative

Despite these changes that brought political Islam into closer alignment with Western cultural values, post-Arab Spring Islam still represented a problem within the Western literary

imagination, as represented by Haddad's *Guapa* and Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*, on the basis of its perceived ideological, social and political difference. I argue that the post-Arab Spring Western literary response to the rise of Islam continues to draw on classical Orientalist representations that tend to domesticate, mute and make known and less frightening the various manifestation of Islamic culture and politics. In contrast to post-9/11 neo-Orientalist depictions in which Islam was a violent ideology, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism assimilates Islam into Western culture by means of two primary themes: pacifying it when it constituted a threat (exemplified by Haddad's work) and adapting it to the needs of the West when it presented an unacceptable difference (this is the sort of representation of Islam found in Hamilton's novel). This process involves Westernising and secularising Islam rather than completely estranging and alienating it, which are ways of stereotyping that are in line with what I term post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse.

Firstly, Islam's threat is pacified, for instance, in the way that there is an absence of discourses that ascribe terrorism or violence to Islam. In the literary texts, there are no characters that are declared terrorists, and when violent attacks occur, they are consigned to a distant past and denounced by the major Arab characters. This process involves Westernising Islam by means of transforming its politics via Western norms. The political change which Islamic radical groups sought to achieve via violence is now possible via a democratic process. For example, in *Guapa*, the Islamists (Sheikh Ahmed and his group) are portrayed as enthusiastic revolutionaries who give up their jihadist creed after the revolution has started in order to seek political change through the ballot box. The Islamic threat they used to embody is thus pacified via a change of political perspective.

Secondly, Islam's differential aspects are adapted in situations that involve Islamic values and rules that do not conform to Western liberal culture, sensibilities, taste and standards. This takes place, for example, when Islamic culture has a restriction on certain individual freedoms such as premarital male-female relationships. In such cases, Islamic rules are shown to be modified by means of revealing that Muslims can act as liberally as their Western counterparts. This is a process of secularising the religion and the culture in which Muslims side-step Islamic rules. For example, in Hamilton's novel, Mariam and Khalil, the young activists leading the protests in Cairo, have an unconventional Platonic relationship, live together and share the same bed. This type of liberal male-female relationship is strictly prohibited by Islamic rules. The differences between Islamic culture and Western culture are thus eliminated in the way that Islam is adapted. Haddad and Hamilton's novels are discussed in greater detail in the following two sections.

Post-Arab-Spring neo-Orientalist literary depiction of Islam, while curtailing Islamophobia, still reproduces a Westernised and secularised version of Islam, thus refraining from reporting it as a culturally and historically different and autonomous religion. Through discursive strategies that pacify Islam's threat and adapt its difference, Islam that emerges in this process is supportive of the revolutionary democratising and liberalising aims of the protests, discarding its threatening and differential aspects by means of adhering to borrowed Western ideologies such as representative democracy, liberalism and individualism. Islam's Westernisation and secularisation are evident in the way that Islam is influenced by Western perceptions of civilised political action and moral values. However, given that these two models of representation necessitate assimilation of Islam instead of excluding it, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism reveals that crude Islamophobia fails to define the relationship between the Arabs and the West. Instead of themes which re-envision the clash of civilisations between Islam and the modern, liberal West, the Arab Spring narratives encourage the possibility of co-existence between Islam and European and North American cultures.

5.4 Pacifying Islam in Saleem Haddad's Novel *Guapa*

The first approach used to represent the problematic aspects of Islam in post-Arab Spring narratives is pacification, which is a main feature of Haddad's novel *Guapa* (2016). Political Islam, Islamic parties or Islamic 'terrorist' groups are portrayed as being supportive of the democratisation process initiated with the Arab Spring. In this discourse, Islam forsakes its supposed anti-Westernism (peaceful or violent) to adopt Western forms of political activism. The main effect of this representation is to placate Islam, revealing that it is not violent and that it embraces peaceful co-existence with the West. The pacification of Islam involves a level of Westernisation through which Islamic politics is perceived to be transformed into Western models. In one of the recurrent themes identified to convey this effect, Islamist groups dispense with their 'tendencies' towards violence when they participate in the revolution. In Haddad's text, the Islamist Sheik Ahmed, his wife and his religious group of men have a past history of violence, but they remain optimistic that the peaceful revolution will provide the required change within society. These characters reflect the transformations that took place in the Arab political scene since the uprisings, especially how political Islam and Salafism supported the democratising agendas that accompanied the revolutions. This depiction re-emphasises that extremist religious opinions belong to the past and that Islam now is leaning towards tolerance rather than terrorism.

Guapa is a *bildungsroman* that traces the education and sexual maturity of its gay protagonist/narrator, Rasa, set in an unidentified Arab city caught in the wave of the Arab revolutions of 2011 ("BN"). Born in Kuwait City, Haddad comes from a family of mixed descent: his mother is Iraqi-German and his father Lebanese-Palestinian, and he was educated in Jordan, the United Kingdom and Canada (Haddad, *G* 303). Haddad is a gay author whose ambivalent identity stood between sexual, geographical and cultural borders ("MQA"). Haddad's text reflects the element of a ramshackle identity and cosmopolitan existence that he himself resembled ("MQA"). The novel was released to widespread critical acclaim, with Haddad named by *The New York Times* as one of five Arab authors to watch after the Arab Spring (El Hajj 10; Chambers et al. 86; Alter). The novel was celebrated as belonging to the genre dealing with queer Arab subjectivities—*Foreign Policy* added Haddad on its 2016 annual list of Global Thinkers 'For claiming queer Arab identity' (Enzerink 257; "FPGT"). The *Lambda Literary* review praised the novel as 'one of the few queer novels with an Arab protagonist' (Lovett). Similarly, the *London Review of Books*, while admitting that the text is hard to classify, placed it within the LGBT genre (Baker).

The main theme developed in the novel is the evolution of Rasa's identity as a gay man living in a homophobic and dystopian Arab community that has been shaped by a legacy of US cultural, economic and military imperialism (Enzerink 245–46). Like the author, Rasa is also of mixed parentage and his life is divided between the Arab country in which he lives and the United States where he receives his education and initial awareness of his sexuality. The story is an allegory in which Rasa's sexual development parallels the events of the democratic revolution and political upheaval in his Arab country. When his father dies, Rasa is raised by his profoundly traditional grandmother, Teta, who stands for homophobic old Arab regimes ("BN"). His resistance to Teta's indoctrination contrapuntally corresponds to the people's resistance to the autocrat. At the end of the story, Rasa manages to reaffirm his homosexuality upon Teta, but the revolution fails to dismantle the culture of denial or create the sexually tolerant and free society he has dreamt of. Haddad's text includes a poignant critique of political corruption, social hypocrisy and patriarchy and reveals the complexity of gay life in the Arab metropolis, creating a bleak caricature of Arab politics and society during the Arab Spring.

The form of Islam that appears in Haddad's novel is transformed, tolerant, peaceful, liberal and democratic. Radical Muslim groups move away from pursuing terrorism as a means for political change to adopting peaceful revolutionary dissention and non-violent politics. This depiction of Islam is revealed in an important episode in which Rasa and Laura, an American

journalist, go to the slums of al-Sharqiyeh (the eastern suburbs) to conduct an interview with Sheik Ahmed Baraka (a religious leader) and his wife, Um Abdullah. This meeting is symbolic of the post-Arab Spring connection that initiated between Western politics (American, in particular) as represented by Laura and a reformed iteration of Islam as revealed by Ahmed and his group. They meet on the basis of mutual understanding, acceptance and tolerance.

Laura is a stringer journalist who covers local news for the *New York Times*. She meets Rasa when the protests break out as she has needed the services that he offers via his translation office (*G* 65). Prior to meeting Ahmed, the revelation which is to follow (namely, that Ahmed is surprisingly pro-Western rather than being an anti-Western fundamentalist), is heightened by the concerns that both Laura and Rasa express before reaching his place. Upon approaching Ahmed's area, Laura takes out a head scarf and wears it while Rasa expresses his anxiety that Ahmed may be offended by Rasa's Western looks and sexuality:

> I don't know what this Ahmed guy will be like. How would he react to seeing me, a T-shirt-and-fashionable-jeans-wearing guy from the western suburbs, speaking English with an American accent? […] Would he smell injustice in the brand-new soles of my Converse shoes? […] would he know I was in bed with another man last night? Would he be able to smell Taymour's [(Rasa's lover's)] sweat on my skin? (*G* 69).

Laura's head scarf highlights the sorts of phobia typically associated with orthodox Islamic restrictions on women's bodies. Laura's willingness to wear it reveals a cross-cultural respect and tolerance towards established Muslim traditions. Rasa's Western clothing and American accent align him with the Western protagonists and values in the narrative. This is further emphasised by the fact that he comes from the 'western' part of the city to visit the 'eastern' slums. He fears that as such, his looks would not be tolerated by Ahmed. In addition, Rasa bears the mark of Western capitalism as can be perceived in the reference to 'Converse' brand shoes. This association demonstrates Rasa's ongoing concern with his social class as a member of the bourgeoisie. Rasa is concerned that his class may further alienate him from Ahmed and his group who are disadvantaged in the Western economic system perpetuated by the autocratic regime. The meeting with Ahmed serves to deflate such expectations regarding Ahmed's anti-Westernism.

The meeting with Ahmed also disproves the violence associated with him, the part of the city where he lives (al-Sharqiyeh) and Islam. In the morning before the visit, a state-television news broadcast reports that there have been kidnappings and beheadings in al-Sharqiyeh where a fundamentalist group has assumed control: 'this morning a group of terrorists, armed with foreign weapons, occupied vast swathes of land in the eastern side of the city, al-Sharqiyeh' (*G* 23). The news broadcast reports that the group have killed fifty army personnel by decapitation as they shout '*Allahu Akbar*' (God is the greatest), further indicating the religious motivation behind the violence. Within the same report, the President makes an appearance in military uniform (which links his rule to military dictatorships) to vow to crush the terrorist elements who, he assures his audience, do exist and 'are benefiting from destabilising the situation' (*G* 24).

The text, however, indicates that the President and state media are using terrorism as a pretext to suppress the protests and cannot, therefore, be trusted as a source of information. For example, elsewhere, Rasa reveals that part of the reason behind his disillusionment with the revolutionary cause is that the people naively accept the regime's propaganda: 'when the president declared he was fighting terrorism people eagerly backed him' (*G* 54). When Rasa suspects the honesty of the report on state television, he switches to CNN, which also implies that the regime might be using incidents of violence to radicalise the opposition (*G* 24). At this point, however, Rasa, as well as the reader, continues to harbour fears with respect to the incident at al-Sharqiyeh.

When Rasa and Laura visit al-Sharqiyeh, they discover that the region is indeed under the control of Ahmed's group but is peaceful and quiet and bears the signs of Western neoliberalism. When Laura asks Rasa to go with her to interview Ahmed regarding the take-over, Rasa hesitates, but Laura assures him that she has 'a good source,' suggesting that they will be fine (*G* 65–66). When they approach the neighbourhood, they stop at a check point run by Ahmed's men who inculcate in Rasa mixed feelings of fear for his safety and excitement for seeing 'that something could be free of the president's control' (*G* 70–71). After leaving the check point with a positive impression, they notice that Ahmed's neighbourhood is filled with signs of Westernisation such as the American companies that seemingly thrive in such a location. The first sight which meets Rasa and Laura's eyes is a group of shops advertising Western products. While McDonald's and Starbucks stores populate the more affluent western part of the city where Rasa and Laura live, al-Sharqiyeh exhibits smaller shops selling Western brands such as Fair and Lovely:

> Taking a turn off the main road I drive across the bridge that separates the suburbs from al-Sharqiyeh. The familiar signs of McDonald's and Starbucks make way for tattered billboards that crowd over each other, fighting for attention, some advertising Fair and Lovely skin-lightening cream and *baladi* [(countryside)] yogurt […] (*G* 69).

Although al-Sharqiyeh is supposed to contain the slums of the city where the downtrodden and most religious people live, it is not exempt from the influence of consumerism, implying that this part of the city functions within a world structured on a US-led economic and military imperialism (Enzerink 245). Fair and Lovely products exist side-by-side with domestic yogurt. This indicates that even the revolutionary action taken up by the people of al-Sharqiyeh against the regime or the dissention that is carried out by Ahmed and his men are expected to conform to ideas propagated by the West. This vignette also emphasises the stratification of the society based on class that is nurtured by the unfettered US economic hegemony in the country (Enzerink 258). The affluence of the western part of the city is contrasted with the economic precarity of the eastern part, while the solution to the latter's marginalisation does not reside within capitalism but is exacerbated by it.

Rasa and Laura's meeting with Ahmed, his men and his wife Um Abdullah, further disproves the falsehood circulated by the regime regarding the violent nature of the opposition and the take-over of al-Sharqiyeh. Ahmed, who is bearded like his men, bears the signs of Westernisation in his dress and the way he speaks. While he wears the traditional Arabic dress for men, the dishdasha, he also wears tennis shoes instead of the sandals typically worn by Arab men, which indicates the shoes' Western style although it is unbranded like Rasa's more costly Converse shoes (*G* 77). Ahmed also speaks English fluently to the degree that he does not require Rasa to translate Laura's questions. Nonetheless, Ahmed demonstrates that he is principled because he chooses not to talk to Laura in English as he believes it is the language preferred by the hypocritical Arab elite. When Rasa begins to translate Laura's question, Ahmed interrupts him:

> 'No need to translate back to me,' Ahmed says in Arabic. 'I understand and speak English, but I prefer to speak only in Arabic. Please explain to her that in our country the elite speak English to appear sophisticated and differentiate themselves from

> the lower classes. So for me to speak English in my home would be treacherous' (*G* 78).

This does not only reveal that Ahmed sides with the run-down and the poor, but also that he is closely connected to a Western language through which he can understand and communicate. Ahmed is thus affiliated with an essential component of Western culture—language—and is subsequently expected to share some of the Euro-American ideals and values. In this short episode, post-Arab Spring Islam and the United States, as represented by Ahmed and Laura, are depicted as needing no interpreter to mediate their newly established relationship, which reveals a post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse in which Islamophobia does not define the relationship between Islam and the West.

The narrative establishes that Ahmed and his wife, Um Abdallah, are committed to the peaceful revolution to which they lose their son Abdullah who is apparently martyred at the hands of the police. Their opposition to the regime is motivated by their altruistic desire to improve the living conditions in the slums which are neglected by the government. Ahmed explains that 'The only government services we've seen here for the past twenty years have been the regime thugs patrolling the streets and beating our children' (*G* 78). Haddad makes a direct appeal for a sympathetic identification with their cause, and such a sympathy is heightened when the loss of their son is revealed: 'Our son disappeared last month […]. We organised a protest in the city centre and he went along. He never came back home' (*G* 79). Instead of deterring them, the loss incites Ahmed and his wife's growing commitment to the peaceful uprising: 'We have an obligation to the revolution. Abdullah being gone only makes the struggle more personal for me […] and obligations to demand change are as much to myself as to my country' (*G* 79). In these lines, Ahmed reveals untrammelled stoical restraint, selfless sacrifice and patriotism. Although he and his wife are certainly sorrowful for the loss of their son, their belief in the strength of the revolution is unshaken by the incident.

Ahmed and his wife desire the establishment of a quasi-utopian society in which economic inequality, financial precarity and poor governmental performance are non-existent. While their goal is to build a society structured by religious commitment, their political vision departs from the creation of an organisational system akin to an Islamic state (a caliphate). This is revealed by Ahmed's response to Laura's question regarding taking over parts of the city. Obviously, Laura is certain that the incident has been a mere take-over of al-Sharqiyeh since she does not ask him about the killing of the army personnel reported on state television. He tells her that the take-over has been instigated by the conflict with the authoritarian regime with the aim of restoring the democratic process: 'We gave lots of chances. We called for

parliament to be dismissed and for new, fair elections. We gave the president one more chance. But you have to earn your legitimacy. Now we have our own plans' (*G* 80). This commitment to the parliamentary and the democratic process is not marred by the take-over of al-Sharqiyeh because the end justifies the means for Ahmed and his group. Their plans are centred on economic and social equality which they seek to establish in a progressive Islamic society.

Ahmed, presenting a blueprint of an architectural design of his planned city, explains that the city will have houses, schools and hospitals arranged in a circular fashion around mosques (*G* 80). He uses the urban plan to illustrate the social structure that he plans to build: 'This is what our future city will look like. No more elitist security measures that separate one citizen from another, no more public institutions located in buildings that are falling apart' (*G* 81). Since his planned society is based on social justice and economic welfare, Ahmed stresses the difference between their vision and an Islamic state: 'We live in a Muslim country,' arguing that those who oppose such an architecture will change their minds when they see the benefits (*G* 81). Ahmed's political pragmatism, rather than religious dogmatism, have thus egged him on to take over al-Sharqiyeh.

Rasa's reaction to the encounter with Ahmed's family encapsulates a great deal of sympathy towards them that contrasts with his earlier apprehension upon arriving at al-Sharqiyeh. Rasa discovers that much of his fear is unjustified and that Ahmed embodies the genuine pulse of the revolution; specifically, harbouring ideas centred on combating authoritarianism and neoliberalism and a reconfiguration of social life aimed at eliminating inequality. He expresses his willingness to live with the family because it would allow him to establish a prosperous country and to share a more just social existence:

> The thought [(that Um Abdallah could be my mother)] comes to me quickly, insidiously, that now that her son has disappeared I could move out of Teta's house and live with them. […] we would pray five times a day and then go out together to protest as one big family. We would rebuild this country starting from right here in this tiny living room in al-Sharqiyeh, and yes, every house will be within five minutes' walking distance from a mosque. It would be nice, really, to have such a mother and father. Plus, I'd finally get out of my bourgeois bubble. Here I'd have some authenticity maybe, and my position on things would be clear (*G* 83–84).

This indicates that Rasa accepts their plan for the country and that an Islamist political system is a promising post-revolutionary ideology. Although he says in a previous paragraph that he does not commit to the five prayers a day required by Islamic faith, Rasa indicates here that he perceives the wisdom behind such principled commitments. As Suzanne Enzerink explains, Rasa is intrigued by Ahmed's social plan and 'cannot help but fantasise about the potentialities of a society not marked by outside interference or class and wealth inequality' (261–62). Rasa's comments validate Ahmed's concept of a society structured on Islamic guidelines and tie Ahmed closer to the spirit of the revolution which, in Rasa's point of view, is aimed at enabling the poor by bridging schisms between all social classes. The regime's radicalisation of Ahmed and his group is thus exposed to be unfounded because he is depicted as belonging to the revolutionary people.

Ahmed's connection to the revolution serves to reveal how figures of Islamic religiosity have been transformed by the Arab Spring. The rise of political Islam during the Arab Spring (which I discussed in Section Two of this chapter), overshadowed the more radical interpretations of Islamic scripture that sought to implement political change by violent means, for instance al-Qaeda and ISIS, or refrained from taking part in constitutional and electoral politics because it has non-Islamic origins such as Salafism. Haddad's text reflects this positive influence of the Arab Spring upon Islamic theological interpretations, foregrounding that Ahmed and his group have had a history of supporting violence but change course after the revolution. The only indication of a violent past that Ahmed and his group has engaged with is the smell of gunpowder that Rasa finds in the vehicle that takes him to Ahmed's house. Upon arriving in al-Sharqiyeh, Ahmed's men ask Rasa and Laura to leave their car behind and to get into a jeep that transports them further into the slums of al-Sharqiyeh (*G* 76). When in the jeep, Rasa realises that it 'has a strong smell that after a few moments I realise is gunpowder' (*G* 76). This incident serves to foreground popular misconceptions associating political Islam with violence. The text echoes the political atmosphere surrounding Islam prior to the revolutions in order to reveal the ideological transformations stirred by the mass action, and which serve to deliver a more nuanced depiction of Islam in contradiction to popular misconceptions.

Haddad's novel curtails the Western pre-Arab Spring rejection of Islam, using recent theological and ideological shifts in Islamic conceptions of civil rights and political participation as the lore from which it builds its pacified image of revolutionary Islam. Sheik Ahmed stands out as representative of such transformations, revealing that emergent iterations of Islam are peaceful, tolerant and pro-Western. Ahmed's transformation is disclosed when he

shows considerable understanding and flexibility indicated by his welcoming attitude toward the American journalist Laura and his ability to communicate with her in English (*G* 77–80). In addition, his plan for the future city based on Islamic principles is welcomed by Rasa as a way to escape current social and economic injustices. Ahmed's group is revealed to oppose the regime, which is drawn in negative terms, and their animosity with the regime is fuelled by issues of equality, patriotism and political participation, rather than religious radicalism or anti-Westernism. Nonetheless, while curtailing Islamophobia, this depiction of Islam falls short to reveal Islam neutrally. The transformations taking place within Islam that are positively portrayed in the text are viewed from and compared against Western social values and political standards. For example, the ideological transition to adopt parliamentary and electoral politics that took place within some Islamic parties is hailed as a positive development in the text because these are Western political systems not because they are necessarily good for the Arab people. Such a depiction thus Westernises Islam by stripping away its internal value systems.

5.5 Adapting Islam in Hamilton's Novel *The City Always Wins*

Adaption is the second discursive strategy used in the literary texts to represent post-Arab Spring Islam. In novels such as Hamilton's *The City Always Wins*, unacceptable Islamic ethical and behavioural codes are altered or remodelled in order to conform to Western standards. The effect of this is to present a transformed iteration of Islam following the Arab revolutions that is less anti-Western, portraying Muslim culture as less opposed to Western liberalism and secularism, a version which is defined by an evolution in line with the Western fetish of 'modernity.' In this context, modernity describes a revolutionary and historic break with the past and formations of tradition and the multiplying effect of this break on facets of life (Johnson 2–3; Ferguson 177–78; Rampley 10). This way of dealing with Islam in the literary works serves to avoid the Orientalist trope depicting Islam as belonging to a timeless, static and pre-modern tradition. For example, Islam's rules regarding women are transformed in a way that eliminates the difference between contemporary Arab women's perceptions of their rights and roles and those of modern Western women. In specific contexts, Arab women express a type of femininity that runs against orthodox Islamic normative feminine behaviour.

In Hamilton's novel, Mariam and Khalil, the young activists leading the protests in the text, have an unconventional asexual relationship that is inconceivable within strict Islamic rules banning relationships between men and women out of wedlock. By being in such a relationship and not asking Khalil to marry her, Mariam becomes different from Muslim

Egyptian girls of her age who are expected to seek marriage. This depiction of Mariam's character involves an adaptation of Islamic normative rules in order to conform to Western liberal principles. Thus post-Arab Spring texts impose Euro-American cultural models upon an Eastern religion, revealing a Eurocentric attitude that denies Islam any internal dynamic or independent evolution. This creates a false perception that, by making such amendments, Islam's present is superior to its past.

In its depiction of the generational struggle between the young revolutionaries and the aging autocratic regime, Hamilton's text reveals an increasing ideological and intellectual schism between young and old Egyptians.[41] The young Egyptians use new technologies, for example smart phones and social media to advance their revolutionary goals, but they also embody revolutionary ways of thinking and new codes of behaviour that reveal the increasing gap between them and their older generation. The most conspicuous of this revolutionary thinking touches on the role of women who take on unconventional responsibilities during the protests such as being in the front lines along with the male protestors, shattering decades-long myths regarding the powerlessness, enslavement and passivity of Muslim women. Mariam is the novel's central character beside Khalil and provides a feminine perspective through which to see the revolution ("HDT"). Mariam is educated, the daughter of a doctor and a medical worker herself. In addition to assuming a position at the front lines in the protests, she is revealed to be more courageous than Khalil whose American nationality gives him a level of protection ("HDT"). Mariam is unprotected from the violence of the regime and is portrayed as being more committed to the liberal tendencies that characterise the revolution. Mariam stands for the progressive and modern ideas of her revolutionary generation.

Hamilton's female character has been influenced by a long history of Egyptian feminist human rights activism and also through Hamilton's biographical history of belonging to a matriarchal family unit (Chambers 5). In addition to his mother Ahdaf Soueif, who is a prominent diasporic novelist and writer, Hamilton's family includes female activists such as his aunt Laila Soueif and his wife Yasmin El-Rifae (Chambers 3–5). El-Rifae, for instance, had been vociferous regarding the backlash that women endured while attending the protests—the abuses included lewd comments and sexual assault (Chambers 5). In an online essay, El-Rifae writes about the inadequacy of government assessments of the level of sexual harassment in Egypt, arguing that 'The streets and other public spaces are neither safe nor comfortable for women. Sexual harassment and assault in various forms are part of the daily

[41] This aspect of the novel (i. e., the generational divide), including references to technology, was the subject of the discussion of this novel in Chapter Four.

calculus that women in Cairo consider and experience, often to a greater degree than women in other cities' ("ES"). Women activists were more vocal and energetic during the revolution, and El-Rifae was particularly involved in an initiative designed to protect women in the crowds from harassment called OpAntiSH (Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment and Assault) (Chambers 5). OpAntiSH, which formed out of a group of volunteers of mostly female friends and grew years later into a more sophisticated operation, physically entered into mobs during mob attacks, surrounded the women being attacked and delivered them to safety (El-Rifae, "WE"). El-Rifae's activism and OpAntiSH are illustrious examples of women's resistance that tend to be forgotten in the grander narrative of the invisibility of Arab women. El-Rifae writes 'People remember the mob attacks, but they mostly do not know about the women who resisted them' (El-Rifae, "WE").

Egyptian women activism and OpAntiSH feature in Hamilton's text, indicating that revolutionary Muslim women are aware of their rights and have agency to transform their social and political position. Women's resistance to men's patriarchy is interwoven into the people's opposition to autocracy and is portrayed as propelling the revolution. For example, Mariam's daily movement around Cairo is made difficult by the prospect of the sexual harassment she is likely to experience. Mariam's first scene walking on the street, which turns out to be another sort of carnage, is described after the mayhem of the initial scene in which people are murdered by the regime at Maspero (the Egyptian Radio and Television Building):

> Mariam keeps her headphones in when she walks, keeps her pace brisk and her expression set to *fuck off* as she navigates the street's assault course of words and sounds and unwanted invitations. The small can of pepper spray smuggled by a travelling friend lives on her key ring, waits tight in her hand as she picks her way through the little swarms of men; grinning, whistling men, men in packs along the narrow sidewalks, men who spit and men who stare, men who make sure they're in your way, men who follow through the dark streets, men who like to scare you for their miserable midnight erections jerked off in dark bathrooms (*CA* 74).

In this description, the revolutionary Egyptian woman is expected to take her own precautions against potential forms of male violence which, she realises, is a reality that cannot be avoided. Mariam uses her headphones to avoid hearing words thrown at her while her walk and looks are intended to push away unwanted attention. She always carries the pepper spray—it 'lives on her key ring—' for use if one of the assailants turns physical. The spray

can only be obtained illegally abroad, which poses questions regarding how the state can improve the measures intended to protect women.

While Mariam resists sexual harassment on the personal level, her membership in the OpAntiSH group, which appears by its real name in the novel, places her within a collective female identity that is resolved to claim agency both to resist patriarchy and to bring down the regime. In the story, OpAntiSH appears when the Muslim Brotherhood ascends to power and the anti-government protests intensify, indicating that harassment is used by the regime (in this case the Muslim Brotherhood led by Morsi), to disperse the protestors. For example, Marriam, Khalil and Rania (a fellow protestor) are taking part as members of the OpAntiSH volunteers when an anti-Morsi protest erupts in Tahrir on the anniversary of the 2011 revolution (*CA* 132). They position in a site overlooking the 'sea of people' beneath which enables them to see a woman who is attacked by men: 'a shoal of people [are] all twisting around a central point' (*CA* 132). Khalil runs down to her rescue, forcing his way through the riot of bodies and squeezing deeper into the crush. He makes his way in spite of the hands that try to grab at her half-stripped body and manages to get her to safety despite the increased level of violence used by the perpetrators (*CA* 133). Mariam has also received her share of physical abuse as evidenced by the wounds she sustains when she returns home: 'Her arms are covered in scratch marks, her scalp is raw from fistfuls of hair ripped out. The tissue pressed to her leg flowers red. The blood spirals' (*CA* 134).

OpAntiSH operations like these in Tahrir are portrayed as resistance to the regime as well. In the words of some of the victims and in the discussion between Rania and Mariam, the text demonstrates that the regime is using sexual harassment to exclude an active segment of the protestors which are women (*CA* 140, 142). While lacking tangible evidence, Rania is sure the Muslim Brotherhood is organising the assaults: 'There has to be some organisation. It always starts with a big group forming a circle around a woman. That does not happen spontaneously. These men know one another' (*CA* 142). The evidence, however, is provided in the episode described above in which Khalil attempts to save the woman in the crowd. Khalil realises that one of the assailants wears a balaclava which is worn in another vignette by police commandos (*CA* 14, 133).

As a revolutionary character, Mariam also diverges from the normative behaviour of Muslim women with respect to sex and marriage, which reveals a remodelling of post-Arab Spring Muslim women according to Western liberal principles. Her asexual relationship with Khalil is one manifestation of her unique moral constitution that would be inconceivable within the boundaries of Sharia law. Khalil and Mariam's relationship starts when they see each other

while on the run from the police in Tahrir Square, thus outlining how their romance is underpinned by revolutionary politics (*CA* 14–16). Khalil is camped near Mariam's camp in Tahrir when an officer approaches her giving orders to her and the other protestors to leave the square immediately and go home. Mariam is outspoken, shouting: 'We are not going anywhere,' and after a short exchange with her, the officer and the commandos who have formed a circle behind him begin to attack (*CA* 14–15). Without introducing themselves to each other, Khalil and Mariam find themselves running from the officers hand in hand literally (*CA* 15). The narrator describes that first encounter, Khalil's emotions and their first conversation after they reach Khalil's flat: 'her hand, the two of them running, how they ducked into the dark doorway of a building ganging heavy with foliage. […] She kept her hand in his as they made their way up through the spiralling shadows of the staircase' (*CA* 16). Only at this moment that they feel the need to introduce themselves, which indicates that they fall in love with each other instantly. Their love is the product of the revolution, a relationship that is created in the dark recesses of revolutionary activism.

Although they fall passionately for each other, live in the same flat and sleep in the same bed, Mariam and Khalil do not become intimate nor do they plan to get married. What keeps their relationship Platonic is their belief in the values that define the male-female relationship, which the revolution inculcates in them. For example, when they are in the same bed, Khalil resists the urge to become intimate because he sees in it another sort of infringement upon women's rights which he should abstain from:

> She's not asleep. He can tell from her breathing. He looks at her and is repulsed by his base urges. His penis shrivels into itself—*she's my sister, I swear she's my sister*. I'm sorry, he wants to say. Sorry for everything, sorry for men, for all men, and the things they do, sorry for being one, for lying here thinking about the touch of your skin, for the weight of my body on yours, for every other woman I've ever looked at (*CA* 141).

Khalil does not want to be associated with the backward and pre-revolutionary way of thinking adopted by the men who harass women sexually on the streets of Cairo. He wants to create the post-revolutionary world in which women live safely.

Despite her love for Khalil, Mariam refuses to be married which establishes her rejection of prescribed gender roles. The announcement not to get married comes as an anti-climax in which the reader's expectations are contradicted. Egyptian social customs

oblige young men and women, following an initial period in which they become acquainted with each other, to visit the girl's parents to declare that they intend to marry. In their period of introduction, Khalil and Mariam make a great couple and the reader is likely to anticipate that their marriage will take place before the end of the story. Such expectations are heightened when they go to Mariam's parents—a meeting that is not foreshadowed in previous passages. The initial conversation between Khalil and Mariam's parents also gives the impression that their marriage is out of the question. Mariam's father, for instance, asks if Mariam and Khalil are going to have children. Mariam's answer is: 'I'm not having children' (*CA* 157). The surprising revelation comes when Mariam insists that she and Khalil have discussed the possibility of marriage several times, and they have decided not to be married. When her mother asks: 'are you two not thinking about marriage?' Mariam's firm answer is: 'We don't need to get married' (*CA* 158). The other characters' reactions convey that Mariam's decision to remain single is unexpected. Her father repeats the question 'Are you sure?' hoping that she would change her mind, declaring that he does not see that she and Khalil have plans for their lives (*CA* 158–59). Mariam's refusal to get married reveals that revolutionary Muslim women do not consider marriage as an inevitable destiny. It also indicates that she and Khalil are not postponing sexual intercourse until they are declared husband and wife but that their relationship is indeed asexual.

Despite being celibate, their relationship is shocking to the rest of the Egyptian society because it departs from conservative expectations. Mariam is berated more than Khalil for staying with a man who is not a relative or husband. For example, in the third and last part of the novel, entitled 'Yesterday' and narrates the return to autocracy, Mariam receives calls from unknown people asking her to stop anti-regime activism. In one of the calls, which most likely comes from the regime's secret service, the caller threatens Mariam: 'You have a reputation to protect. You're living with a foreigner. You're making people agitated' (*CA* 249). The threatening voice indicates that he/she might expose Mariam's relationship with Khalil to the public as an attempt to stop her. This would harm her reputation and place mounting social pressure on her parents who would have to ask her to stay home or get married quickly.

In another episode, the police also remind Mariam that it is surprising that she is friends with a foreign man—'foreign' in both contexts means that Khalil is not her husband or a relative. When Hafez, one of their fellow revolutionaries, disappears, Khalil and Mariam go to the police station to look for him (*CA* 254). The officer asks Mariam who Khalil is to her. When

she tells him that Khalil is a colleague, the officer says: 'You're out with this foreigner in the middle of the night looking for another man who's not your husband. What would your father think?' (*CA* 255–57). This comment is a reminder of the social and religious constraints placed upon women regarding being acquainted with men and the social pressure placed upon their families if they do so. Mariam indeed crosses religious and social boundaries when she decides to adopt this unconventional behaviour.

Mariam embodies another unconventional role for Muslim women in her participation in the front lines during the protests. When she goes to Tahrir, Mariam takes on the role usually performed by male protestors which indicates that a revolutionary Muslim woman—much like her Western counterpart—blurs the line between the sexes and achieves greater equality for her sex. For example, before one of the protests to which she and Khalil decide to go, she disguises herself as a boy: 'In four seconds she can pull the kuffiyyeh [(traditional headdress worn by men in Palestine)] up around her face, tie it around the back of her head, can become a boy' (*CA* 39). Wearing the kuffiyyeh, which is a symbol of Palestinian resistance to Israel, Mariam looks like a boy. Her dexterity in wearing the kuffiyyeh indicates that it is not the first time she wears it. This demonstrates that when she resists, which occurs often, Mariam is similar to men. This is further emphasised in the next scene in which Mariam and Khalil lose each other in the thick of battle. Khalil finds her but mistakes her for a man: 'Through the salty mucus filling his eyes he sees a boy in a hood, feels him rubbing his back, and only when the breaths come again that he sees it's Mariam' (*CA* 41). Elsewhere in the text, the narrator explains—using free indirect speech—that Mariam believes she is equal to men in her revolutionary capacity: 'She wants to stay on the front line. It can't just be poor boys who keep dying' (*CA* 50). By doing so, Mariam rebels against inequality, refusing to be kept in isolation or treated with contempt because she is a woman.

In Hamilton's novel, post-Arab Spring Islamic rules regarding women which do not conform with Western culture are adapted and transformed in order to make Islam more modern, less traditional and pro-Western. This discourse curbs Islamophobia with respect to the position of women and human rights in Islam. For example, Mariam's intellectual makeup takes from the revolution which is underpinned by the quest to create a free and liberal society. Mariam enjoys considerable liberty as evidenced by her willingness to live with a man who is not her husband. She also challenges her family expectations by refusing to get married, thus rejecting popular narratives that represent Muslim women as submissively obedient to their families and that restrict them to domestic lives. In addition, through her struggle for women's rights, Mariam demonstrates that, like Euro-American woman, she has agency to resist

autocracy and patriarchy and takes charge to rebel against segregation. For example, using incidents from the actual history of the Egyptian revolution such as the virginity tests (conducted on women protestors in Tahrir in one of the police stations on the 9th of March 2011) and the 'blue bra woman' incident (the woman protestor who was beaten by security forces until her underwear was visible), Mariam demonstrates her awareness of a female desire to liberate and radically alter the political parameters of society: 'we are the target, we are the oppressed, we are the front line, and while everyone else has shattered their political axes into impotent fragments, what more cohesive force is there than simply: women' (*CA* 151). Mariam is a new breed of revolutionary Muslim liberal women whose ideas diverge from orthodox Islamic conceptions of the position of women and who finds space to practice her new role in a revolution that has been exceptionally inclusive of female activism. Mariam's character indeed helps curtail Islamophobia by seeking to shatter the myths regarding Muslim women passivity and silence, but it also indicates how revolutionary Islam is adapted, modernised and secularised in post-Arab Spring literary texts. Mariam's disregard for religious restrictions on male-female relationships corrodes Islamic ethical value systems and places the institution of marriage outside the realm of Islamic jurisprudence.

Throughout this chapter, I argued that Islamophobia is curtailed in the representations of the Arab Spring and that Islam is portrayed as a modern, secular and Westernised religion. This view is problematic because it denies Islam a unity and an integrity of its own, measuring it based on its compatibility with the West. However, this is the second element—in addition to the inclusion of Arabs in the West—that indicates that the Arab Spring revolutions engendered new vocabulary to refer to Arabic culture in what I call post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism. This transformation in Western discourses regarding Islam reflects the evolution that occurred within Islamic parties and groups during the Arab revolutions and the adoption of peaceful and democratic means of political change. Nevertheless, Islam remains problematic in the literary discourses due to its being historically different and threatening. Consequently, in the literary texts, Islam's threat is pacified, and its difference is adapted. In the next chapter, I argue that despite the inclusion of Arabs in the West and the curtailment of Islamophobia, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism depends on a host of repackaged Orientalist stereotypes to refer to other aspects of Arab culture such as attributing the failure of the Arab Spring to the rootedness of autocracy in Arab politics and the inability of Arabs to carry out a democratic endeavour. These are reproductions of the classical Orientalist tropes of 'Arab despotism' and 'the lazy Oriental,' respectively.

Chapter 6: Representing the Outcome of the Arab Spring

6.1 Discourses of the Aftermath of the Arab Spring

In this chapter, I argue that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism remains indebted to the abstractions propagated by classical Orientalists regarding aspects of Arab culture other than Islam. The academic and literary discourses on the outcome of the Arab Spring evidence a biased critique of the Arab people as being incapable of achieving the democratic goals of the revolution. As a religion, Islam is not portrayed as the reason behind the Arabs' inability to create thriving democracies in the Arab world after the uprisings, but other areas of Arab culture such as Arab politics or the Arabs themselves (as political agents) are stereotyped and misrepresented. Such views revert indirectly to classical Orientalist stereotyping of the Arab world, for example, by demonstrating that the failure of the revolutions is due to the Arab revolutionaries' lack of unity, which is a repackaging of the Orientalist stereotype of 'the lazy Oriental,' or due to the persistence of autocracy in Arab politics, which is a reproduction of the stereotype of 'Oriental despotism.' For example, in academic discourse, Achcar argues that the Arab Spring failed because the Arab states that experienced the revolutions had patrimonial political structures that rendered democratisation exceptionally difficult. Similarly, Stephen King contends that democratic consolidation has historically been particularly complex and the Arab states connected with the Arab Spring failed to realise it. I argue that these analyses of the outcome of the Arab Spring are recent variations of the classical Orientalist stereotype of Oriental despotism.

Reflecting upon this academic discourse, the literary memoirs and novels under investigation in this thesis use two main themes to depict the disappointing outcome of the Arab uprisings: firstly, that the Arabs are disorganised and lack unity and direction, which make them incapable of producing a unified effort to realise the goals of the revolution. This is particularly characteristic of Thirlwell's novelette, *Kapow!*, where emphasis is placed on the disunity of the protestors as the main reason for their failure. This discourse reproduces the Orientalist stereotype of the lazy Oriental in a slightly different manner. Secondly, there is a frequent use of the theme of the rootedness of dictatorship among the Arab peoples as evidenced by the unlimited authority of the military and how it dominates the structure of the Arab state. This theme is revealed most emphatically in El Rashidi's novel, *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, in which generations of Egyptian activists, including those at Tahrir Square, fail to impose their free will upon the military establishment. El Rashidi's representation is a repackaging of the Orientalist stereotype of Oriental despotism. These depictions of the

outcome of the Arab revolutions reveal that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism draws on a host of classical Orientalist stereotypes to describe the Arab Other—only Islam is now excluded from such abstractions.

In academic political writings, analysts postulate that the Arab Spring turned into an Arab Winter, with three countries falling into civil war (Libya, Syria and Yemen) and Egypt being the stage for a military *coup d'état*. Political analysts unequivocally maintain that Islamic influence did not stand in the way of the hopes of the revolutionary Arabs, but they fall into long-held clichés pertaining to Arab culture such as Arab despotism and the laziness of the Arab natives when interpreting the factors that led to the disappointing outcome of the revolutions. This trend is exemplified by Achcar, the professor of Development Studies and International Relations at the University of London, who stands out as a keen observer of the uprisings. He authored two books to analyse both the causes and outcomes of the Arab upheavals—*The People Want: A Radical Exploration of the Arab Uprisings* (2013) and *Morbid Symptoms: Relapse in the Arab Uprisings* (2016).[42]

In the latter, Achcar strives to understand why the uprisings 'began turning sour,' observing that the Arab revolutions did not produce the pattern of the 1989 Eastern European Velvet Revolution that was hoped for and envisioned by many people in the West (*MS* 1, 6). Achcar states that the reason was 'neither religious nor cultural;' rather, it was that the pre-2011 Arab states had predominantly patrimonial and neopatrimonial structures with crony capitalist economies—a unique political system that made genuine political change impossible (*MS* 5–6).[43] Patrimonialism can be monarchical or republican and is more associated with the absolutism of the eighteenth-century European *ancien régime* than with the modern bourgeois state (*MS* 7; Linz and Stepan, "DT" 26). Neopatrimonialism refers to the traditional patrimonial system interwoven with the modern state system, including political parties, legislature and the judiciaries, that is imposed by colonialism (Cheeseman et al.; von Soest 2). In the Arab patrimonial states (the eight monarchies in addition to Libya and Syria), ruling families had an unquestionable ownership of the state and would fight relentlessly to preserve

[42] Achcar's analyses in these two books are influenced by the thesis of a 2006 book he co-authored with Noam Chomsky, *The Clash of Barbarisms*, in which the authors argue that a clash between the United States and reactionary forces in the region would be inevitable (*MS* 11; *PW* 290).

[43] In his argument that Islam did not play a role in the failure of the Arab Spring to create democracies, Achcar follows Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's thesis that 'a type of secularism that decrees a complete separation between religion and the state was [not] empirically necessary for democracy to emerge' ("DT" 17). Linz and Stepan were also analysing the Arab Spring in their article 'Democratisation Thesis and the Arab Spring' (2013).

what they consider to be their dominion (Achcar, *MS* 7). In the other states that could be labelled neopatrimonial, the predominance of patrimonialism in the region induced a corrupt 'triangle of power' that combines the military apparatus, the political institutions and a capitalist class functioning as a state bourgeoisie (Achcar, *MS* 7). This trilateral 'power elite' is determined to maintain its hold on state power, which is the source of their wealth and privileges (Achcar, *MS* 7). This political setting is unlike that which was dominant in Eastern Europe prior to their revolutions which allowed a smooth transition to democracy: the Eastern European states had bureaucratic and civil servant functionaries who envisaged the possibility of keeping—even improving—their purchasing power under capitalism or transforming themselves into capitalist entrepreneurs (*MS* 6–7). The dissimilarity between the two political systems thus accounts for the varied outcomes of the 1989 Eastern European and Arab revolutions (*MS* 6).

Under such circumstances, Achcar maintains, it was a mistake to believe that there would be a repetition of the Eastern European pattern of smooth transition into a new political and social order in the Arab region, insisting, as he did in *The People Want*, that the region was falling into a '*long-term revolutionary process*' that would take decades with 'new episodes of revolution and counter-revolution' (*MS* 7–8; *PW* 17–18). He explains that Ben Ali's fall, Mubarak's resignation and Saleh's handover can by no means be compared to the popular overhaul of the communist socio-political order (*MS* 8). No complete disintegration of the old political system followed the sham of these presidents' removal except in Libya. In that country, however, years of suppression of political freedoms and the annihilation of stable institutions by Gaddafi precluded the establishment of a new functional political order.

Achar analyses the failed uprisings in Syria and Egypt as the two countries whose fates determine that of the other revolutions. Syria and Egypt's ultimate outcomes are the fall into fundamentalism (Syria) and the return of dictatorship (Egypt). The development of their revolutions was highly convoluted due to the presence of 'a three-corner struggle' rather than the usual binarism of the conflict between the revolution and the counter-revolution. This triangle consisted of the revolutionary pole and the two rival camps of the *ancien régime* and the reactionary fundamentalists (*MS* 10). Achcar argues that fundamentalism—by which he refers to the wide spectrum of Islamic movements, from moderate political Islam such as conservative Salafism to Shia Khomeinism and terroristic jihadism—constitutes another unique element of the Arab region that, along with patrimonialism, made the Arab Spring appear like no other revolution in history (*MS* 8, 10).

Fundamentalism had a deeply reactionary impulse compared to the progressive character of the revolutions, played a complex role in the mass action and was a tool in the hands of regional players such as Qatar and Iran (*MS* 8–9). In Syria, fundamentalism played a sizable role in instigating and prolonging the conflict, with regional powers using it to wage a proxy war. Qatar and Turkey were particularly involved in helping the al-Nusra Front, a Sunni militant group, to fight the Assad regime (*MS* 40). Iran had the goal of shoring up the Syrian regime, to the detriment of the Syrian opposition, by providing fuel for Asad's repressive machine and by furnishing the regime with Shi'a terrorist militias imported from neighbouring Iraq and Lebanon (*MS* 10, 31).

The political scene, however, was more complicated. The Assad regime benefitted from instigating Sunni fundamentalist violence as evidenced by its decision to release many prominent jihadi militants from its jails in 2011 (*MS* 33). The Syrian regime was initially confronted with the problematic situation of the peacefulness of the early protests against it led by the Coordination Committees, which were comprised of a range of young progressive revolutionaries who believed in peace, democracy and justice (*MS* 31–32). The regime needed to attach violence to the protests in order to confirm its claim that the revolution was a Salafi-jihadist conspiracy (*MS* 32–33). The regime also engaged in trade and outright cooperation with ISIS in the areas that ISIS controlled: the terrorist group provided oil, gas and electricity, among other things to the regime which in return paid the gas plant staff, provided spare parts and sent out technicians for repairs (*MS* 40–41). As conflict raged between warring fundamentalist groups—Iran's Shi'a militias in support of the regime and Qatar and Turkey's Sunni groups in opposition to Assad—the revolution that represented the people's will was relegated to the background, with descent into gory mayhem becoming the ultimate fate of the uprising in Syria (*MS* 10–11).

The second outcome of the Arab revolutions in Achcar's analysis is the repressive backlash of the old regime, which is the fate of the uprising in Egypt. Achcar argues that Sisi's *coup d'état* was a violent, reactionary move that reinstated Egypt's old regime (*MS* 66). The development of the revolution in Egypt took a trajectory similar to that in Syria. In Egypt, the power triangle was comprised of the revolution and the two counter-revolutionary camps: the fundamentalists, represented by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, and the old regime (*MS* 67). Achcar explains that the United States had a considerable involvement through Qatar's influence on the Muslim Brotherhood, with the aim of preserving the interests of Washington (*MS* 67). Due to the weakness of the revolutionary pole, the way was clear for

the Muslim Brotherhood and the army to compete over the fate of the country—hence, a dynamic of both cooperation and enmity ensued between them (*MS* 67).

From the beginning of the revolution, the Brotherhood offered its counter-revolutionary services to the army, the backbone of the regime, and worked with it hand-in-glove in the initial phase (*MS* 67–68). After gaining the majority of seats in the People's Assembly following the 2011-2012 elections, they set themselves on a collision course with the army, notably when they demanded that the army-appointed cabinet of Kamal al-Ganzouri be dismissed (*MS* 68). In another challenge to the army, the Brotherhood declared a candidate (Morsi) for the presidential elections (*MS* 69–70). However, the best the army could do was to let the Brotherhood win the presidency after the army granted themselves the legal means to abort unwanted decisions by the new president (*MS* 71). When in office, Morsi worked to consolidate more power for himself and his party, including proclaiming all his constitutional declarations to be final and the 'brotherhoodisation' of the state by means of increasing the number of Brotherhood ministers from five to eight (*MS* 75–76).

The army was not going to relinquish the political control of the country to the Brotherhood; it required a suitable way to regain power (*MS* 69, 83). The opportunity presented itself as the nationwide discontent with Morsi's mismanagement of security, national sovereignty and the economy (*MS* 87). In April 2013, Tamarrod (rebellion/dissent)—an anti-Morsi campaign led by five young Nasserist activists—was formed, launched a petition to proclaim no confidence in Morsi's rule and called for early presidential elections (*MS* 85–87). The petition pointed out that the main objectives of the revolution—namely, 'bread, freedom, social justice [and] national independence—' were not realised by Morsi and his Brotherhood-led government (*MS* 87). It aimed to lead a massive mobilisation against Morsi on the first anniversary of his inauguration, the 30th of June (*MS* 87). As the Tamarrod campaign gained momentum, the army openly supported it (*MS* 87–91). One week before the date, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Sisi, announced that the military would support the countrywide anti-Morsi demonstrations, proclaiming that the army is determined to protect the will of the people (*MS* 91–92). The army offered to mediate a compromise between the protestors and the Muslim Brotherhood to create a national unity, with this offer being subject to an ultimatum that ended on the 30th of June. In the days preceding the planned climax, the Brotherhood rejected the compromise, and the tension escalated between the president's sympathisers and the opposition led by Tamarrod which called for the suspension of the constitution and the replacement of Morsi by the president of the constitutional court. On the first of July, Sisi gave Morsi another final ultimatum to meet the demands of the protestors

that ended within forty-eight hours without Morsi complying—Sisi acted accordingly (*MS* 93).

Achcar stresses that although the opposition to Morsi was a genuine representation of the will of the people, the expulsion of Morsi was a fully-fledged *coup d'état* orchestrated by the army in a similar way to the 2011 *coup* against Mubarak:

> There was nothing wrong with the progressives striving to mobilise the people in order to dismiss the president, even though he had been democratically elected. […] The problem arose, however, when the Egyptian progressives *asked the army* to remove the president by carrying out a second coup, and hence seizing power for themselves (*MS* 104).

The Egyptian revolution, consequently, came full circle: initially, the army, with the aim of 'preserving the old regime,' collaborated with the Muslim Brotherhood to hijack the first wave of the revolution that began on the 25th of January 2011 (*MS* 105). The army also hijacked the second wave of the revolution on the 3rd of July—this time against the Muslim Brotherhood rulership—and shortly began to 'restore the old regime' (*MS* 66, 106). Accordingly, the old regime had always been able to reinvent itself and remain in power. In Egypt, like the other Arab countries that experienced the uprisings, the situation evolved into a clash between two reactionary camps: the fundamentalists and the old autocrats (*MS* 151).

Likewise, King's book *The Arab Winter: Democratic Consolidation, Civil War and Radical Islamists* (2020) provides a sober assessment of the outcome of the Arab Spring that recalls the Orientalist claim regarding Oriental despotism. King observes that the revolutions failed and that Islamic influence was not to blame, arguing that the derailment of the revolution came as a result of the challenges that accompany the transition into democracy (2). The three stages of democratic transition are authoritarian breakdown, democratic transition and democratic consolidation (2). King contends that due to the complexity of democratic consolidation, the 'Challenges associated with [it] go a long way toward explaining the contours and disappointing results of the Arab Spring' (2). He observes that in 2019, 'only Tunisia can be tentatively considered a consolidated democracy' (1). While Syria, Libya and Yemen fell into civil wars, Egypt, the most important and most populated of the Arab countries, ended its short-lived democratic experience with repression and conflict between the state and the Islamic groups. In his analysis, Islam did not prevent democratisation as evidenced by the Islamic political parties that were able to combine Islamic traditions with modern democratic practices (11). The reason was the inability of political parties and

political actors, including the Islamic ones, to consolidate the nascent democracy, which implicitly indicates that lack of democracy is firmly established in Arab politics—an indirect reiteration of the theme of 'Oriental despotism' in King's political analysis of the reason behind the failure of the Arab Spring.

The first stage of the tripartite model of democratic transition is authoritarian breakdown, which was achieved with extraordinary speed in four of the countries that witnessed the Arab Spring. Tunisia was the first to breakdown Ben Ali's entrenched, twenty-three-year authoritarian rule, forcing him and his family to flee the country on the 14th of January 2011. In less than two weeks, the revolution began in Egypt, leading to the unexpected removal of Mubarak on the 11th of February after thirty years as head of the state. Libya and Yemen were next in line: long-ruling Gaddafi was killed on the 20th of October 2011 and Saleh was overthrown on the 21st of January 2012 (3). When the protests began on the 15th of March 2011 in Syria, it was expected that Assad would face a similar end (3–4).

The second phase is democratic transition, which involves a change of government through fair and free elections. King explains that this is an 'important benchmark of a democratic transition' and that the Arab countries that broke down authoritarianism also transitioned satisfactorily to this phase (4). In Tunisia, a coalition dominated by moderate Islamists won the Constituent Assembly elections that took place on the 23rd of October 2011 (4–5). Moderate Islamists also won the founding elections in Egypt, and the Muslim Brotherhood's candidate, Morsi, won the presidential elections in June 2012 (5). Libya's transition elections were held on the 7th of July 2012, with the liberal and secular coalition (the National Forces Alliance) winning the majority of seats in the General National Congress (5). The February 2012 elections in Yemen replaced President Saleh with his vice-president Abdrabbu Mansur Hadi (5).

While the Arab countries' transition into the first two phases of democratisation were smooth, their transition into the last and most crucial phase (democratic consolidation) proved incredibly challenging. A disaggregated approach to democratic consolidation identifies multiple spheres that must be available before democracy can progress, including the negotiation of pacts—compromises and concessions aimed at resolving conflicts and creating national consensus (5–6). It is not surprising that the Arab Spring countries failed in this stage because 'Democratic consolidation brings into play challenges in state-society relations that stretch far beyond the electoral arena' (5). King highlights five pacts in which the Arab countries failed: the military pacts, the political pacts, the socioeconomic pacts, nation-state pacts and transitional justice, human rights and rule of law pacts (6). The military pacts

involve maintaining military impartiality and keeping it under civilian control; political pacts refer to bargains obligating political parties to abide by the rules of the democratic process; socioeconomic pacts reflect inclusive policymaking aimed at providing legitimacy for new democratic regimes; nation-state pacts denote the attempt made by politicians and their followers to build national unity and the modern state; and the lack of pacts to establish transitional justice, human rights and the rule of law threatens to empty democracy of its meaning (6, 15, 19).

The Arab Spring countries had different scores with respect to these pacts, but the overall outcome was that the consolidation of democracy had only been attained in Tunisia. Regarding the military pacts, the Arab states were similar to other developing countries where it was difficult to expect the government to be completely civilian (7). The Arab countries provide a particular case of military intervention in state affairs due to the number of armed conflicts, tensions and civil struggles—an Arab experience that enabled military officers to actively engage in politics (7). The military involvement in the political life of the Arab countries can also be indirect where direct intervention was not present. This can be made via tutelage, prerogatives (including economic prerogatives) and challenges to civilian authority (7). Military control as regards the appointment of leadership and policymaking poses the greatest threat to the consolidation of democracy more than its control of other facets of state affairs such as internal security or defence policy (7–8). Egypt remains a notorious example for its military's blatant dominance over politics and the economy during the revolution, particularly its staged coups and manipulation of secular and Islamic parties (24).

Political pacts are democratic bargains struck by the leaders of electorally competing parties to abide by the rules of political democracy (9). Political pacts express the political actors' commitment to 'forgo appeals to mass mobilisation, violence and military intervention to alter electoral outcomes' (9). Political pacts compel the contractees to accommodate vital interests, creating an atmosphere to reorganise their relations via negotiated compromises (9; Burton et al. 13–14, 20). During the Arab Spring, the main challenge to achieving political pacts was to reach a compromise between the secular and the Islamic parties because they distrust each other despite their initial acceptance of democracy (King 11). Negotiations and settlements over a wide range of subjects, such as class, ethnicity, region, tribe, sect and the like were discussed, but disagreements over the role of religion and Sharia law in the political life of the post-revolution Arab states remained deeply problematic and hindered democratic bargains

(9). Tunisia's success can be attributed, among other things, to its Islamist and secular parties' remarkable willingness to cooperate towards realising democratic bargains (23).[44]

Political pacts must be supplemented by social and economic bargains in order to create the economic transition—a necessity in the Arab Spring countries—and achieve democratic consolidation (14). Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillipe Schmitter's theory of democratic consolidation proposes that national consensus should be sought on social and economic decisions—a socioeconomic pact—because economic transition should be negotiated and implemented via a broad national dialogue that includes business, government and labour (45; King 14–15). Solid economic pacts can create a sustainable balance between demands on the economy and economic growth, enabling an economic transition that shores up democratic consolidation (King 15). In Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, the economic challenges addressed by the *ad hoc* National Dialogue Conference (NDC) had been so challenging that they, ultimately, derailed the consolidation of democracy (211–12, 232). The NDC addressed the issue by recommending a market reform that limits elite takeover and seizes opportunities for economic growth produced by a vigorous private sector and an economy connected to global markets (238–39). Nevertheless, regional influence gave holdover elites from the old regime and traditional parties considerable influence over the democratic transition—a step many observers believed would perpetuate corruption and nepotism despite the efforts of the NDC (239).

King also stresses that without national unity, democratic consolidation may not be at hand. National unity means that the vast majority of citizens accept the political community to which they belong. National unity is an integral feature of democracy building because without it, conflicts may not be contained in new democracies where the introduction of competitive elections may instigate communal violence between antagonistic groups (15; Rustow 25–26). Acceptance of a unified nationality is a prerequisite for the acceptance of the democratic principle that those who win greater electoral support will not use their superiority to block others from taking office in the future, and, in exchange, the losers will submit to the winners' binding decisions (15; Schmitter and Karl 82).

In addition to national unity, the character of the state or statehood—defined in the Weberian model as comprising the military, the bureaucracy and the tax collection apparatuses—and its ability to manage resources, execute policies and preserve law and order are necessary conditions for the adoption of democracy (King 17–18; Anderson 11; Linz and Stepan, *PDT*

[44] I discussed this aspect of the Tunisian revolutionary experience in Chapter Five above.

17). In some of the Arab Spring countries such as Yemen and Libya, national unity and modern statehood were not firmly established prior to the democratic transitions of 2011 due to the fragmentation of the Arab states as a result of decades of European colonialism (King 15–16). This historical situation resulted in sub- and supra-state identities that weakened the popular consensus on a shared nationhood, whose lack created communal conflicts upon the introduction of electoral competition (King 16; Hinnebusch 377–78). In Yemen, the rivalry between South Yemen and North Yemen—two countries that were unified after a 1990 bloody war—erupted violently after the start of the post-revolution democratic process (King 16). Similarly, in Libya, the post-Gaddafi civil war was not prevented by two rounds of democratic competitive elections. In contrast, Tunisia and Egypt enjoyed more consolidated national identities that curbed violence during their transitional periods to the degree that even Egypt's repeated military coups did not produce a wave of bloodshed similar to that witnessed in Syria (King16).

Lastly, King adds another set of pacts that he considers necessary for democratic consolidation in the Arab region: namely, transitional justice, human rights and the rule of law pacts. Transitional justice addresses previous state-sponsored violence and oppression and how a society should deal with the legacy of crimes against humanity (19). It is represented in four main elements: establishing the facts in relation to violations, serving justice by prosecuting the perpetrators, making amends to the victims and their families and providing guarantees that similar atrocities would not be repeated (19). The process of achieving transitional justice is related to upgrading human rights according to high international standards, including equal citizenship rights for all, along with the establishment of the rule of law (21). The last two requirements necessitate conducting reforms to the judicial and security sectors with the aim of purging these sectors of patronage networks and replacing them with democratic norms in which human rights and law and order are protected by the state (21).

These pacts were not consolidated in the Arab Spring states although the uprisings promised to establish human rights and mobilised groups to demand citizenship equality for everyone, especially marginalised and minority groups such as women (21, 23, 313). In the pre-2011 Arab states, the judiciary and the security forces were used by the autocrats to maintain power and served as extensions of the regime rather than instruments of the state (21). For example, constitutional courts bestowed unwarranted constitutional legitimacy to presidents who remained in office for life (21). The security apparatuses acted with impunity and no judicial recourse of abuses of human rights was allowed (21). After the Arab Spring, the Ministries of Interior and the security infrastructures were 'surprisingly resistant to change, creating an

avenue for the return to dictatorship' (22). In Tunisia, although its revolution's success was exemplary, reforms to its judicial and security sector were disappointingly slow (313). In Egypt, human rights and the rule of law deteriorated massively under Sisi, and the abuses and violations of the security state that defined the Arab countries prior to the revolutions continue to this day (313).

Academic analyses of the outcome of the Arab Spring conceived at the time—for instance, Achcar's work—besides those that came almost a decade later, such as King's work, bear out my conclusion that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism, in addition to eliminating Islamophobia and including Arabs in the West, reverts to outdated Orientalist abstractions and themes regarding the Arabs and their politics. In Achcar's analysis, the reason for the failure of the Arab Spring was not religious or cultural but was a deeply ingrained patrimonialist form of governance, coupled with crony capitalism, which rendered democratisation impossible. Similarly, King attributes the failure of the revolutions to the difficult process of democratic transition, in which both Islamic and secular parties failed equally. Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism thus reveals an affinity between Islam and modernism, stressing that Islam did not stand in the way of the democratisation of the Arab nations. However, this discourse depends on classical Orientalist stereotypes concerning other areas of Arab culture to account for the failure of the revolutions such as patrimonialism and the inability to consolidate democracy, which are indirect manifestations of the Orientalist trope of the despotic Arab. While post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism has certainly progressed from sheer Islamophobia, it remains a problematic rendering of the contemporary Arab Other.

The literary works on the Arab Spring develop similar post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist narratives regarding the outcome of the revolutions. They avoid blaming Islam for the inability of Arabs to democratise but revert to repackaged Orientalist generalisations to represent the factors that led the revolutions to fail. The following two sections discuss two of these stereotypes in the novels by Thirlwell and El Rashidi. In the first section that discusses Thirlwell's novelette, the revolutions fail because the opposition is divided, which results in the revolutions lacking a specific direction (*K* 72, 79). This is a reproduction of the Orientalist stereotype of the lazy Oriental. In the second section dedicated to El Rashidi's novel, Egyptian politics is doomed to be hopelessly autocratic because dictatorship has always been able to return to power after every attempt at reform (*C* 176). El Rashidi's theme reverts to the Orientalist stereotype of Oriental despotism indirectly.

6.2 National and Narrational Disunity in Adam Thirlwell's *Kapow!*

Thirlwell's novelette, *Kapow!,* uses a post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist discourse to describe the aftermath of the Arab revolutions, demonstrating that Islam does not hinder democratic change, but it reverts to a mild form of the classical Orientalist stereotype of the 'lazy Oriental.' This is apparent in the novelette's portrayal of the failure of the Arab Spring as the result of the Arabs' inability to achieve democratic change due to their lack of direction, unity and the ability to make collective effort and their deleterious ideological, political and socio-economic differences. Lack of unity and differences among the revolutionary Arabs stand for the laziness of the natives in Thirlwell's indirect repackaging of the classical cliché because the classical and the repackaged abstractions stereotypically describe inherent reasons for the inability of the Arabs to realise higher goals such as democracy. For instance, the narrator (Thirlwell himself) comments that the revolution in the Arab metropolis has become 'multiple,' indicating that it has lost its unifying principle due to conflicting factions and constituents (*K* 72). The subversive multiplicity of the Arabs is inscribed in the text's formalist features: the novelette is characterised by unconventional typography, textual fragmentation and metafictional digressions, with an explicit critique of mimesis—the realist novel's ability to convey its subject matter. *Kapow!* emulates the failure of the Arab revolutions by means of demonstrating that the realist novel is incapable of capturing the various dimensions of the numerous factors contributing to that history. Thirlwell's plot and formalist features reveal disunity and multiplicity like the revolution. Thirlwell does not attribute the disappointing aftermath of the Arab revolutions to Islam, revealing that failure is not unique to the Arab experience but is perceived within a larger pattern of revolutions in world history. Thirlwell, thus, maintains the post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist impulse of not portraying Islam as the root cause of the failure of the Arab revolutions while reiterating the Orientalist stereotype of the lazy Oriental.

Kapow! is a metafictional work split between the story of the revolution in Egypt, the author/narrator's reflections on writing the history of that revolution and a love story set during the revolution. The narrative is centred on a revolution, a plot and a book that eventually fall apart (Duff). The narrator's distance from the events in Cairo is emphasised as he uses second-hand information that he draws from Faryaq, a London taxi-driver and brother to Mouloud, a well-intentioned protestor and juice bar owner (Gibbons 33). In a story within the story, Faryaq narrates how Rustam, an Uzbek taxi driver living in Cairo, finds Mouloud (a complete stranger to Rustam) lying on the street after Mouloud has been beaten by regime thugs for visiting Tahrir Square (Thirlwell, *K* 7, 12–14). Faryaq's story recounts how Rustam,

Mouloud and their friends take part in the revolution at Tahrir until the departure of the President (Mubarak), rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and the beginning of the counterrevolution (*K* 36, 40, 44). Within Faryaq's story, the narrator perceives another story that Faryaq 'couldn't quite see' concerning the private lives of the protestors, which is the love story between Mouloud's sidekick, Ahmad, and Rustam's wife, Nigora (*K* 19). The relationship highlights the connection between the public domain and the private lives of the Egyptians, which is revealed above all in Ahmad's disappointment at the political stagnation at Tahrir and at the boredom that hinders the development of his relationship with Nigora (*K* 50, 65–66, 72, 79). The structure of a story within a story emulates the innerworkings of the revolution, which Thirlwell uses to demonstrate that 'revolution,' a word that originally means 'return' according to the text, is always characterised by a reinvention of power by more calculating forces than the people who initiate the mass action (*K* 71, 76).
In order to emulate the multiplicity and multi-directionality of the uprising it narrates, Thirlwell's book challenges the formalistic conventions of the novel. Written in the tradition of metafictional works drawing attention to their artifice, bookhood and printhood, such as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759), William Gass's *Willie Master's Lonesome Wife* (1968) and Steve Tomasula's *VAS* (2002), *Kapow!* interrupts the reading experience with texts that spread out in multiple directions, in-text notes that pop up in various places, paragraphs of odd layouts and fold-out, pull-pout and polka-dotted pages (Ghosal 78, 94; Couturier 87; Thirlwell, "AT"). In her interview with Thirlwell, Frances Riddle describes *Kapow*! as a 'visually-diverting work of experimental fiction' (Riddle).[45]

The unconventional layout makes the reading experience cumbersome because the text constantly interrupts the reader, and the reader is obliged to go back and forth while physically rotating the book. For example, on the first page, the reader is struck by a slab of text written upside down across the middle of two paragraphs (*K* 5). Initially, the purpose of this block of text is not clear, but it keeps interrupting the flow of the reading. A crooked 'Y' shape also appears and is hard to interpret. This experience is repeated on almost all pages, and the reader realises that the Y shaped glyph functions as a note indicator and the blocks of prose are in-text notes (rather than footnotes or endnotes) or asides. The effect, as Steven Poole writes, makes the reader 'feel a bit sick—' an intended outcome that Thirlwell uses to

[45] Critics such as A. Suciu and M. Culea and Danuta Fjellestad attempted to identify the genre of the novel. Suciu and Culea played with a set of terms including ergodic literature (in which the medium of delivery is essential to meaning) and autofiction (mixing autobiography and fiction) while Fjellestad placed it under the category of multimodal literature (texts that realise meaning via multiple semiotic modes) (Suciu and Culea 29, 32; Fjellestad 45, 51).

make reading the book simulate a revolution (Poole). 'Punningly,' Poole observes, 'a novel that is in part about the Arab Spring compels the reader to perform revolutions' (Poole).

In addition to form, the content of the novel also establishes an associative analogy between the book and the revolution: narrator, characterisation and plot, much like the revolution they represent, evidence features of multiplicity and disunity. Firstly, the narrator is portrayed to be unqualified, distant from the subject matter of his narrative and to lack agency. At the beginning of the novelette, the narrator subverts his authority by declaring that he lacks sobriety due to his excessive use of dope and caffeine: 'So I was, let's say, in a doped yet caffeinated state' (*K* 5). In the interview with Ted Hodgkinson, Thirlwell clarifies the function of this combination of dope and coffee: 'one of them speeding you up, and the other one slowing you down, so you ended up in suspension, […] a kind of hyper energy or anxiety' (Hodgkinson). This state of hyper energy and anxiety enables the narrator to keep pace with the revolution by means of continually digressing—a technique he uses to describe the revolutions that are breaking out in different places simultaneously. 'I kept thinking one thing, then another, then another' while trying to narrate the revolution (*K* 5). The result is a multiple and disjointed story in which progress in the revolution and its narrative is suspended.

Moreover, the narrator is conscious of his spatial and cultural distance from the history he describes, looking at the events in Cairo from an 'astronautical perspective' and travelling through Faryaq's words 'everywhere, even inside-out, even into an apartment block I had never visited in a country I didn't really know' (*K* 9–10).[46] Such a distance serves to destabilise the authenticity of the history he provides to his readers. Furthermore, the narrator casts doubt upon his narrative as he questions his own integrity. In the first of the in-text notes, he contemplates his recent addiction to dope and coffee: 'It wasn't the usual or previous me, or I. But lately, to be honest, I'd been thinking that this thing called *I* wasn't anything at all. I was beginning to think that *I* was basically a pseudonym' (*K* 5). Later he adds 'I was doubting this thing called *I* very much' (*K* 12). By denying his agency, the narrator demonstrates that his narrative lacks substance of an authoritative history.

[46] As I pointed out in Chapter Four, multiculturalism and globalisation are integral to Thirlwell's work and can partly explain his choice of metafiction as a narrative style. Jerome Klinkowitz explains that part of the stimuli for metafiction were the retreat of mainstream culture and the rise of new multicultural mixes (Klinkowitz). Regrettably, discussing the link between globalisation and *Kapow!* in detail or Thirlwell's stylistic choice is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Secondly, the protests' multiplicity and lack of directionality are represented by the characters' lack of revolutionary purpose and motivation, which leads to conflicts and differences between them and the eventual dissolution of the revolutionary force. For Rustam, involvement in the mass action occurs by accident: he is dragged into it. He is portrayed to lack a real motive: 'he wanted to go to the Square, to join the revolution [because he was] nostalgic for crowds' (*K* 26). Prior to the events, he has told his wife Nigora that he has quitted political activism, so going to the Square is without planning: 'he was done with politics. […] So it wasn't premediated […]' (*K* 26–27). The first appearance of Rustam in the text also re-emphasises his lack of motive: '[he] became a revolutionary not because he'd thought about it lovingly—since Rustam was just a quiet man. He didn't enter the revolution *directly*, but in a sidestep […]' (*K* 6). This sidestep is when he attempts to help Mouloud whom he finds lying on the street—an incident that eventually makes him a revolutionary.

Unlike Rustam, Nigora, Ahmad and Mouloud do have motives, but their motives are revealed to be more corporeal and hedonistic and so removed from the patriotic, liberal and democratic spirit of the revolution. Nigora, who reveals her anti-revolutionary sentiments when she disapproves of her husband's participation in the uprising, visits the Square only to see her lover Ahmad: 'She'd come here because of the slight sweet chance of talking to Ahmad' (*K* 46). When assigned to help the revolutionaries by means of identifying places where sexual harassment occurs, Nigora hesitates: 'Nigora wasn't sure, she said to Aziza [(Ahmad's girlfriend)], quietly, if she was the right person for this' (*K* 45–46). Similarly, Ahmad demonstrates little adherence to the democratising aims of the revolution; his purpose being corporeal enjoyment with Nigora. The text states that 'he just wanted to see her naked,' and 'he was wondering what size Nigora's areolae might be. He was wondering how he would ever see them' (*K* 45, 63). Although their relationship is highlighted by the narrator as a love story, their love diminishes in comparison to their obsession with each other's bodies. This functions to highlight the narrow personal interests that push the revolutionaries into the Square.

Mouloud reveals a more contradictory attitude to the revolution initially, but he eventually falls into the same sort of hedonism. At the beginning of the novel, Mouloud is beaten by regime thugs due to his participation in the uprising, which suggests that he is a sincere protestor (*K* 7–8). Faryaq praises him to the narrator: '"My brother" said Faryaq, "his name is Mouloud. He is a brave man. He is a *hero*. You hear that often?" "No," I said. "Yes," said Faryaq, "he fights for what is right"' (*K* 12). However, Mouloud's sexual attraction to both Nigora and Aziza mars his bravery, reveals his hedonistic motives and indicates an

ideological division between the genders. When in the Square and in the presence of both women, Mouloud mentions the need to have food, and the narrator explains his sexual intentions:

> 'We could do with some food,' interrupted Mouloud. It may have seemed incidental, because when Mouloud spoke he didn't speak as a modern man—no, folks, he was, I am afraid, kind of sexist. When he mentioned this need for food in the form of a statement he meant Nigora and Aziza (*K* 28).

The narrator stresses that Mouloud's intentions are sexist and, therefore, uncivilised. The use of the word 'sexist' is out of context. It reveals an ironic tone and the narrator's unreliability regarding word choice. However, there is an element of sexism in Mouloud's remark that derives from the fact that he targets both women at the same time, revealing a predatory attitude towards women. The setting (Tahrir) contrasts Mouloud's act with the modern and civilising ethos of the revolution.

Nigora's reply to Mouloud further reveals a contrast between her progressive attitude towards the relationship with men and his traditional view of women. The narrator comments that Nigora 'was not to be ordered, she was not to be determined by the world of male strangers. She chose cheekiness instead' (*K* 28). She chooses not to be submissive, revealing her awareness of her feminine strength and a confidence that she can defy patriarchy and redefine the boundaries between her and men. Instead of Mouloud picking her, she, with an overt expression of sexual desire, takes the lead and picks Ahmad: '"You," said Nigora to Ahmad, the pretty boy of the group. "Come with me"' (*K* 28). In the context of the revolution, it is females who choose their male partners rather than the opposite. Compared to Mouloud's traditionalism, Nigora's progressive and liberal independence further stresses the disparity between the genders among the protestors, emphasising that the disunity of the protestors is one of the factors that lead to the failure of the revolution.

Thirdly, the multiplicity of the revolution is created in the novel via the plot, which disintegrates into an endless array of sub-plots and digressions. Thirlwell uses this plot structure to critique mimesis, the realist novel as a mode of delivery, highlighting the inability of literary realism to trace the multiplicity of threads and dimensions of the stories that comprise the history of the revolution. Initially, the main plot functions to demonstrate that the outcome of the revolution is disappointing due to the multiplicity of the revolution: 'By July the revolution was so multiple it was comical' (*K* 72). The narrator explains that

Ahmad—as representative of the hopeful revolutionaries—is too optimistic, hence the comic irony, to imagine a utopian polity combining the different religious factors: '[Ahmad] wanted a popular revolution where the Muslims and Christians joined in too' (*K* 72). Like many of his co-revolutionaries, he is unable to see that part of the Islamic political forces are calling for an 'Islamic state, not civil' (*K* 72). Ahmad fails to see that 'the opposition could become so divided' and that in his city 'diminishment was a multiplication' (*K* 72). The revolution disintegrates because it multiplies.

Since multiplicity undermines the revolution, it also subverts the realist novel's claim to report historical reality because the novel is incapable of comprehensively tracing it in multiple directions and dimensions. The narrator observes that stories are digressions of other stories, with each not being the expected end of the thread but the beginning of yet another story. This is where the element of surprise resides, which the narrator calls 'kapow' or 'wham:'

> Because if a story's extended in one direction then it might mean that the story was being extended the other way—and that the story you thought was real, in which all the other stories were contained, was in fact—like, wham!—part of another story, of which you knew nothing (*K* 5–6, 72).

This highlights that the realist story is self-reflexive because its principle of narration depends on a chain of endless stories and, consequently, the history it represents is not reality but a part of a boundless reality. Alison Gibbons analyses this as an attack on literary realism: a meaningful reading of the text is impossible because the reader will end up in a multiplicity of fragmented and continually digressing narratives. 'To put it another way, this is, on the one hand, a cloaked critique of the notion of a panoramic, omniscient narrative perspective, found for example in "purest realism"' (Gibbons 39). Since this view is crucial to Thirlwell's depiction of the outcome of the revolution, the narrator declares the failure of the realist novel: 'The real! The real could never be described' (*K* 16). Later, he adds that his principle of realism also applies to the revolution: 'It was there in the structure of revolution itself. Just think how this word revolution, which only ever meant return, somehow made a backflip and came to mean a new beginning' (*K* 71). Consequently, the digression and multiplicity that undermine his story also undermine the revolution staged as the dramatic backdrop to the novel. The 'wham!' or 'kapow!' moment in a story—the moment of discovery that it is connected to other digressions—is also the moment of surprise at the realisation that every aspect of the revolution is multiple as well. In the vignette quoted above, it is the moment Faryaq realises that the revolution fails because it turns multiple.

The only possible narration of the multiplicity of the Arab revolution available to the narrator is a combination of various stories with no clear unifying principle that represents an artistic collage. At the end of the novel, the narrator denies his characters agency as they are depicted as passively inhabiting a time of tremendous political upheaval. The narrator contemplates the fate of his revolutionary characters after the dissolution of the revolutionary forces, revealing that they must continue to suffer from autocracy. He writes: 'I am leaving them there, while the military council develops its schemes and power grabs' (*K* 80). Without much will or power due to their divisions and lack of unity that stem from their conflicting political and ideological allegiances, they continue to be under the mercy of the counterrevolutionaries. The narrator is quick to remind the reader of the principle that binds both revolution and narration: 'All this is, after all, is [*sic*] only a small exploded story, just a place, like one of Rauschenberg's combines, where some things are' (*K* 80). The only possible narrative of the revolution is a narrative that resembles the combines created by Robert Rauschenberg whose work juxtaposes painting and sculpture. A literary collage of this sort can account for the disunity that characterises the Arab Spring, the failure of the revolutionary forces and the return of autocracy.

Thirlwell's representation evidences a post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist attitude, in which Islam is not stereotyped and Islamic culture is not antithetical to Western modernism. The text reveals that the revolution fails due to the revolutionaries' disunity and lack of direction and demonstrates that this disappointing outcome has been the fate of almost all revolutions in Western history, thus obliterating the cultural difference between Islam and Europe. For instance, after the revolution becomes prolonged, the narrator turns to reading old books regarding the history of the French revolution (*K* 63–64). This knowledge of Western political history enlightens him in relation to the Arab revolutions. He also uses a famous quotation from Albert Camus to comment on the outcome of the Egyptian revolution: 'All modern revolutions […] have ended in a reinforcement of the power of the State' (*K* 76). He observes that the revolutionaries who launch the Arab uprising will not determine its outcome, which will be decided by stronger forces such as the military. Thirlwell's narrative demonstrates that the 2011 Arab revolutions belong to world history and that Islamic culture does not hinder the Arabs' attempt to realise Western democracy.

Throughout the text, both form and content are interwoven to reflect upon the outcome of the Egyptian Spring, revealing a narrative that replicates the multiplicity of the revolution that it historicises. The revolutionaries reveal that they pursue different and conflicting agendas as they take part in the mass action. Their ideological, political and religious differences

eventually result in the downfall of the revolutionary forces and the return of the SCAF autocracy. This is an indirect repetition of the Orientalist stereotype of the lazy Arab natives, which is an ideological obfuscation on the part of colonial powers and is synonymous with domination (Said, *CI* 255; S. Philpott 252). In Thirlwell's text, the depiction of the Egyptians' inability to carrying out a collective political effort due to disunity and differences echoes in a subtle way the myth of the lazy native because laziness indicates lack of achievement. The formalist features emulate this aspect of the revolution by means of an unconventional typography, metafictional digressions and fragmentation. In effect, Thirlwell highlights his critique of literary mimesis, which he uses to reveal the impossibility of realism in the novel and, by extension, the impossibility of the Egyptian revolution to be united and successful. Thus, Thirlwell emphasises that, due to their inherent inability to unite in their political endeavour, the Egyptians fail to realise tangible liberation and political independence, which recalls the Orientalist generalisation that the Oriental natives are lazy and disorganised unlike the Europeans. Consequently, Thirlwell's representation indicates that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism, while side-lining Islamophobia and including the Arabs in the West, continues to use certain outmoded Orientalist abstractions regarding the Arab world.

6.3 *Chronicle of a Last Summer* and the Persistence of Autocracy

Yasmine El Rashidi's novel *Chronicle of a Last Summer* (2016) reverts to the classical Orientalist trope of Oriental despotism to give an account of the disappointing outcome of the Egyptian Spring. The text conveys to the reader that autocracy is persistent in Egypt and has reinvented itself after every revolution in recent history and that the revolutions of 2011 against Mubarak and 2013 against Morsi are not an exception. El Rashidi's portrayal of autocracy avoids attributing it to Islam as evident, for instance, in the depiction of Sisi's coup as an undemocratic action against Morsi's elected Islamist government. The first two sections of El Rashidi's tripartite novel cover the summers of 1984 and 1998 and reveal that autocracy, represented by Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak, has always maintained power through the use of violence, oppression and propaganda. Violence and oppression are portrayed in the erasure of memory, the silence imposed upon the people and the suppression of dissention. Propaganda appears in the regime's control of the media and education, which are used to praise regime leaders and demonise the opposition. In the third section narrating the summer of 2014, the narrative chronicle's autocracy's return to power via Sisi's military *coup d'état* and the Egyptians' submission to his rule due to a lack of political alternatives. The thematic teleology with which El Rashidi narrates the outcome of the Egyptian Spring reveals that Egyptian political history and possible futurity are hopelessly authoritarian. El Rashidi avoids

open Islamophobia and uses themes that draw on the classic Orientalist stereotype of Oriental despotism. Her text is thus in line with what I call post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism.

El Rashidid is an Egyptian journalist, translator, a regularly contributor to the *New York Review of Books* and one of the editors of *Bidoun*, the Middle East arts and culture quarterly (Alter; Goretsky). She grew up in Cairo and took a particular interest in writing about the Egyptian revolution, authoring a short history of the events entitled *The Battle for Egypt* (2011) and contributing a chapter entitled 'Cairo, City in Waiting' to M. Cassel and L. Al-Zubaidi's *Writing Revolution: The Voices from Tunis to Damascus* (2013) (Yabroff; Goretsky). El Rashidi declares that her novel is not strictly autobiographical, but, as John Hawley describes it, it is 'a personal philosophical reflection on the nature of change and stasis' (Yabroff; Hawley 8).[47] Much like Hamilton's text, El Rashidi's novel thematises the generational aspect of the revolution, revealing that Baba, who has a vivid memory of what he believes to be the failed 1952 revolution of the Free Officers, is not enthusiastic about the 2011 revolution like Dido (the narrator's young communist and Nasserist cousin and opponent of the current regime), who believes in the 1952 revolutionary propaganda and that removing Mubarak will reform the political system. However, the novel is unlike Thirlwell's highly experimental novelette: El Rashidi is 'most traditional, creating a protagonist writing as a memoirist who remembers her childhood and traces her history up to the present, [making] time itself […] a central character' (Hawley 8).

El Rashidi is particularly interested in the decisions made by a subject in attempting to navigate a route between complicity and integrity, revealing that institutions and more-powerful individuals will always stand in the way of that person's endeavour to maintain integrity and to choose freely (Hawley 11). El Rashidi's writing captures the experiences leading to an 'ethical dilemma common in societies under authoritarian control: must one resist, or should one remain silent' (Hawley 12). Silence is the answer that most Egyptians choose to embrace in this novel, but it comes with a concomitant guilt: the complicity of silence. According to Rajia Hassib, this is the central question of the text: 'Is the silence of objectivity and being an observer, *witness*, the same as complicity?' (Hassib; El Rashidi, *C* 152). El Rashidi explains that she wrote her novel to capture 'how we came to be muted in the

[47] In her chapter in *Writing Revolution*, El Rashidi mentions the story relating to the disappearance of her father (a major event in the novel), which reveals an undeniable autobiographical aspect ("CCW" 50).

way we were and perhaps still are' (qtd. in Yabroff). Silences of this sort shroud much of the characters' individual experiences in her chronicle.

On the level of national history, omissions and elisions engulf much of the official national history, a technique she uses to highlight the sense of the information oppression the regime imposes on the Egyptians. In an interview, El Rashidi observes that her interest lies in exploring 'the grey area where fact ends and fiction and multiple truths and speculation begins [*sic*]: […] I was interested in the failings of memory, and the soft censorship of society and culture, and the erasure of political history' (qtd. in Alter). For instance, at the beginning of the novel in 1984 when the narrator is aged six, she watches television with her mother (Mama), and a documentary shows starving children in Ethiopia (*C* 6). Every day the scenes are repeated, but the narrator realises that 'There are also starving children in Cairo, but they never show them on TV' (*C* 6). The narrator realises the misinformation propagated in government television, but she is not allowed to act upon this knowledge. When she attempts to speak with one of the starving children on the street, her mother silences her: 'I want to talk to her but […] Mama tells me to look away' (*C* 7). Political propaganda and internalised popular silencing are intertwined to create a false reality for the Egyptians. The young narrator's coming-of-age in the first two sections of the novel is the story of sifting through the thick mist of social and political silences and erasures. As Rohan Maitzen observes: 'Through [the narrator's] steady but unknowing eyes we glimpse an uneasily shifting political landscape, the complexities of which defy the one-dimensional narratives of the government's incessant TV broadcasts' (Maitzen).

El Rashidi uses the first two sections based on the summers of 1984 and 1998 to chronicle the established nature of autocracy in Egypt and how it continues to structure the external and psychic life of Egyptians despite the popular revolutions and the change of a couple of presidents. Two major historical revolutions, 1919 and 1952, are revealed to have been futile. The 1919 revolution was a mass uprising against the British mandate over the country that was the result of the pressure of World War I on Egypt including Great Britain's violation of its promise to take the burden of the war alone, and requests for independence by Egyptian elites represented by the Wafd Party (Tignor 239–40; Marsot 95–96). The 1952 revolution was the *coup d'état* executed by the Free Officers, and it was an attempt to rebel against the monarch's Western orientation, its inability to avoid political humiliation at the hands of Great Britain and Israel and to free Egypt of all residual imperial influence (Podeh and Winckler 13–14). While these events did indeed have positive implications especially with respect to realising independence for Egypt, Baba believes they are completely useless:

‘[Baba] said nothing would ever change. […] Don’t forget we had two revolutions, he told Dido. Nineteen fifty-two but also 1919. They came and went and all their hopes were shattered’ (*C* 33–34).

The change of political leadership over the course of sixty years did not improve the political system in tangible ways to make the lives of citizens better. El Rashidi demonstrates that Nasser, Sadat, Mubarak and later Morsi and Sisi have been disappointingly autocratic. For example, when the elections of Mubarak’s second term approaches, he bans members of the Muslim Brotherhood from participating in it because, in Dido’s words, ‘he wants to make sure [they] can’t challenge him’ (*C* 33). When the narrator asks who Dido wants to win the elections if the members of the Brotherhood are allowed to take part, his answer is ‘Neither’ (*C* 33). Dido expresses his disappointment at Mubarak, the only president Dido and the narrator’s generation has known, because ‘He thought Mubarak would be different but already he is proving he is just an old scrooge’ (*C* 33). The same resentment is echoed by Baba who believes Mubarak is a pharaoh and ‘said the pharaohs invented dictatorship’ (*C* 33).

The first two sections of the novel also chronicle how autocracy has maintained power through the use of violence (physical, ideological and symbolic), oppression and propaganda. A sense of the regime’s oppression is conveyed through a major incident in the novel which is Baba’s disappearance for almost thirty years. Baba is revealed to have been imprisoned for disagreeing with one of Mubarak’s sons who fabricated cases against Baba (*C* 145–50). In the last section of the novel, Baba returns but no one wants to speak about why he has disappeared (*C* 143). The trauma that the disappearance caused to the narrator as a child is apparent in her questions to her mother and Uncle regarding the whereabouts of her father (*C* 22, 59). The impact on the father was nothing less than devastation: she writes after he returns that ‘They had broken him’ (*C* 149). Baba’s crime is only refusing to comply with the corruption of the regime, which emphasises the misery that befalls honest Egyptians.

In addition to repression, the regime deploys forms of propaganda as a tool to maintain hegemonic control over the population. The propaganda functions to both demonise the opponents of the dominant party and to undertake a political hagiography of existing leaders. The most important propaganda is the claim that if the regime does not continue to rule, the country would descend into terrorism or an Iranian-style Islamic theocracy. This is used to demonise a major component of the opposition, which is the Islamists. Right after replaying the documentary of the Ethiopian famine, the television broadcasts a documentary on the murder of President Sadat that occurred on the 6th of October 1981 (*C* 7; Drevon 70). The text reads:

> They show him with his wife and children. They show him meeting important people. They show him at the parade where he was killed. […] We were watching TV. Mama put her hands to her mouth. Baba stood up. They gasped, then were silent, then Mama started saying Quran (*C* 7).

Sadat is shown as both a family man, to emphasise his humanity, and as a statesman, to foreground his patriotism. This portrayal functions to heighten the effect of his brutal murder. The effect appears in the parents' shock and sympathetic reaction. While the assassination remains a heinous crime, the regime capitalises on it to elicit popular support.

The effect of such a propaganda is perceived in Dido who concurs with the media portrayal of the Islamists. When the narrator asks why the Muslim Brotherhood has been banned from participating in the elections by President Mubarak, Dido says:

> *[The Muslim Brotherhood] tried to kill two presidents before. They tried to kill Nasser, and they tried to kill Sadat. They did kill Sadat. People like them killed Sadat. Mubarak is scared they will kill him too, so he is being iron-fisted now that he is president. […] The Brotherhood hates the president. They are violent and want Egypt to be like Iran* (*C* 32).

Dido is quick to believe that the Islamists have sought to murder Nasser, which is the official one-dimensional narrative of a highly debated and probably staged assassination attempt that occurred in 1954 in Alexandria (Drevon 49).[48] He also appears misguided in his assumption that the Muslim Brotherhood, or '*People like them,*' are responsible for Sadat's assassination. That group was the Islamic Jihad, a poorly organised secretive set of cells that had no connection with, and is ideologically opposed to, the Muslim Brotherhood (Drevon 52). Dido's misjudgement of the regime's tactic of demonising its opponents becomes more evident when Dido, the communist, is also imprisoned at the end of the novel for opposing the Sisi regime. The irony is that despite being at opposite ends of the political spectrum, leftists like him and right-wing adherents such as the Muslim Brotherhood are put into Sisi's prisons.

Media outlets such as television and newspapers are not the only vehicles of government propaganda: education, recognised by Althusser as a wing of the ideological State Apparatus, is also used to indoctrinate the people. In primary school, the children are not taught much

[48] Later in the novel (pp. 103-4), the narrator mentions that the television broadcasts another documentary on Nasser's assassination attempt in Alexandria.

about pre-1952 Egyptian history—this part is mostly censored. For example, the narrator finds several flags in her father's study including the flag of the Kingdom of Egypt: 'It was green with stars and the moon' (*C* 19). She observes that although children learn world flags at school, this flag has not been taught: 'We never learned this in school, but Granny had told me' (*C* 19). While this may appear as a small omission, later the narrator learns from Uncle that before the current flag, Egypt had nine flags, which 'was testimony to how rich our history was' (*C* 51–52). It is not in the best interest of the regime to teach this great history because it wants the people to forget the Egyptian Kingdom, so it censors it in government education.

Furthermore, Dido is a victim of governmental indoctrination in the form of education. The conversation on the flags with Uncle turns into a discussion over the legacy of President Nasser. Uncle believes Nasser's socialist reforms are determinantal to the progress of the country:

> *Everything Nasser did was a failed idea.* […] *He had no vision. He was delusional. He didn't think into the future. He took from the rich and gave to the poor. It was the worst thing he ever did. The poor got things for free and then became lazy. They got lands and benefits then thought they could do nothing and Nasser would still give them more* (*C* 54–55).

Dido disagrees with Uncle, contending that Nasser and his comrades of the 1952 revolution are great men and hoping that 'there will be another Nasser one day' (*C* 54). The narrator does not understand why Dido likes Nasser despite Nasser's glaring inadequacies. The text makes explicit, then, that the answer lies in the sort of education he has received in school: 'At school they taught children that all the Egyptian presidents were great. Only the king was bad' (*C* 55–56).

Baba and Uncle are depicted as representatives of the old generation who have evaded this industrial programme of ideological indoctrination. For example, like Uncle who has a clear evaluation of Nasser's legacy, Baba demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the clash between the regime and the Islamists. Initially, the text makes it clear that the Islamists are integral to the society, in a way that contradicts the estrangement that is perceived in Islamophobic literature. For instance, one of Sadat's killers is a relative of the family: he is Uncle Ashraf's son (*C* 47–48).[49] In addition, El Rashidi reveals that extremism is not a norm

[49] Uncle Ashraf is a minor character mentioned only in this vignette and should not be confused with Uncle.

among the Islamists. Baba believes it is Uncle Ashraf's fault that his son has become a fundamentalist: 'Baba said it was Uncle's fault for not paying close attention' (*C* 48). For Baba, joining violent religious groups is not intrinsic to religiosity. When the narrator fears that Uncle Ashraf himself may become a killer, Baba dismisses the idea as silly, adding: 'It was just a trend with young people who were lost. They turned to religion' (*C* 48). Contrary to the abstractions found in regime propaganda about the Islamists, Baba blames the son's extremism and violence on individual choices.

Similarly, Uncle demonstrates a profound and holistic understanding of government indirect propaganda aimed at demonising the Islamists. For example, the television shows a warning on the dangers of ants: 'these small black beady ones in particular. In a moment they can be all over you, and their bite, if a collective effort, can kill' (*C* 71). Uncle insists that the warning 'is a metaphor that the regime is sending subliminal messages about the Islamists who have been staging sporadic bombings and attacks' (*C* 71). When the Islamists are accused of executing bombing attacks, Uncle insists that the regime is responsible. He assures Mama that the regime was behind the attack on the Coptic village: 'He insisted that the demolition proved that the government had been behind an attack on a Coptic village that had gone uninvestigated by the state' (*C* 123). Mama disagrees, arguing that her friend is 'a Copt and said the government was the only thing protecting them. Mubarak and the Pope were one' (*C* 123). Mama, who depends on hearsay, appears less credible than Uncle who depends on deep knowledge of the regime for his confirmation.

The Third Section of the novel is set in the summer of 2014 and dedicated to the aftermath of the Egyptian Spring. It confirms the chronicle of the rootedness of autocracy in Egyptian politics that is narrated in the first two sections. El Rashidi demonstrates that, despite the 2011 and 2013 revolutions, political options remain limited for the Egyptians, as evidenced by the narrator's political resignation that borders on complicity. The narrator reveals that Sisi achieved power via a fully-fledged *coup d'état*, that he is an autocrat and that the narrator and her family vote for him because they have no alternative. In this text that is swamped in silences and erasures, the first indication that the revolution is a disappointing failure is the vignette in which the narrator turns to reading books in the literature of defeat conceived after the 1967 war with Israel. In this literature,

> Everything was stripped down to fundamentals, bare, deflated. […] *The more ornate social realism of such writers as Naguib Mahfouz and the virtuous eloquence of Arabic literature were abandoned for more*

> *experimental, fragmented works that expressed the anxieties and crises at hand* (*C* 136).

The narrator indirectly compares the Egyptian Spring to the humiliating defeat of 1967. She only finds solace in the literature that, out of frustration, does away with linguistic formalism and seeks generic experimentation. The narrator's choice of reading is an understatement that describes how the Egyptians feel about the disappointment of their revolution.

Dido and the narrator's youth generation enthusiastically immerse themselves in the revolution, but Baba's generation remains pessimistic. For example, when the narrator tells her father about the first day of the protests hoping 'to share my excitement,' he remains indifferent: 'We have lived it all before, he said, we already tried it. He didn't want my hopes to be high' (*C* 145–46). The narrator attempts again to pull Baba from the past and to make him believe in the revolution, but the father 'knew a revolution would change nothing' (*C* 150, 176). Baba's remark is confirmed immediately: this vignette is followed by Sisi's 2013 *coup d'état* broadcast on television.

Morsi's expulsion is the turning point for the revolution and the return to the old military autocracy. It is a confirmation for the narrator of the persistence of autocracy in Egypt. 'Things become darker, like paint,' she observes (*C* 152). The opposition factions from the right such as the Islamists and the leftists including Dido are chased and persecuted (*C* 160). Dido is imprisoned on political charges of inciting anarchy and disrupting the state (*C* 170). In prison, Dido reaches the conclusion that autocracy has always maintained power in Egypt despite the people's resistance, including 2011 (*C* 157). He tells the narrator that the revolution, via old music and history books, has connected the new generation to their past. 'He's learning that history is repeating itself' (*C* 157). Dido concludes that 1919 and 1952 have not been real revolutions because 'there wasn't a change of the system. The country didn't completely change' (*C* 157). The narrator explains to Dido that, like 1952, 2011 is a military usurpation of power in which the army forced Mubarak to step down because the army has opposed Mubarak's son's succession (*C* 157–58). She adds, despite the millions who have taken to the streets, 2013 is no different: it is a *coup d'état* to enable the army to return to power after Morsi's democratic election (*C* 158).

Eventually, the narrator submits to Sisi's autocracy due to the lack of an alternative, thus falling into an ethically problematic complicity. Sisi's regime uses the same propaganda to coerce the people into submission: 'If it weren't Sisi, it would be terror' (*C* 177). The narrator remarks that they are 'reminding us of the past' when Nasser and Sadat have also claimed to

be fighting terror (*C* 177). The narrator and her family demonstrate a great deal of resignation when they vote for Sisi. Their vote, however, does not represent their free choice because it is their only option: 'What other choice did we have? *If you had given me another option*' (*C* 177–78). By complying, the narrator falls into the ethical dilemma of supporting autocracy, which only highlights the Egyptian's dire need of political alternatives.

In her representation of the aftermath of the Egyptian Spring, El Rashidi thus reverts to the Orientalist theme regarding the despotic Orient to depict Egypt as hopelessly autocratic. The 2011 Egyptian revolution failed because autocracy is persistent in Egypt, reinventing itself after every revolution since 1919 through 1952, 2011 and 2013. El Rashidi uses the first two sections of the novel to chronicle the history of regime tactics of oppression and use of propaganda to remain in power. Baba's imprisonment for thirty years on false charges manufactured by the regime is a glaring case of regime oppression. The regime propaganda functions by means of heaping praise upon military leaders and demonising the opposition. Despite initial hopes of change, the Egyptians are forced to submit to Sisi's regime in the aftermath of the Egyptian Spring because they have no other option. El Rashidi's representations demonstrate that post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism is profoundly problematic because it reproduces Western abstractions pertaining to Arab culture such as Oriental despotism. While it avoids the blatant Islamophobia associated with post-9/11 neo-Orientalism, it continues to marginalise the Arab Other.

This chapter demonstrates that the aftermath of the Arab Spring is described in academic and literary discourses using post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalist idioms that include the Arabs in the West and avoid Islamophobia, but which mark a reversion to classical Orientalist stereotyping of some aspects of Arab culture. The failure of the revolutions is not ascribed to Islam but to the contemporary Arabs themselves or the corruption of present-day Arab political institutions. In Achcar and King's political commentaries, the disappointing outcome of the Arab Spring is justified by the prevalence of the patrimonial state in the Arab region and the complexity of democratic consolidation, respectively. The literary works, such as Thirlwell's *Kapow!* and El Rashidi's *Chronicle of a Last Summer*, complicate this political discourse, revealing two main themes that depict the reasons behind the failure of the revolutions: 1) in Thirlwell's novelette, the inability of the revolutionaries to carry out a collective and unified political endeavour; and 2) in El Rashidi's novel, the rootedness of autocracy in the Arab world. In this literary discourse, the Arab world is neither ready for nor capable of moving to a fully representational democracy, which reveals a deeply problematic Orientalist impulse that indirectly repeats the stereotypes of the lazy Oriental and Oriental despotism to explain

the failure of the Arab Spring. This further illustrates what I call post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism, which avoids portraying Islam negatively but denigrates the Arabs and their contemporary politics via a system of symbolic codes. In the next chapter, I argue that since the majority of the Arab Spring novelists and memoirists are from previously colonised Arab countries, their production bears traces of postcolonial resistance to Western hegemonic discourse. Nonetheless, these resistant discourses are employed on a minor scale and in a limited number of themes within an overarching neo-Orientalist discourse.

Chapter 7: Postcoloniality in post-Arab Spring Literature

7.1 The Ambivalence of the West in post-Arab Spring Narrative

Although post-Arab Spring literary texts exhibit a neo-Orientalist outlook in their representation of the Arab revolutions, they also employ various minor narratives and sub-plots that contest Western stereotypes regarding certain aspects of Arab culture such as gay identities, colonial history and indigenous traditionalism. Post-Arab Spring narratives constitute a body of postcolonial work that emerges 'out of the experience of colonisation and [asserts itself] by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasising [its] difference from the assumptions of the imperial centre' (Ashcroft et al., *EW* 2). As a literature produced from previously colonised regions, postcolonial writing is 'constituted in counter-discursive rather than homologous practices and [offers] "fields" of counter-discursive strategies to the dominant discourse' (Tiffin 18; Al-Musawi 27). Works such as Haddad, Hamilton and Alrawi's are particularly representative of a postcolonial narration of the history of the Arab Spring that links the revolutions to the experiences of colonialism and neo-colonialism. For example, the texts proceed from the assumption that the deposed rulers are comprador elites in the service of their masters in the Western metropolis, establishing that the Arabs continue to live under neo-colonialism after gaining independence. Simultaneously, the texts evidence an uneasy relationship with the West: the imperial powers exist in this literature both as a source from which to draw political, social, economic and moral values and as a hegemonic political and discursive presence that ought to be resisted. For example, in Haddad's novel, the United States is a source of inspiration for gay Arab identities, yet it is also a place where the Arab gay protagonist is doubly marginalised—as a homosexual man and as an Arab. As such, the texts employ equivocal positions towards the colonising geo-political West, viewing it both as a source of liberalism and progressive politics and as a hegemonic presence. This is the sort of ambivalence that Bhabha describes as characterising the colonial encounter which engenders both a desire and lack of desire of the colonising West on the part of the colonised Arabs.

As a literary canon, post-Arab Spring memoirs and novels belong to the genre of postcolonial literature as six out of the eight literary authors whose work is discussed in this thesis come from territories that follow the classical Jamesonian classification of being 'postcolonial.' With the exception of American author Ian Bassingthwaighte and British author Adam Thirlwell, all the others originally come from the Arab world—Saleem Haddad, Omar Hamilton, Karim Alrawi, Hisham Matar, Ahdaf Soueif and Yasmin El-Rashidi. Their work on

the Arab revolutions exhibits aspects of postcolonial literature and is tied to the Arab colonial and postcolonial experiences. These authors utilise a host of discursive resistance strategies such as the use of literary genres, modes, themes and plots that are historically known to undermine Western hegemonic discourse. For example, magic realism is universally acknowledged as a resistance mode that is particularly expressive of postcolonial experiences because it challenges Western rationalism via references to magic and indigenous superstition.

Resistance strategies also include using or not using the language of the colonial centre (i.e., English) with the aims of harnessing its discursive authority (when using it) or denying it that supposed authority (when not using it). The authors' choice to write in English rather than Arabic functions as an attempt to communicate with Western audiences, in a way that recalls previous debates in postcolonial writing surrounding ideas of readership and empowerment of language. Writing in the language of the centre enables the postcolonial writer to seize the language as a medium of power by 're-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place' (Ashcroft et al., *EW* 38). As Ashcroft et al. point out in their classic study of postcolonial writing, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), the strategies of lingual abrogation and appropriation are available for the colonised as viable methods to show resistance to the metropolis: the former involves 'a rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication' (that is, denying English privileged status), while the latter is 'the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages' (*EW* 38; see also Gunning 34).

The logic behind abrogation or appropriation of colonial language had been laid out in the established and critically well recited position of postcolonial authors such as Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who disavowed English in favour of Gikuyu and the Igbo and the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe who chose to write in English. In his 1986 seminal work *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngũgĩ argues that imperialism in its colonial and neo-colonial phases 'continues to control the economy, politics and cultures of Africa,' with culture being the most lethal (3–4, 16). The Africans began to liberate their economies, politics and cultures from the Euro-American stronghold to realise self-determination. 'The choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people definition of themselves' because language, in addition to being a means of communication, is also 'the carrier of culture' (4, 13, 15; see also Gunning 38). To write African literature in European languages is, therefore, to write, not African literature, but a new creation, a hybrid and minority tradition and a tradition in transition which Ngũgĩ terms Afro-European literature and associates with the African petty-bourgeoisie (22, 26–27). To write in indigenous African vernacular, in contrast,

is to preserve national heritages which were kept alive by the peasantry and the working class (23). Choosing to write in his Kenyan local language, Gikuyu, Ngũgĩ contends that such an act 'is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples' (28; see also Gunning 39).

Achebe's literary production in English exemplifies an alternative trend in postcolonial writing. In his 1965 essay 'English and the African Writer,' Achebe takes a broader definition of African literature and opposes 'cram[ming] African literature into a small, neat definition' (343; Gunning 39). Achebe argues that for a literature to be national, it must take 'the whole nation for its province' and must have an audience throughout its territory (343). If a literature is available only to a specific group within a nation or territory, it would not qualify as national but as ethnic literature. Consequent, the national literature of Nigeria is not the one written in Hausa, Igbo, Effik, Yoruba or any other ethnic language but the one written in English. Achebe adds that this must be acknowledged as the 'reality' of the African nations; namely, that European colonialism brought several African peoples under larger polities and only European languages will enable them to communicate with one another (344). Writing in the European languages, therefore, is not a betrayal of the African nation but a pragmatic mechanism to cope with historical reality (344, 348). Such writing has an important purpose; namely, to deliver an important message regarding genuine African experience (347–49). Thus, while the language is the colonisers', the experience is that of the colonised, which necessitates new experimental configurations of English in order to deprive the colonisers of one of their most important instruments of imperial oppression; that is, control over language (Achebe 347; Gunning 40; Ashcroft et al., *EW* 7).

Both strategies of abrogation and appropriation appear in the works by post-Arab Spring authors who choose to write in English but continue to make use of Arabic words in their texts. For example, Soueif's memoir employs the transliteration and non-translation of Arabic words to mark her unique linguistic style.[50] She introduces her memoir with systems of the transliteration of Arabic words in Latin characters which have been devised by Arab bloggers, and, in doing so, gesturing to the role played by bloggers in promoting the revolutionary spirit among the Egyptians. Several of the Arabic sounds which have no orthographic equivalents in English are written using Arabic numerals rather than letters. For example, the Arabic letter 'Ain' (number eighteen in the Arabic alphabet) is written as the number '3' which when inversed resembles the shape of the letter in Arabic—the word 'people' is written as 'Al-

[50] As Shaden Tageldin and others have noted, making English by Arabizing it had been a feature of most of Soueif's fiction (84).

sha3b' (*CM* ix, 17). In addition, Soueif rejects the established English translations of certain Arabic words, preferring to use the original Arabic word instead. Such a rejection is also a rejection of the imperial mission itself, which, according to Graham Huggan, is an act of translation of the Other into the master's code (62). For example, regarding her use of the Arabic word for square, 'midan,' she writes: 'I prefer the Arabic word, "midan," because, like "piazza," it does not tie you down to a shape but describes an open urban space in a central position in a city' (*CM* 10). These processes of textual decolonisation foreground the cultural distinction of the colonised Arabs and bestow legitimacy on local language by means of giving it space within the English text.

In addition to appropriating linguistic authority from the empire, Arab authors utilise literary genres and themes that have historically been used by postcolonial authors to undercut the discursive hegemony of the metropolis. Such narrative strategies include the reverse trip into the imperial centre, foregrounding the history of colonialism, the *bildungsroman*, allegory and magic realism and constitute a lore of available literary devices (Ashcroft et al., *EW* 27–28; Gunning 18, 79–80). Although by no means region-specific, several of these narrative strategies flourished within a particular cultural setting. For example, in his introduction to *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (2012), Ato Quayson explains that the magic realist genre was particularly relevant to the postcolonial experience of Latin America more than any other postcolonial region (14–15; Siskind 833–34). Important authors such as Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel Garcia Marquez found magic realism meaningfully expressive of their experience (Quayson 15). Quayson realises that the reason behind this is an amalgam of cultural and religious elements; particularly, the influence of Aztec, Incas and Mayan aboriginal civilisations and Catholicism (15). The genre was, however, universalised with the publication of Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), which influenced many landmark works outside Latin America, such as *Midnight's Children* (1980) by Salman Rushdie and *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison (Siskind 855).

Three of the literary texts under discussion in this thesis use these genres, modes and plots to present especially pressing postcolonial concerns that were brought to the fore during the Arab revolutions. Haddad's novel, *Guapa*, uses the trip into the metropolis sub-plot with the aim of dealing with the issues of identity formation and double marginality. Rasa's trip to the United States is used to delineate the maturity of his homosexual identity and the liberation of Arab sexuality from colonial influence. Hamilton's novel, *The City always Wins*, provides a narrative of the legacy of colonialism in Egyptian infrastructure and how Cairo itself is a colonial city. When the revolutionaries seek to occupy public spaces including Tahrir Square,

the architecture of the city (represented by barbed wire, barricades and alleyways) sides with the agents of the Empire, leaving the protestors with nowhere to run or hide from the police. Alrawi's novel employs the magic-realist genre to provide an account of Arab indigeneity, honouring Arab mysticism and empathy over Western rationalism and technology (Younas 546). These works are discussed in further detail in the next sections of this chapter. Suffice to say that these works contest colonial hegemony in the Arab world with emphasis on identity, anti-colonial liberation and difference which have been contingent issues during the revolution.

Discursive resistance regarding these issues is informed by a configuration of Arab Nationalism that stresses the political unity of the Arab world and aims at realising full Arab independence, rejecting neo-colonialism and abolishing residual colonial legacies such as the Sykes-Picot borders and the state of Israel. These authors establish a connection between Arab political elites and American and European powers and bestow an anti-colonial aura on the Arab revolutionaries, revealing in the process deep fissures within contemporary Arab local nationalisms due to the disappointment with the Arab postcolonial state's inability to fully free itself from Western hegemony. The Arab Spring is portrayed as a new movement of Arab nationalism mobilised to liberate the Arabs from old residual colonialism, present-day neo-colonialism and comprador elites. For example, in Hamilton's text, the weapons that the Egyptian army uses to suppress the revolutionaries bear the '*Made in America*' stamp, and, later, the army orders $2.5 million-worth of tear gas from the United States (*CA* 44, 153). The discovery of the origin of the tear gas canisters enrages the protestors who shout 'Fuck [Commander-in-Chief] Tantawi and fuck the army!' (*CA* 44). The protestors' resentment indicates their realisation that the regime is in alliance with colonial powers (the United States) and demonstrates the internal conflict within the Egyptian society to claim the nation and redefine nationalism.

Hamilton and the other authors draw on historical notions of Arab Nationalism to describe such anti-colonial sentiments that fuelled the protests. As an ideology that traces its roots to early European colonisation in the Arab region, Arab Nationalism (also known as Arabism, pan-Arabism and radical Arab Nationalism) is defined by a pan-Arab unity whose main vocation is the establishment of a unified political body for the Arab-speaking people (Dawisha 2, 8; Addi 16). Lahouari Addi notes that 'Arab Nationalism was the expression of anger at European domination, which despised the native populations it controlled' (18). Arab Nationalists take language to be the crucial element that defines the nation rather than other determinants such as ethnicity, religion or territory, and thus, Arab Nationalism seeks a

political unity that encompasses all the territories, ethnicities and sects that use Arabic as their mother tongue. As the foremost theoretician of Arab Nationalism, Sati' al-Husry, wrote: 'People who speak a unitary language, have one heart and a common soul. As such, they constitute one nation, and so they have to have a unified state' (qtd. in Dawisha 2; see also Addi 39).

Throughout the Arab world, many political projects during the twentieth century took the unification of the Arab peoples under a single nation as the basis of their political outlook. Most prominent amongst these were Nasserism and Baathism which embraced a sort of Arab unity as their primary agenda (Dawisha 3–4; Addi 39–40). Nasserism, which drew on anti-colonial nationalist ideology and was associated with President Gamal Abdel-Nasser of Egypt (in office from 1956 to 1970), had an enduring political legacy in Arab politics during the second half of the twentieth century to the degree that its ascendency to power in Egypt in a 1952 *coup d'état* led to the seizure of power by Arab Nationalists via military coups in other parts of the region (Addi 4; Salem 2; Gerges, *MA* 13–14).[51]

In its attempt to establish a unified Arab state, Arab Nationalism sought to challenge the partition of the Arab world which followed the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The Agreement was a deeply detrimental event in contemporary Arab history and was understood by many Arabs as part of the legacy of European colonialism that should be redressed before retrieving the pre-colonial unity of the Arabs. The Agreement was a 1916 secret pact that was negotiated by Sir Mark Sykes of Britain and George Picot of France (Russia and the Kingdom of Italy had secondary roles), stipulating that the two powers shall establish direct or indirect mandate over the territories as they see fit within the regions designated to them (Tripathi 76–77). The immediate consequence of the Agreement was the partition of Arab lands previously under Ottoman rule, such as Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, into colonies: Mesopotamia, with its oil reserves, went to the British while Syria went to the French (Tripathi 77; Grainger 67; Fromkin 144). David Fromkin explains the imperialist logic of the British and French: 'the Middle East was to form an Arab state or confederation of states, nominally independent but in reality divided into French and British spheres of influence' (144). For Arab Nationalists

[51] It is noteworthy that Said criticised Arab Nationalism, in the figure of Arab Nationalist George Antonius, for being associated with Western structures of democracy and liberalism (Nash, "BO" 73; *CI* 244, 246). This sort of critique is taken up by Arab Spring literary authors such as Haddad and Hamilton who strive—Haddad through the questioning of national identity being a Western innovation exported to the colony and Hamilton through reference to the creation of Arab democracies that are not affected by economic colonialism—to elaborate innovative patterns of Arab existence that is free of Western influence (Hamilton, "EW"; Haddad, *G* 145).

like al-Husri, the modern geopolitical configuration of the Arab world, with attendant parcelling into national states, remains the artificial creation of imperial Europe (Dawisha 3). Consequently, the abolishment of the borders created by the Agreement was the ultimate goal of Arab Nationalism.

Israel is perceived by Arab Nationalists as both an illegitimate state and a hostile impediment to the geopolitical progress of Arab territories, which needs to be contained in order to come to the full realisation of the independent pan-Arab national state. The history of the establishment of the Israeli state is one that conjures up the ghosts of colonial history: the official Western recognition of a Jewish state in the Middle East began with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which was created in a letter by British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to the leader of the Jewish community in Britain, Baron Walter Rothschild (Tripathi 77). It stated that 'His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home of the Jewish people' (qtd. in Tripathi 77). The Declaration contradicted Sykes-Picot which enabled the establishment of an international administration over Palestine only after consultation with allies, such as Russia and Shereef Husain of Mecca (Tripathi 78; Grainger 67, 190; Fromkin 144); it was made by imperial Britain partly with the aim of furthering its colonial ambitions (Tripathi 77). Deepak Tripathi explains that the British cabinet approved the Declaration mainly because its members recognised that the Zionist project could serve to cloak and advance the imperial ambitions of Great Britain (77; Grainger 67). Gaining Palestine was important for the British because it enabled securing the northern flank of the Suez Canal, which was a strategic gateway to India (77). Such manoeuvres by colonial Empires were not lost on the Arab Nationalists who saw that Sykes-Picot and the Balfour Declaration went hand in hand. For example, al-Husri proclaimed that the Arabs lost the 1948-9 war over Palestine despite the fact that the Arab states were seven and Israel was only one state precisely because the Arab states were seven (Dawisha 3). Arab sentiments towards Israel thus did not differ from their view of colonial Europe: the struggle with Israel is a threshold towards realising Arab full independence and self-determination.

The rhetoric of Arab Nationalism, along with attendant rejection of Sykes-Picot and the creation of Israel, informs the sorts of postcolonial and anti-colonial resistance that is sketched out throughout post-Arab Spring literary texts. Indeed, visions of active local nationalism exist in several of the texts that reveal local aspirations of decolonisation and self-determination, such as the concern for an indigenous Libyan culture in Matar's memoir, but these are subsumed into more optimistic aspirations for the collective political liberation of

the Arabs. Allusions to the Sykes-Picot borders are introduced in several texts, including El Rashidi's *Chronicle of a Last Summer*. The historical fact that Egypt and Sudan belonged to a single polity is acknowledged so as to highlight the racial segregation which was introduced by the British who separated the dark-skinned Sudanese from the light-skinned Egyptians (*C* 13–14). The Arab-Israeli conflict resurfaces frequently in Hamilton's novel: for example, the protagonist Khalil (himself of Palestinian descent and his name is Arabic for Hebron) describes the poster of Jerusalem which his girlfriend Mariam brings with her when she moves to live with him. His words reveal a link between neutralising Israel and realising pan-Arabism: 'Above the desk is Mariam's poster. VISIT PALESTINE. […] the Dome of the Rock triumphant at the heart of the eternal city. It used to be easy. A train from Cairo to Jerusalem. One land, one people from Casablanca to Baghdad' (*CA* 87). The allusions to a free Palestine in Khalil's words and Mariam's poster indicate that the Egyptian revolutionaries embrace Arab Nationalist views, prioritising the unification of Arab lands as part of their agenda. Freeing Palestine is necessary in this process in order to bring the Arab world to a pre-Sykes-Picot temporality when 'It used to be easy' to move from one Arab land to another.

It is noteworthy, however, that the re-appearance of fervent sentiments of Arab Nationalism, especially the Nasserist iteration, with its opposition to Sykes-Picot and Israel, is extraordinary in 2011, owing to the fact that it appears slightly anachronistic. Arab Nationalist aspirations for geopolitical unification were briskly dashed with the Arab 1967 defeat in the war with the Zionists—a defeat that is remembered in Arab collective memory as *al-naksa* or the setback (Gana 17; Al-Arian 19; Gerges, *MA* 19). Abdullah Al-Arian's description of the aftermath of *al-naksa* is succinct: 'The ideologies of Arab Nationalism and socialism […] were thoroughly discredited once their prime objective of liberating Arab lands and defeating Zionism proved too tall an order' (19). He quotes an Egyptian writer describing Nasser's political appeal after *al-naksa* as saying: '[Nasser] may have been buried on September 28, 1970, but he died on June 5, 1967' (qtd. in Al-Arian 19). The Arab Spring, however, revived the aspirations of the young Arab masses for pan-Arab political solidarity and activism as is reflected in the literary works discussed here. Realising the Arab Nationalist dream of the abolition of Sykes-Picot and the appeasement of Israel looked attainable for the Arab revolutionaries after the relatively quick removal of the unwanted presidents.

Political analyses of the Arab Spring also support this conclusion that the Arab Spring and Arab Nationalism are interlinked. Sara Salem's book, *Anticolonial Afterlives in Egypt* (2020), traces the 2011 Egyptian revolution to the 1952 *coup d'état* by the Free Officers which

eventually brought Nasser to power. She contends that the two events illustrate the legacy of the Egyptian processes of decolonisation and that 2011 should be situated within the trajectory of 1952 (1–2). Salem argues that Nasserism was the first and last hegemonic project in modern Egypt—Salem uses hegemony in the literal Gramscian sense which means a class (the Nasserist ruling class) exerting power over other classes while creating a balance between coercion and consent (23, 26). This hegemonic project, with its appeal to the masses, owed its hegemony to the years preceding 1952 when Egypt was febrile with anti-colonial sentiments while political parties such as Wafd (the foremost nationalist party of the time) failed to accomplish meaningful independence (20). Salem contends that 'Nasserism, then, owed its hegemony to the anti-colonial moment' (20). However, after Nasser's death, the ruling regimes of Sadat and Mubarak were unable to maintain this hegemonic project with an increasing dependence on coercion rather than consent—a situation that led eventually to the 2011 revolution (23, 25). Thus, 2011 can be understood according to Salem's line of reasoning as a movement to return to the Nasserist anti-colonial Nationalism which was frustrated by the weaker regimes of Sadat and Mubarak. Salem's analyses thus make it less surprising that the Arab Spring enkindled feelings of pan-Arab Nationalist agendas.

While such anti-colonial concerns indeed inform post-Arab Spring literary narratives, I argue, however, that this literature presents a contentious relationship with colonialist discourse. The texts represent alternative voices which resist stereotypes of the Arab world; the main plots, however, are underpinned by a Eurocentric world view. Thus, this body of literary work provides ambivalent positions with respect to the Anglophone World within a predominantly subversive reportage of the Arab world. Matar's memoir, *The Return*, for example, is preoccupied with the Italian colonial history in Libya and how colonisation shaped the recent history of the country. The return that constitutes the main theme of the story is the author's return that has been enabled by the revolution that deposed Gaddafi in 2011 and the neo-colonial elite that ruled the country under the auspices of their masters in Washington, London and Rome. The memoir's criticism of Gaddafi's crimes and manipulations of the Libyans—including Matar's father who disappeared in the Abu Salim massacre of 1996—functions as a condemnation of the West whose colonial and neo-colonial legacies are brought to the fore in the narrative, particularly in its depiction of the ties between Gaddafi and US and British leaders which enabled Gaddafi's misrule. Asserting these facts is certainly indicative of Matar's resistance of the Empire. London, however, remains the place of choice for Matar's diasporic existence since he left Libya in 1979. As a colonial metropolis, it thus

occupies a problematic site in the narrative—being both a source of trauma and a place of survival to overcome that trauma.

Consequently, I argue that by adopting a discourse in which they reiterate the grand narratives of colonialism while displaying a limited level of resistance, the authors employ an ambivalent relationship with the West that illustrates Bhabha's thesis of the ambivalence of the imperial presence in the colony. Ambivalence for Bhabha—a term that derives from Freudian psychoanalytic theory—refers to the simultaneous feelings of desire and undesire towards a person, object or action (Young, *CD* 153; Young, *WM* 181; Fay and Haydon 37). Bhabha's contribution modifies Said's thesis that colonialism as a system of subjection is unequivocal and unidirectional: Bhabha argues that an intricate amalgam of attraction and repulsion defines the relationship between the centre and the periphery (Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 13; Young, *CD* 152–53; Young, *WM* 181–82; Bhabha 96). Bhabha explains that when colonial power deals with and is inflected by colonised culture, race, sexuality, violence and even climate, the '*reference* of discrimination' is evidenced by difference and exists as a mutation or a hybrid 'that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority problematic' (159, 161). Hybridity, for Bhabha, is 'the sign of productivity of colonial power [which] displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination' (159).

Taking the 'English book' (the Bible, the literary text) as a metonymy for the arrival of the English Sahibs in India, the book, when emerging in the colony, becomes a hybrid that 'no longer simply commands authority,' thus becoming a marker of the ambivalence of the imperial centre in the colonial context (161, 170; Mishra 4). The emergence of the book in the colony,

> is the effect of uncertainty that afflicts the discourse of power, an uncertainty that estranges the familiar symbol of English 'national' authority and emerges from its colonial appropriation as the sign of its difference. Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axes of its power to be representative, authoritative. Hybridity represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification—a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority (162).

Ambivalence thus becomes the defining feature of the relationship between coloniser and colonised that disturbs and unsettles the purity of both identities. The centre and periphery

become ambivalent with hybrid manifestations and effects, and, instead of a master-subject monolith, a multidirectional relation of power is established where agency is implicated in a process of circulation, moving—rather than being fixed—between the coloniser and colonised (Bhabha 165–66; Young, *WM* 188; Huddart 29–30). In Matar's text, for instance, metropolitan Western capitals ambivalently exist as agents of menace and freedom, which illustrates the complexity of postcolonial existence and neo-colonial politics in the contemporary Arab world.

Ultimately, the Arab authors effect a strategic abrogation of notions of centrality and authenticity to which they do not belong as a consequence of everyday marginality, adopting a model of resistance with a hybridised and syncretic outlook of the modern world. As Ashcroft et al. explain, postcolonial writers 'argued that not only is the notion of authentic experience as false as its validating concept of the "centre," but that the inauthentic and the marginal is in fact the "real"' (*EW* 41). This argument also asserts a rejection of the notion that indigenous cultural practices can return to a 'pure' and untarnished condition and that those cultural practices represent ultimate authenticity (*EW* 41–42). This position of hybridity, syncretism, cross-culturality and the 'acceptance of difference on equal terms' (*EW* 36) adopted by the Arab authors further explains why they used English as a literary medium. Instead of seeking the pre-colonial purity of the Arabic language, writing in English provides a platform on which to explore local concerns while establishing a hybridity of positions mingling both centre and periphery views and creating syncretism that opposes the monolith of the coloniser.

In conclusion, the Arab Spring literary narratives demonstrate structures of postcolonial resistance while at the same time reifying colonial and neo-colonial discursive hegemony. The novels discussed in the next sections of this chapter by Haddad, Hamilton and Alrawi are exemplary of this problematic discourse. Through the prism of the Arab Spring, the texts resist specific tropes regarding the Arab homosexual, the colonial city and the Arab subaltern respectively using discursive resistance strategies such as the reverse trip into the imperial centre, acknowledging the legacy of colonial history and magic realism. Post-Arab Spring anti-colonial resistance is underpinned by Arab Nationalism and its vision of a pan-Arab polity that is free from colonial influence. These novels, however, fail in other respects to challenge predominant Orientalist assumptions regarding the othering of Arab culture more broadly.

7.2 Decolonising the Arab Homosexual in Haddad's *Guapa*

Haddad's novel, *Guapa*, decolonises the queer Arab figure, presenting a protagonist who is doubly marginalised within US society. The text challenges misconceptions regarding Arab homophobia, revealing that Arab culture has been historically more tolerant towards issues of sexuality and that existing homophobia in Arab societies was a product of colonial history. Haddad uses two postcolonial counter-discursive strategies: he employs a reversed version of the journey into the Oriental wilderness by means of having his protagonist, Rasa, travel into the Western metropolis (the United States), and he uses the literary mode of the *bildungsroman* narrative. Both strategies enable him to expose the hypocrisy of the American claims of individual rights and freedoms.[52] The reverse trip to the metropolis—a repurposing by postcolonial authors of the quest or voyage motif found in countless European literatures charting the non-European world—reworks colonial narrative orthodoxy in which the former silent native speaks and acts on reclaimed territory, effecting an appropriation of marginality (Said, *CI* 210–11, 212; Ashcroft et al., *EW* 104; Hamadi 44). In the *bildungsroman*, the images of childhood (problematically representing uncorrupted innocence) and maturity (reconciling with the world from which they are originally excluded) allow authors to explore issues of autonomy and national self-realisation (Gunning 79–80). Rasa's trip to America is motivated by feelings of estrangement from dominant Arab national identity (due to his sexuality) and his initial identification with American culture, which he believes would allow gay Arab men a model of belonging; however, he realises after arriving in America, that American society is inhospitable to gay men from the colonies and that Western colonialism encapsulates sexual colonisation as well. Rasa's discovery of the Empire (America) as a hegemonic power, in the Hardt and Negri sense, is concomitant with a symbolic self-discovery enabled by library readings of major thinkers such as Said, Partha Chatterjee and Massad. The readings reveal to him that Arabs have been historically tolerant to homosexuality and that homophobia has been introduced into the Arab world by the colonisers. This progression in Rasa's awareness is relevant to the Arab Spring experience because it is connected to the realisation that the West's claims of supporting liberation and

[52] It should be noted that *Guapa* also uses allegory which has been appropriated in postcolonial writing as a literary device to challenge colonial assumptions. Stephen Slemon explains that 'Allegory becomes a site upon which post-colonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of literary, and specifically anti-imperialist, figurative opposition or textual *counter-discourse*' ("ME" 11). While I have explained in greater detail how allegory functions in *Guapa* in Chapter Five of this thesis, the link between allegory and postcolonial writing in the novel cannot be explored in further detail here due to the brevity of this section.

self-determination are not veracious; neo-colonial powers opt to be on the side of the dictators and the capitalist comprador elites that the Arab protestors rose up against.

Guapa describes a day in the life of its gay, revolutionary protagonist, Rasa, which starts with the unfortunate discovery of his relationship with his lover Taymour by his overbearing grandmother, Teta (*G* 15). This crisis in the private life of the protagonist which results in Taymour's decision to play by the rules of society, become deeply closeted and end his connection with Rasa, parallels another crisis on the public level; namely, the popular disappointment with the revolution which evolves into a crisis (*G* 54; Yassin-Kassab, "GS"; Lovett). The novel's central theme is Rasa's struggle for self-definition which mirrors the intricate battles for political autonomy fought out in Arab societies (Yassin-Kassab, "GS"). To deliver these themes, the novel adopts a counter-discursive position that is 'at a remove from narratives that can be co-opted into [a] kind of Orientalist, homogenising Islamophobia' (Atia 54).

In her critique of the text, Nadia Atia explains that Haddad distances himself from positions associated with the 'Gay International,' which impose White paradigms of understanding upon gay bodies across the world (54). The term 'Gay International' is proposed by Massad to describe White-male-dominated missionaries such as the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) which universalise 'gay rights' across the world using US discourse on human rights ("GI" 361–62). Massad contends that such groups evidence a special Orientalist impulse borrowed from broader stereotyping of Muslims and Arabs in North America and Europe ("GI" 361). Massad points out the hegemonic nature of their missionary work: 'it is the discourse of the Gay International that both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology' ("GI" 363). Haddad's novel embraces Massad's thesis and is a vociferous defence of indigenous Arab homosexuality that rejects Western gay categories and the destruction of local sexual and homoerotic desires by the Gay International.

In his article 'The Myth of the Queer Arab Life' (2017), Haddad articulated and developed these ideas which constitute the basis of his view of postcolonial Arab homoeroticism.[53] Haddad explained that Arab homoeroticism functioned on non-Western identities: 'Many Arabs who engage in same-sex practices do not identify as "gay," "lesbian" or "bisexual"' ("MQA"). He reflected on his own experience in Jordan when his boyfriend broke up with

[53] In this article, Haddad cited the above discussed essay by Massad.

him because Haddad was 'too open with [his] sexuality' which showed him that concepts such as 'gay' or 'coming out' tended to be meaningless in a culture that functioned on a different set of normative ethics. There are some queer Arabs, he wrote, 'who do not feel it is unusual to engage in same-sex practices and remain unconnected to the word "gay"' ("MQA"). Even among Arabs who feel comfortable in their sexuality, 'the notion of public coming out rings hollow in a culture where who you share your bed with is a private matter' ("MQA"). He concluded that queer Arab bodies had become an ideological battle ground that evidenced a dual oppression: 'we are battling oppressive forces within our own communities, and we are also resisting the global narrative that tries to use our "oppression" for broader military or political goals' ("MQA"). This anti-colonial attitude informs the face-off between Western-led global hegemony and Arab queerness and is inscribed everywhere in Haddad's novel.

Haddad uses a tripartite plot structure in order to outline Rasa's identity development and intellectual maturity: 'Castrating Donkeys,' 'Imperial Dreams' and 'The Wedding.' Narrated in a flashback of his college education, the second of these sections constitutes the moment when, living in the United States, Rasa discovers that his Arab identity excludes him from identifying with the wider gay community. Rasa's trip to the United States has been proposed by his father to provide him with superior education (*G* 132). Rasa, however, has an equally important objective, which is to explore different sexual possibilities, 'try it on for size and see if it really was for me' (*G* 136). Prior to the trip, Rasa has only formulated a faint understanding of his sexual identity through exposure to Western gay life and liberal culture, more widely—a fact which he blames on poor education in his unnamed Arab country of origin and on religious and social constraints as regards homoeroticism. Rasa has had no name for his sexuality until he watches an interview with British pop singer George Michael discussing his sexuality on US broadcaster CNN (*G* 92).

Rasa also draws liberal ideas from American popular culture, including television personalities such as Oprah who teaches him to live 'the most honest version of myself' (*G* 131). Nonetheless, Rasa discovers that, from the inside, America is different:

> I […] dreamt of America, of a world where no one asks what you're doing and you are free to do what you like, kiss and love whomever you want and be the person you were meant to be. […] I had thought of it as a place where it didn't matter who you were or where you were from, all that mattered were the ideas in your head (*G* 132).

Rasa's ruminations reveal a psycho-sexual development after the trip. He concludes this description by saying: 'I was wrong.' He discovers that the phenomenon of stereotyping works in both directions: the culture that has been introduced as superior due to being 'civilised,' 'tolerant' and 'free' turns out to be a place where he experiences a double marginality—being gay and Arab.

Rasa realises that Americans perceive him essentially as 'an ambassador of a people at war with civilisation,' which results in him feeling exiled from American culture, and, as a consequence of this growing sense of cultural exclusion, he increasingly engages with Arab Nationalism (*G* 142). The negative stereotyping of Arabs is revealed in questions asked by Americans such as: 'Why do *you* force women to wear the hijab? Why is *your* culture consumed with hate? Why do *you* produce terrorists?' (*G* 142). He is being reminded constantly of his overt and non-closeted difference: his Arabness. In response, Rasa begins to retreat into both his Arab identity and an increased religiosity, wondering if there's much more to his identity and religion that is being hidden from him (*G* 143). After delving into the theoretical writings of Said, Gramsci, Chatterjee and Amin Maalouf, Rasa begins to appreciate the colonial dynamics of his situation (*G* 144–45, 196; Baker). For example, Rasa's understanding of Chatterjee's thesis of national identity being a Western creation that has been exported to the colonial world shapes his understanding of Arab Nationalism (*G* 145).[54] Chatterjee galvanises him to engage in pan-Arab activism: for instance, he participates in an anti-war demonstration (understood to be the 2003 US war on Iraq) in which he is handed a sign which says 'NO BLOOD FOR OIL' and a megaphone to chant in Arabic (*G* 182–83). In addition to assuming the role as a proxy speaker for the Arab nation against US imperialist acts, Rasa is given a black-and-white kaffiyeh to wear which is symbolic of his support for the Palestinian cause and broader calls for full Arab independence and self-determination (*G* 185). Rasa's repudiation of American gay life and culture is concomitant with Arab nationalist activism, depicting Arab homosexuals as aligned with local causes and opposed to imperialist ideologies.

Furthermore, the allusion to postcolonial theoretical work in the novel includes another reference to Massad: this time to the thesis of his book, *Desiring Arabs* (2007). Massad

[54] In his book, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986), Chatterjee argues that nationalist thought, whether conservative, liberal or Marxist, was established in the post-Enlightenment period of European history, drawing on a 'modern' framework of knowledge 'which proclaims its own universality' and ambivalently both accepts and rejects the dominance of an alien culture (11; Majumdar 31). He concludes that nationalist thought has always been a discourse of power (11; Majumdar 32).

argues that contemporary Arab normative sexual behaviour (including restrictions on homosexuality) was inherited from the history of European expansionism in the Arab world. When Rasa's gay friends discuss homosexuality in Islam and in Arab culture, Maj (the drag queen) adopts the argument that 'there is a long acceptance of homosexuality by Arab society that stretches back to the pre-Islamic period. It was those prudish Victorians who spoiled the party' (*G* 241). According to Massad, the Arabs borrowed their modern conceptions of sexuality from nineteenth-century Victorian society. He argues that since the beginning of colonialism in Arab lands in the early nineteenth century, Arab historiographers disregarded all 'sexual desires' associated with the Arabs prior to that date (*DA* 1). The reason for the renunciation of pre-colonial Arab sexual norms by Arab intellectuals was that those intellectuals accepted without challenge the Western concepts of 'civilisation' and 'culture.' When those intellectuals read and wrote Arab history and culture, they effaced, neglected and repudiated all pre-colonial Arab sexualities because these did not fit into the colonial frameworks of culture and civilisation, principally the Victorian code of sexual behaviour (*DA* 1–2, 15). The goal set by those intellectuals was to produce evidence that Arab sexuality had always been similar to that of the Europeans and to explain away instances of 'deviant' Arab sexualities in pre-colonial Arab history and literary heritage (*DA* 15). The reason why Arab intellectuals did not challenge these borrowed concepts and defend their 'uniqueness' was on account of an imported hegemonic pressure to conform to the dominant culture of the White European colonisers (*DA* 15–16).

In Haddad's novel, decolonisation of Arab sexual desires involves returning to a pre-colonial past and the abolishment of colonial sexualities. The Arab Spring is thus portrayed within a larger category of Arab decolonisation and as a step towards the decolonisation of Arab homoeroticism. For example, Rasa's revolutionary goal (namely, to return to pre-colonial Arab sexualities) is revealed when he describes how he and the other revolutionaries celebrate the protests: 'We were singing for us, *reclaiming our past* and celebrating our future' (*G* 51 my emphasis). He also declares that the revolution is underpinned by an emancipatory form of sexual expression: 'I joined the protests so that I would no longer have to wear a mask,' indicating that the revolution will enable him to express his sexuality more openly (*G* 82). More broadly, Rasa's love relationship with his lover Taymour parallels his initial hopes when the revolution breaks out, whereas the termination of Rasa and Taymour's relationship coincides with the suppression of the revolution by the regime. The novel begins with the discovery of Rasa and Taymour in bed by Teta (*G* 16). Teta symbolises the autocrat in the way that she controls Rasa's life and intrudes upon his private affairs (*G* 149), destroying

Rasa's intimate moment with Taymour (read as Rasa's initial infatuation with the revolutionary cause). Shortly after the incident, the President suppresses the revolution and Rasa's hopes for revolutionary change and a return to Taymour are crushed (*G* 54, 82–83). The failure of the Arab Spring and the persistence of the pre-Arab Spring political system means for Rasa the continuation of colonial perceptions of sexuality and the failure of the liberatory aims of the revolution.

7.3 Cairo's Colonial Infrastructure in Hamilton's Novel *The City Always Wins*

The City Always Wins reveals its postcoloniality via an acknowledgement of the facticity of colonial legacies in Egypt and the neo-colonial influence over the Egyptian political elite. It documents and reflects on colonialism in Egypt via the notion of the colonial city, depicting the revolution as an anti-colonial movement to reclaim Egypt. Hamilton thematises Cairo's colonial infrastructure (Tahrir and other squares, alleys, barricades and barbed wire) to indicate that Cairo's urban planning bears the marks of its colonist builders and is a tool in the hands of a client oligarchic clique. Hamilton's text can be read using Fanon's concept of the compartmentalisation of the colonial city and the violent nature of decolonisation (Fanon 1, 3–4; Boehmer and Davies 2–3).[55] According to Fanon, the colonial city is composed of 'native' towns and 'European' towns, creating an apartheid where the dividing lines are the barracks and police stations, and soldiers and police officers function as agents and spokespersons for the colonist (3). Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies explain that, in Hamilton's novel, the militarised, planned infrastructures of Cairo are violently transformed by the State against the civilian protestors (2–3). The revolutionaries in Tahrir Square and other Cairene sites are struggling against the Empire, resisting and escaping spatially from the heavy hand of the autocrat through the alleyways and streets of Cairo (2–3). By acknowledging and exposing the legacy of colonialism in Cairo and the neo-colonial influence on Egyptian politics, Hamilton's novel resists the discourse of Western hegemonic historiography. It emphasises how the Arab Spring was singular in being defined by a spatial conflict over public squares, for instance Tahrir Square in Cairo, the Square of Change in Sanaa, the 14th of January Square in Tunis and Liberty Square in Benghazi. The history of the Arab Spring that the novel depicts is mapped out on colonial geography in cities planned by

[55] Other critics have also made the link between the squares during the Arab Spring and the peoples' desire to break free from colonial rule. Norbert Bugeja, also quoting Fanon, explains that the square emerged during the Arab Spring as a 'political-affective nexus in which and *through* which the "moving consciousness of the whole of the people," and "the assumption of responsibility on the historical scale" were expressed' (3).

European empires and existing under neo-colonial hegemony. The text, however, still prevaricates over the representation of the West: it critiques Western democracies for supporting the Egyptian autocracy to supress the protests while revealing that the same Western democracies provide a model for new forms of democratic rule that the revolutionaries seek to establish.

Building on the research findings established in chapters Four and Five of this thesis, Hamilton's novel is a semi-autobiographical narrative in which he summarises the revolution as a struggle between the old generation—the regime and the ruling elite—and the younger generation of revolutionaries who are portrayed as idealistic and ambitious (Moore 202; Ali; Hamilton, "EW"). Simultaneously, the novel is also concerned with space—the squares, streets and alleyways—where space is modelled and controlled by competing currents of power and resistance (Mahmi 229). Cairo, the city that the title refers to, is the city that always wins, and its victory serves the neo-colonists, who redeploy its infrastructure to suppress the revolution and maintain their political and economic hegemony.[56] After the revolution is defeated by the *coup d'état* led by Field Marshal Abdel Fattah Al Sisi (which historically occurred in July 2013), the novel's central character, Khalil, reflects on the invisible alliance between the regime and the city's infrastructure: a 'shadow network of prisons and dungeons and police barracks connected through the constant invisible motion of opaque vehicles and watchful patriots and radio waves' (*CA* 267). The prisons and dungeons are 'connected' to the police, their vehicles and even their radio signals, all working in unison to stymie the Egyptian dreams of freedom. The novel's final judgement on the revolution in Egypt is that the protestors fail to wrest Cairo from the hands of the neo-colonists and their protégés.

According to Boehmer and Davies, Cairo is immediately linked to space in Hamilton's work via a description of it as a place where there is a multitude of voices and social actors, all competing to occupy and reclaim it (1). The city is introduced in a long and mesmerising description that also hints at its colonial past and optimistic, but still unknown, future:

> Cairo is Jazz: all contrapuntal influences jostling for attention, occasionally brilliant solos standing high above the steady rhythm of the street. […] These

[56] As Farid Farid suggests, the title of the novel is most likely a conscious imitation of the title of Janet Abu-Lughod's 1971 book, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Farid). Abu-Lughod's book traces the historical development and urban organisation of Cairo, including its layout during the high time of European colonialism towards the end of the nineteenth century (98).

> streets laid out to echo the order and ratio and martial management of the modern city now moulded by the tireless rhythms of salesmen and hawkers and car horns and gas peddlers all out in ownership of their city, mixing pasts with their present, birthing a new now of south and north, young and old, country and city all combining and coming out loud and brash and with a beauty incomprehensible. Yes, Cairo is jazz. […] [T]he jazz that is beauty in the destruction of the past, the jazz of an unknown future, the jazz that promises freedom from the bad old times (*CA* 10).

The ricocheting notes of jazz resemble the planned and unplanned layers of Cairene life, which foreground the spontaneous energies and effects of quotidian life charted out upon city infrastructure (Boehmer and Davies 2). The community's underlying values and prejudices can also be discerned: the countervailing aspects reinterpret and reclaim the city space, including the 'salesmen,' 'hawkers' and 'gas peddlers' who are 'all out in ownership of the city' (Boehmer and Davies 3). The novel captures a broader and more enabling concept of infrastructure; namely, the notion of people as infrastructure, which stresses the commercial collaboration between marginalised city dwellers (Boehmer and Davies 3; Simone 407). Economic relations of this kind empower ordinary people to repossess the urban space and demand their rights in the city (Boehmer and Davies 3). The peddlers and salesmen crying out their wares reveal the sort of social stratification of Cairene community that sets the scene for the hegemony of the mercantile/political elite and the attendant resistance by the subjugated classes.

Part of the scramble for the ownership of Cairo's space is the face-off between neo-colonial forces and the indigenous dwellers of the city—a rivalry that develops in the moments of revolution. Hamilton's description of Cairo's social milieu is predicated upon Fanon's notion of the segregated colonial city governed by violence (Fanon 5, 15). Violence defines the colonial situation, in which the colonist maintains the exploitation of the colonised subject 'at the point of the bayonet and under the canon fire:' 'decolonisation is always a violent event' (Fanon 1, 2). Cairo is structured in terms of a hierarchical divide between the colonists and the mercantile bourgeoisie and the revolutionaries. These two actors attempt to claim the urban space, which is mapped out on the basis of segregationist infrastructural planning established by the colonists, who created 'lines of force' that 'bring violence into the homes and minds of the colonised subject' (Boehmer and Davies 3; Fanon 4, 6). Fanon argues that the only way to regain and decolonise the city is to destroy the colonists' sector: 'To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist's sector, burying it deep

within the earth or banishing it from the territory' (6, 15). When decolonisation begins, the colonists establish contact with the national bourgeois elite in order to resist this process (9). Nationalist elite political parties work with the colonist bourgeoisie and abstain from confrontation with colonialism (22). Consequently, the masses realise that, when independence is achieved, it does not bring them the freedom that they fought for, and subsequently they have to fight neo-colonialism—a camouflage for capitalism—whose instruments are the national bourgeoisie (34–35, 100–01).

Hamilton's text is centred on the theme that Cairo's colonial history still controls its present. Like other cities of the Arab Spring, Cairo's contemporary urban planning has been the product of various colonial influences and interferences. Nasser Rabbat demonstrates that alterations to the built environment of cities in the Arab world during European colonisation included the modernisation of the layout of old historic towns, with new extensions branching out and sitting uneasily on top of or next to the historic planning ("AR" 202; Rabbat, "CT" 185; Rogan 123–24). This sort of urban development had repercussions for the demography of the city; specifically, it absorbed the city's upper classes and wealthy inhabitants, which sapped the traditional city of much of its economic and social vitality ("AR" 202). Some of the new districts were built exclusively for foreigners who were invited by the colonial or local authorities and were given much of its amenities, including public spaces, squares and parks ("AR" 202). Rabbat observes that public squares, including Tahrir Square, did not belong to the original planning of the Arab city: 'A new form of public space, the plaza or the square, started appearing in the late nineteenth century in these dualistic Arab cities […]. [T]hey were imported as complete forms, which had been conceived, tested, contested and settled elsewhere' ("AR" 202–03; Rabbat, "CT" 185). The concentration of foreigners and wealthy classes in these modern urban formations produced the sort of hierarchical compartmentalisation that Fanon theorises. According to Rabbat: 'cities like Algiers, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, Aleppo [etc.,] entered the twentieth century with two poorly reconciled and heavily hybridised halves: a pseudomodern and faux-traditional one' ("AR" 202).

The novel depicts the violent battle raging between the neo-colonial political and mercantile agents and the masses of Cairo who inhabit the two compartmentalised parts of the city. Consequently, jazz not only refers to the ricocheting movement of life in Cairo, but also to the revolutionary Cairo that is resisting Western neo-colonial hegemony. As Claire Chambers explains, jazz is associated with 'the creative flowering and apocalyptic violence [of] resistance of Cairo' (15). Michael Titlestad explains that jazz 'is about asserting trajectories of

becoming […]; it is perforce improvisation within a form' (Titlestad 149; Chambers 15). Moreover, the contrapuntality of the Cairene jazz, a concept Hamilton borrows from Said, compares the relationship between the competing discourses of coloniser and colonised to musical counterpoints in order to expose the deep colonial contours of Cairo's architectural, urban and social make up (Said, *CI* 51; Chambers 14; Ashcroft et al., *PSK* 49). Consequently, the past that the jazz destroys denotes the colonial past that is inscribed upon Cairo's urban layout, and the futures that the jazz attempts to create refer to the liberation from neo-colonialism that the revolution promises. During the Arab Spring, the flow of people in Cairo embodies the improvised movement of jazz 'beauty' to present various political and social emancipatory potentialities.

With the aim of making the free, uncolonised future of Cairo a reality, the novel makes the occupation of space (government buildings, squares, stadiums) the central task of the revolutionaries—a goal that they believe attainable during the initial optimism of the protests. The plot is structured around the confrontations that occur at the most important sites in Cairo between the protestors who seek to take control of these places and the regime that violently suppresses them. Hamilton provides graphic details of the events and the protestors' manoeuvres at Maspero (the Radio and Television building), Port Said Stadium (the Ultras), Mohamed Mahmoud Street, Rabaa, Nahda and Tahrir Square (*CA* 5–7, 110–15, 202–06).[57] In almost all of these events, an alliance between elites such as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the Islamist President Morsi and President Sisi, on the one hand, and neo-colonial powers such as the United States, on the other, is made evident. For example, although the Muslim Brotherhood is the least likely to be accused of being an ally of the West due to historical incongruity between its line of Islamic politics and Western culture, during the presidency of its candidate, Morsi, the Egyptian people are convinced that he is supported by the United States, that Obama is a secret Muslim who belongs to the Brotherhood and that the revolution has been orchestrated to deliver Egypt to the Brotherhood (*CA* 168). The revolutionaries find themselves chased and hunted by this violent neo-colonial alliance that is much more powerful than themselves and denies them the right to their city.

[57] As Chambers observes, Khalil repeatedly says in a sort of refrain throughout the novel that he wishes the revolutionaries could have taken Maspero, indicating the importance of this site to the success of the revolution (10; Hamilton, *CA* 235, 239, 275). In Chapter Five, I explained that Khalil thinks that Maspero is crucial to the revolution in order to win the media war against the regime. My analysis here is that Maspero is also important as a space and as a building.

The events at Mohamed Mahmoud Street and Rabaa Square stand out as having been exceptionally violent, a violence that is vividly retold by Hamilton. For example, Mohamed Mahmoud witnessed several bloody confrontations between the regime and the protestors, and the one that is captured in Hamilton's description is the clashes that occurred after the massacre of the Ultras on the first of February 2012 during SCAF's rule. Mohamed Mahmoud is a short street located at the heart of Cairo, branching out from Tahrir Square; it is the location of the American University and close to the Egyptian Ministry of Interior. Khalil and Mariam attempt to take part in the protests against the killing of seventy-four fan members at the Port Said Stadium (a city located in the North-East of Egypt), but they are confronted with the use of tear gas. The tear gas that is used by the regime is attributed to the United States twice in the novel: the first is when a protestor comes to Hafez, one of Khalil's friends, asking him to take a picture to prove that the gas canisters bear the inscription 'Made in America,' and the second is when the Egyptian army purchases 2.5 million US dollars' worth of tear gas from the United States (*CA* 44, 153).

When the protest begins, Khalil and Mariam exhibit a stubborn will and determination to take control of the street via their manoeuvres, movements and tactics, which include navigation of urban space, walking, running, occupying a spot and staying put. These manoeuvres indicate a desire to reclaim space because, as Boehmer and Davies observe, the postcolonial novel presents 'the "act of walking" as invested with the capacity to reinterpret the infrastructural ordering of the city' (7). The 'rhetoric of walking' highlights how 'the postcolonial city is continually remade, reread and recharted in ways that evade the surveilling gaze of the authorities' (qtd. in Boehmer and Davies 7). Boehmer and Davies argue that, in Hamilton's novel, the protagonists not only walk, but they run, which is symptomatic of the urgency they feel (7). In addition to the 'rhetoric of walking and running,' 'stubborn non-movement' can also be understood as an act of resistance aimed at wresting space back from the regime.

When the protestors receive the news of the massacre at the Port Said Stadium, they pivot in their numbers and head for Mohamed Mahmoud Street. The first action the protestors take is to violently alter the infrastructure of the city: 'the army's wall is ripped down, and the crowd advances on the Ministry of Interior' (*CA* 112). Khalil's movement through the battlefield is registered, indicating his exploration of the place, which he makes his own: he 'moves through the sounds, the invisible world of the battle, the rain of stones, […] the insults volleyed at the crowds in armoured uniforms' (*CA* 112). When the police begin to attack, Khalil defiantly stands still: 'They are coming. He doesn't run' (*CA* 113). Mariam, who is disguised as a doctor, also stays firm in her place when the protestors are dispersed by the

police: ‘The truck charges and unleashes a volley of heavy buckshot and the crowd splits—but the doctor is still’ (*CA* 113). Only when (US) gas canisters begin to land does Mariam fall, and Khalil rushes towards her in order to rescue her:

> Khalil is running toward her into the cloud and the tears are streaming and burning little salt runs of acid down his cheeks his eyes are raw and sealing shut and his chest is heaving when he kneels down before her and pulls her up into his arms […] and he turns to run but his eyes won’t open and his chest is closing and with every breath he’s gasping for air […] (*CA* 113–14).

The suffering the tear gas causes to the protagonists emphasises the brutality of the army machine of the repressive regime and its Western allies. Khalil, Mariam and the other revolutionaries stand defiantly at the beginning of the clashes and succeed in taking control of Mohamed Mahmoud. Nevertheless, when they approach a more politically significant space (the Ministry of Interior), they fail only because the Repressive State Apparatus adopts more powerful forms of suppression: tear gas. This description acknowledges Khalil’s (and the other revolutionaries’) inability to claim ownership of their city. Khalil runs carrying Mariam only to escape the streets of the colonial city, which side with the regime: ‘you are defeated so run but don’t fall, run fast but don’t breathe run *faster* but don’t breathe and don’t fall just run and run faster without breathing and without seeing’ (*CA* 114). Suppression in sites like these by the regime is what ultimately leads to the defeat of the revolutionaries in Egypt.

Despite this critique of some aspects of Western imperialist practices in Egypt, Hamilton’s text does not have a clear anti-colonial position: it remains ambivalent with respect to the relationship with the West. For example, the global dominance of English as a Western language is acknowledged, but Hamilton insists that the world global system with its most important language (English) can still be used to challenge Western dominance: ‘First in Arabic and then the rest of the world in English. Empire sows the seeds of its own defeat’ (*CA* 21). Despite being a Western language, English is applauded because it enables the revolution, but the revolution will bring an end to Western imperialism. This sort of ambivalence is further evidenced by the envisioned political system that the revolutionaries want to establish: that system is not based on non-Western forms of rule but on a new form of democracy. In his 2018 speech at the Institut Du Monde Arabe, Hamilton explained that the Arab revolutions constituted a new wave of democratising that was ‘going to remake the very concept of democracy for the 21st century:’ a democracy that is free from the economic colonialism that beset contemporary democratic practices (“EW”). In the novel, Hamilton similarly criticises neoliberal interference in Western democracies: ‘Elections are a billion-

dollar distraction. Actual democracy is everyone having an equal *stake*' (*CA* 84). Khalil and his revolutionary friends are convinced that the Egyptian revolution is creating a new form of democratic practice that will signal a new age of progressive politics: 'Our days of listening to drunk old Europeans lecture us about democracy are over' (*CA* 85). For them, democratic practice is problematic because of, for instance, the interference of capitalism in the elections: 'democracy is for sale to the highest bidder' (*CA* 85). Consequently, Western democracy and the West as a signifier in the text are neither rejected nor desired, revealing an ambivalent attitude of postcolonial resistance characterised by reifying and adopting Eurocentric world views.

The City Always Wins belongs to the genre of postcolonial writing because it acknowledges the history of colonialism in the urban planning of Cairo and how neo-colonialism establishes its hegemony over revolutionary Egypt via client political elites. It uses Fanon's concept of the colonial city, whose infrastructure sides with the dictatorship and enables the autocrat and neo-colonial agents to suppress the revolution. Hamilton indicates that the protestors in Tahrir Square and other Cairene sites are resisting colonialism in a revolution that is equivalent to an anti-colonial war waged to decolonise the country. In order to win, the revolutionaries must reclaim Cairo space, which they fail to do due to the violence used by the neo-colonial regime. The novel reveals some of the ambivalence that exists—according to Bhabha—in the colonial world between the coloniser and the colonised. The revolutionaries in the novel both reject and desire Western democracy, perceiving it as an evil ideology that is implicated in Western imperialism in Egypt while also believing that a modified form of it should be used in the revolutionaries' political programme.

7.4 The Indigenous Arab Voice in Karim Alrawi's *Book of Sands*

Alrawi's novel, *Book of Sands* (2015), resists neo-colonial practices in the Arab world and Western hegemonic narratives by means of giving voice to indigenous and subaltern Arab cultures. Alrawi uses magic realism as a genre in order to privilege Arab cultural knowledge systems such as mysticism and tradition over Western rationalism and innovation (Younas 545–46; Zamora and Faris 3). In magic realist texts, the novel, which is originally a Western literary genre, is filled with scenes of the magical that are taken from the lore of traditional Arab mythology. Alrawi's novel thus questions the validity of Western rationality when compared to Arab mythological beliefs (Younas 551). The appearance of spirits throughout the text confirms the stereotype depicting the superstitious nature of Arab culture (Younas 548–49). For example, in order to become pregnant, a 'girl spent her days standing over

burning censers calling on the *jinn* lords to make her fertile' (Alrawi, *B* 208). In addition to magic realism, Alrawi's novel utilises the journey into the colony and the plot of the discovery of the English book in the wilderness to privilege indigenous Arab culture: the protagonist, Tarek, discovers that the book of sands is the desert, which is rich with myths and legends. Tarek, who is associated with Western rationalism, mathematics and disbelief in superstition, is transformed after his journey into the desert—and a close exposure to its traditions—into a believer in God. In a text that is preoccupied with the history of the Arab Spring, Alrawi's use of magic indicates that the official account of the revolution narrated by the regime (portrayed as a neo-colonial agent) should be questioned as well (Younas 552). As Abida Younas argues, Alrawi's text 'testifies to the historical account of Arab uprisings from the perspective of all those who have never been given a voice, like villagers, prisoners and travellers' (552). Similarly to Haddad's and Hamilton's novels, Alrawi's text provides an ambivalent view of the colonial West, especially in privileging Western narratives regarding women rights, as evidenced by his treatment of the subject of female genital mutilation by the local communities in the mountains, which repeats Western stereotypes regarding the maltreatment of women in Arab culture.

Alrawi's novel is loosely semi-autobiographical, based on the author's brief participation in the Egyptian revolution in 2011. Alrawi is an Arab-Canadian who was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt, and he arrived in Tahrir Square only a few days after the revolution started to support the pro-democracy movement ("ASIN"; Ruff; Tulpar). Like his protagonist, Alrawi was arrested a few years before the revolution by Egyptian State Security, partly for his humanitarian work in Egypt, and he was held in an interrogation centre for several days (Ruff; Tulpar). The novel re-animates this episode in the author's life: Tarek, a mathematician, poet and puppeteer, is imprisoned and tortured by the regime for twelve years while being a student for taking part in an anti-regime protest (Tulpar; Ghafour; Rose). As a result, Tarek is not supportive of the current Arab revolution in the square, but when he visits the square looking for a friend's son, he finds himself on the radar of Security Forces. This forces him to leave the unnamed city for the desolate mountains, taking his nine-year old daughter, Neda, with him and leaving his pregnant wife, Mona, behind (Tulpar; Ghafour).[58]

The magical elements in the text include the swarm of birds that invade the city, which is symbolic for the Twitter revolution, and the delayed births of babies like Mona's, which reflects a nation that tries to 'rebirth itself' (Alrawi, "CT"). The narrative becomes marked by

[58] Although Alrawi leaves the country and city of his novel unnamed, he refers to several places such as the Hanging Church, which is an actual site in Cairo (*B* 43).

stasis after Tarek and Neda leave, and the focus shifts to Tarek's confrontation with the traditions of the local Arab people and his own past. Legend and reality intermix in the mountains, as evidenced by the tale of the Three Sisters and the myth of the Wishing Rose, which are revealed to be true in the world of the story—one of the three sisters, Reham, is Neda's biological mother.

Hamida Ghafour identifies *Book of Sands* as embodying a form of ambivalence in that it is 'an intensely political book but there's hardly any politics in it' (Ghafour). Alrawi, however, reveals much of his politics via the genre of magic realism rather than through an immediate treatment of the politics of the unnamed Arab country in which his novel is set. Magic realism is an oxymoron that combines ways of representing both realism and fantasy (Slemon, "MR" 409; Zamora and Faris 1). In magical realist texts, two oppositional paradigms of narration compete to create two different fictional worlds (Slemon, "MR" 409). Magic realism creates a space 'for the interactions of diversity' where 'ontological disruption serves the purpose of political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinise accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality and motivation' (Zamora and Faris). The magical events in the novel, such as the birds that inhabit public spaces, create a rupture in the reality of everyday life, indicating that readers ought to adopt a sceptical reading of the political events—that is, the revolution as narrated by the regime. For example, in several vignettes, Tarek reveals his distrust of the media: when he goes to pay his electricity bill at the Electricity Ministry, Tarek witnesses how, after finishing work hours, the employees participate in a pro-government demonstration (*B* 5, 57, 74, 115). Their demonstration is broadcast on state television 'to counter those on Internet and satellite stations of protests elsewhere in the city' (*B* 5). Tarek, consequently, 'rarely watches television, thinks it lies' (*B* 5). This episode alludes to the function of the magical; namely, to urge the reader to be politically conscious and question official narrations of the Arab Spring.

The magical realist narrative style also reflects Alrawi's concern with the colonial history of the Arab world. As Younas explains, magic realism is inherently politically motivated, 'reflect[ing] the political tension in the colonised and postcolonial world' (546). Magic realism has become 'a language par excellence' for postcolonial writing because it prioritises non-Western forms of knowledge (Younas 545–46; Zamora and Faris 3). Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris stress that:

> Texts labelled magical realist draw upon cultural systems that are no less 'real' than those upon which traditional literary realism draws—often non-

> Western cultural systems that privilege mystery over empiricism, empathy over technology, tradition over innovation. Their primary investment may be in myths, legends, rituals—that is, in collective (sometimes oral and performative, as well as written) practices that bind communities together (3).

Consequently, magical realist writers proceed from the position that the novel was originally a popular form operating within communal imperatives in different parts of the world, and they revitalise these communities in their fiction wherever they were occluded (3–4). The local communities in Alrawi's text exist in the mountains, and his account of the magical realist events gives a positive view of their mysticism over rational explanations. For example, the novel begins with a magical event, which is 'babies decide not to be born, and mothers cease to give birth' (*B* 1). No rational explanation is given as to why this occurs, but when Tarek and Neda arrive in the mountains, we learn that Neda has cast a spell to delay babies' births (*B* 178). Later, Neda wants to obtain the Wishing Rose that can break any spell, and she asks her father to buy it from the woman who sells salt at Salt Valley on the stone plateau (*B* 26, 185). Tarek reluctantly accepts to go, saying that 'There's nothing magic can do that science can't do' (*B* 185). Nonetheless, towards the end of the novel, Tarek buys the rose, and, when he and Neda return to the city, Mona is in the hospital in labour, indicating that the spell that has plagued babies throughout the story is broken (*B* 279–80, 300–01). The fact that the magical element in this vignette provides the solution, rather than the scientific or medical, demonstrates that the mysticism of the Arab communities in the mountains is as legitimate as Western science in Alrawi's text.

In addition to privileging indigenous cultures, Stephen Slemon explains that magic realism is linked to 'living on the margin,' which denotes 'that magic realism, as a socially symbolic contract, carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial centre and to its totalising system of generic classification' ("MR" 408). Magic realism suggests the existence of certain forms of literary writing and cultural experiences that constitute the basis of these forms, and which cannot be easily classified using major genre systems ("MR" 408). As a consequence, 'the magic realist text can be read as reflecting in its language of narration real conditions of speech and cognition within the social relations of a postcolonial culture' ("MR" 411). Alrawi's preoccupation with indigenous culture testifies to his concern for subaltern society in the colony rather than for the elite and bourgeois classes at the centre. This serves to highlight a political and historical account of the revolution from the perspective of the silent population, for example peasants, villagers, travellers and prisoners (9).

The novel depicts such voices in various passages that represent a non-official version of the events. One of the passages in which the subaltern speaks is when Tarek, at the beginning of his incursion into the mountains, calls on a village in the countryside. Tarek finds that the villagers are gathering to excavate the bodies of their family members who have been killed by State Security and buried in mass graves (*B* 90–91). The dead villagers are completely unknown: 'Corpses, discoloured flesh clinging to bone, searched for identification papers in wallets and pockets, visible markings noted, teeth fillings counted' (*B* 91). The villagers' silence is highlighted: 'Their grief starts where words fail and fade into silence' (*B* 92). This episode reveals that these villagers, who are associated with superstition, magic and mysticism have a narrative of the revolution that cannot be destroyed or elided.

Furthermore, when Alrawi portrays authoritarianism and the miserable living conditions it creates for the Arab citizens, he also reflects on Arab political elites, associating them with neo-colonial hegemony. Wen-chin Ouyang explains that, in addition to foregrounding the influence of colonialism over indigenous culture, magic realism highlights the corruption and incompetence of post-independence political authority in the postcolonial world (153). Younas observes that 'Alrawi shows the regimes of the Arab world as embodying neo-colonial practice that perpetuates bribery, corruption and authoritarianism' (546). Consequently, the myriad references to corrupt bureaucracy and bribery in the novel is a condemnation of the failure of the postcolonial state to achieve complete independence. For example, right at the beginning of the novel, Tarek struggles to pay his electricity bill, which he knows is inflated (*B* 3). Increasing the amount customers must pay is a ruse used by employees at the Electricity Ministry in order to make them pay bribes for the correction of their bills. Tarek must 'find the man in charge of reading meters, pay him a bribe and only then will his meter be read and the adjustment made to his bill' (*B* 3). Financial exploitation of this sort is indicative of capitalist abuse; the electricity is not provided by a privately-owned company but by a state-run ministry. This serves to associate the Arab state with Western capitalism as well as corrupt bureaucratic practice, in turn linking state authoritarianism to Western neo-colonialism.

In addition to magic realism, Alrawi uses the reverse journey into the colony (that is, the mountains and desert) as a postcolonial resistance strategy. As I previously demonstrated in my discussion of Haddad's novel, the reverse voyage metaphor is a repurposing of the quest voyage motif used by European Orientalists that enables postcolonial writers to reclaim territory and appropriate marginality. It is also related to a motif that Bhabha refers to as 'the emblem of the English book,' which, he argues, is repeated in a host of writings of English

colonialism (145; Hansson 9). Its scenario is 'played out in the wild and wordless wastes of colonial India, Africa, the Caribbean, of the sudden, fortuitous discovery of the English book' (145). Bhabha argues that the book in this scene signifies 'an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline' (145–46; Hansson 9). A well-known example in the literature of empire appears in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, in which Marlow finds a manual on seamanship (*An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*) at one stop during his journey by boat up the Congo River (40; Mishra 5; Hansson 8). Marlow realises that the book is old but marvels at its 'singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work' (40; Mishra 5). Vijay Mishra explains that V. S. Naipaul has read this scene in a way that concurs with Bhabha's interpretation of similar scenes by European writers: for them, 'The book is a marker of cultural authority, a civilising mission' (5).

Alrawi reverses and experiments with some aspects of these tropes in order to resist colonial discursive authority. For example, the book in the novel is not a written European manuscript but figuratively becomes the desert itself—its myths, legends, tales, orature and culture. The desert is the book of sands of the title.[59] Alrawi compares the desert to a book: Tarek's road into the desert is 'as straight as a book's spine, on either side dunes folding like pages, turns misty with gusts that blow across in waves' (*B* 95). Similarly, Alrawi experiments with the hero of the journey which is not made by a European into the wilderness of the colony but by a Western-influenced native into his own unknown territory and past. Tarek's association with Western rationalism and secularism is evidenced by his infatuation with mathematics and quantum physics and his disbelief in God. For example, when Tarek and Yaqzan (one of the village elders, the valley's rainmaker and an emblem of old wisdom) discuss the existence of God and the angels, Tarek tells him that he 'believe[s] in a universe we can measure and put into words' (*B* 177–78, 196). Yaqzan assures him that 'God is beyond what language can describe or minds can comprehend' (*B* 178). Although Tarek is not convinced in this conversation, he is indeed transformed by the end of his journey in the mountains. When Tarek spends some time with the villagers in Salt Valley, he realises that there are supernatural powers that cannot be rationalised in the material world. Tarek collects shreds of newsprints as data for an equation 'he thought would make sense of the world' (*B* 276). Initially, all the parameters seem to fit well into his equation, but he cannot include God in it in any significant way until the end of the story (*B* 277). While God makes a vague concept in

[59] In an interview, Alrawi explains that the title of his novel is a reference to Jorge Luis Borges's 1975 short story collection, *The Book of Sand*. The idea of Borges's book is a book with an endless number of pages (Rose). This can also apply to the desert as a book of endless stories and tales.

the equation because He is constantly in a state of becoming, Tarek realises that 'By such deferral, God requires our freedom to better know itself, [and] then, creation must also be free and undetermined' (*B* 277). Tarek's acceptance of the concept of God indicates the early signs of his transformation, which comes as a result of his discovery of new and unknown knowledge in the desert.

Tarek's equation is linked to the revolution: its outcome is that there is justification for people's belief in freedom from autocracy in the Arab world, despite the overwhelming power of the autocrats and neo-colonial hegemony. Tarek's equation parameters are taken from revolutionary literature: its mathematical symbols stand for 'resistance to change,' 'intention,' 'a relationship of dissatisfaction with the status quo' and 'the ability to envision something better' (*B* 276). In order to clarify the concept behind his equation, Tarek ruminates on the example of the revolutionary crab-man at the square 'who disrupted the seemingly inevitable by a choice when no choice seemed conceivable' (*B* 276). Tarek believes that such a revolutionary and risk-taking spirit represents the true meaning of freedom. He writes down that '*Freedom is to conceive and act on a choice that can change the reality from which that choice arises.*' (*B* 277). Consequently, Tarek's exposure to the book of sands (the traditions, legends, orature and culture) of the indigenous Arab people transforms him from a strictly rational person into someone who accepts possibilities that are not supported by material evidence. In his scientific equation, he realises that not only can God be included as a parameter, but that God is the part of the equation that makes it meaningful. In relation to the revolution, Tarek, who does not support the Arab Spring due to a painful prior experience of imprisonment and repression, begins to see why people in the square, like the crab-man, believe that freedom is attainable despite the difficulties.

Alrawi's resistance to Western discursive hegemony via a prioritising of Arab superstitious culture and traditionalism over Western rationalism and literature is problematic. Like Haddad and Hamilton, Alrawi prevaricates with respect to his resistance to Western stereotyping of Arab culture. For example, the Arab society's view of women is commented on via female circumcision, which is practiced in the mountains. This motif appears frequently in the text, portraying women's position in Arab society negatively and reiterating Orientalist stereotypes regarding the sexualisation of women. In such vignettes, Alrawi stresses how patriarchy contributes to the execution and perpetuation of the supposed inferiority that Arab women have to endure. For instance, Tarek's wife, Mona, is taken as a child to be circumcised by her brother, Omar: '[Omar] was in the bathroom of his parent's apartment, the local barber wiped a rag blood from a straight razor. Mona, maybe seven years

old, screamed and sobbed as she lay on the stone tiles' (*B* 44–45). The memory of pain reverberates in Mona's head when, at the end of the novel, she tells Omar: 'I never forgot,' 'Never forgave,' 'You let them cut me' (*B* 312). Such commentary on patriarchy stems from a Western feminist perspective regarding women's rights, gender roles and the empowerment of women, which destabilises Alrawi's broader position in which he depicts indigenous Arab culture neutrally.

In conclusion, Alrawi's novel, *Book of Sands,* is a postcolonial text that resists Orientalist discourses which portray Arab indigenous culture as inferior to Western rationalism. The text's postcoloniality is evidenced by its use of magic realism, the journey into the colony and the plot of the discovery of the European book in the Oriental wilderness. Because magic realism creates a disruption in literary realist conventions, its use requires the readers to question the realism of certain aspects of the narrative. In Alrawi's novel, this means questioning the official narrative of the revolution as broadcast by state television. Magic realism is also inherently political, reflecting the political tensions between colonists and colonised. Postcolonial authors use magic realism because it privileges non-Western mysticism over Western rationality and innovation. Moreover, magic realism is associated with the marginal, and, consequently, its use by Alrawi demonstrates his resistance to the Western centre. Alrawi gives the subaltern a voice with which to express their narrative of the revolution. This is related to one more function of magic realism, which is to critique the corruption of postcolonial Arab elites and their association with neo-colonialism. Furthermore, Alrawi uses the plot of the discovery of the book in the colonial wilderness to reveal the value of desert orature and culture. Tarek's exposure to the culture of the desert transforms him into a believer in the revolutionary cause. Nonetheless, despite Alrawi's resistance writing, he remains ambivalent with respect to the position of the West as a signifier in his text.

In this chapter, I introduced a qualification to the central argument of the thesis: I contended that the majority of post-Arab Spring novels and memoirs represent literature coming from the postcolony, bearing a level of discursive resistance to the Western metropolis. Except for Bassingthwaighte and Thirlwell, all the authors whose work is discussed in the thesis are from a previous European colony. Postcolonial writing involves artistic and political self-representation mobilised to narrate the aftermath of colonialism from the point of view of the indigenous peoples (Innes 4–5). I demonstrated that the narratives written by the Arab authors, while maintaining a neo-Orientalist discourse that reiterates major Orientalist tropes in its representation of the Arab Spring, exhibit a limited level of resistance to colonial

discourse. The works resist a handful of stereotypes while the overall representation of the Arab uprisings concurs with Eurocentric narratives. *Guapa* by Haddad uses postcolonial resistance strategies such as the *bildungsroman* genre and a reversed version of the journey into the Oriental wilderness when the protagonist goes to the United States to learn, explore and improve awareness of his homosexual identity. However, this remains limited to the Orientalist tropes associated with Arab sexuality as represented by an Arab homosexual. The novel does not mobilise an all-inclusive critique of the metropolis that seeks to dismantle key Eurocentric positions. This mixing of attitudes of desire and lack of desire towards the metropolis reveals the ambivalence of the category of the colonising West in the literature of the Arab Spring: the West stands both as a source of inspiration to be emulated (particularly in political and liberal freedoms) and as a menacing neo-colonial presence that ought to be resisted. Thus, post-Arab Spring literary texts provide a recent illustration of Bhabha's thesis of the ambivalence of imperial authority in the colony.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Post-Arab Spring Anglophone narratives reveal a transformation in Western neo-Orientalist perceptions of the revolutionary Arab world. In light of the ostensibly liberalising and democratising goals of the Arab Spring, a new iteration of neo-Orientalism appeared, which I term 'Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism.' This new form of hegemonic discourse is different from classical Orientalism and post-9/11 neo-Orientalism in two principal aspects: firstly, the inclusion of Arabs in the West and the disappearance of the tropes concerning the 'clash of civilisations' and that Arabs are anti-Western. These are replaced by themes pertaining to globalisation and multicultural co-existence between the Arabs and the rest of the world in Western-dominated virtual and actual spaces. Secondly, post-Arab Spring literature demonstrates a curtailment of Islamophobia and the disappearance of themes regarding the 'War on Terror,' Muslims as 'terrorists' and Islam as a violent religion.

Simultaneously, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism draws on a host of classical Orientalist stereotypes relating to other aspects of Arab culture in its description of the history of the Arab Spring. Most importantly, there is a misreading of Arab and Islamic politics as evidenced by interpreting the Arab Spring revolutions using Western political thought. This is evident in the academic, political and literary readings of concepts such as 'dictatorship' and 'democracy' in the context of the Arab revolts. These concepts are construed and employed in their Western political usage when describing the Arab mass action. For example, dictatorships are criticised in Western political thought for length of terms while in Islam there is no obligation for Muslim rulers to undergo periodic change. In addition, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism reverts to using repackaged versions of stereotypes, such as 'Oriental despotism' and the 'lazy Oriental' to depict the outcome of the Arab revolutions. For example, El Rashidi's depiction of the aftermath of the Egyptian revolution reveals Egypt as being in the grip of a relentless military autocracy, which is an indirect reproduction of the Orientalist belief that despotism is integral to Arab culture. Finally, post-Arab Spring literature is also postcolonial literature, which, while adopting major neo-Orientalist positions regarding the Arabs, resists Western discursive hegemony. Nonetheless, this sort of resistance is only made on a minor scale and in a limited number of themes such as portraying and acknowledging the legacy of colonialism in Cairo's urban planning and infrastructure in Hamilton's use of the concept of the colonial city. Hamilton's depiction serves to highlight the protestors' rejection of residual colonial influence.

The key findings of this study indicate that postcolonial scholarship continues to be relevant to this day. Most importantly, it reveals that Said's theorisation of the power relations between the West and the Arab world is important to contemporary awareness of politics and culture. In particular, post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism bears out Said's contention that Orientalist writing was the product of its specific historical and political moment (*O* 203). This is an integral part of Said's theorisation as evidenced by the repeated emphasis in his 2003 'Preface to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition:' 'I emphasise […] that neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other' (*O* xii). Post-Arab Spring neo-Orientalism avoids the tropes that Arabs are anti-Western and terroristic because the Arab Spring as a political endeavour was ostensibly the Arabs' attempt to embrace Western democracy, break away from autocracy and abandon violence. Thus it was inconceivable to continue to describe the Arabs as anti-democratic and anti-modern in Western discourses.

This connection between neo-Orientalism and Western political engagement with the Arab world is an important repudiation of the claim that postcolonial studies is dying and has little to offer more than forty years since the publication of Said's book, *Orientalism*. Postcolonial scholarship is necessary because it is impossible to predict future international politics, which according to Said, will continue to produce, mould and shape new forms of Orientalism. Fukuyama was proven mistaken when he argued that the end of history—i.e., 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government—' will be 'a very sad time' because it is a prospect of centuries of boredom due to lack of ideological struggle for recognition and risking one's life for 'abstract goals' (1, 17–18). The Arab Spring demonstrated that turbulent times of political engagement and lack of engagement continue to define the relationship between the West and the rest of the world, specifically in the Arab region. Indeed, the Arab revolutions did not arise out of ideological boredom, and Bouazizi's selfless sacrifice, and those of many other Arab revolutionaries, were not made for 'abstract goals.'

The findings of this study also demonstrate another contentious issue regarding the urgency of postcolonial scholarship in today's world; namely, that postcolonialism still has work to do in order to properly understand Islam. As Young suggested, although subjects pertaining to Islamic religion and Islamic culture had been a staple in Western intellectual debates, Western intelligentsia had often misread Islamic faith and society ("PR" 29, 30). My discussion in Chapter Three demonstrates a recent example of this sort of misconception which occurred when politicians, academics and literary authors interpret the Arab Spring revolutions using

Western political vocabulary, in particular the argument that the revolutionary Arabs were seeking to implement representational democracies based on European and American models. As I argued, this assumption is not supported by evidence, which suggests that democracy is not a value to be achieved in Islam and, consequently, the Arab Spring was not a democratisation movement. This misconception gives more urgency to Young's call for postcolonialism to address the issue of Islam more adequately and validates his argument that the postcolonial remains—postcolonialism is needed to understand Islam.

The focused nature of the doctoral investigation that I conduct in this study, however, inevitably leaves much to be said regarding the Arab Spring Anglophone literary narratives. Despite the nascent and limited nature of this literature, it is a contemporary artistic expression of a crucial period of Arab history that is of interest to postcolonial and literary scholarship. Most importantly, there is the need to address the continually evolving use of social media in our world today and the overlap between non-electronic forms of artistic expression, such as printed texts represented by the novel, on the one hand, and the visual and auditory feeds in Twitter, YouTube and similar platforms, on the other. These forms of expression are hard to reconcile given that they are incredibly different in terms of production, medium, presentation, audience, tone and influence. Social media feeds are multimedia-oriented, immediate, short, interactive and typically informative while literary texts are almost the opposite: retrospective, often introspective, lengthy and artistic.

Simultaneously, the varied forms of social media and multimedia that flourished during the uprisings appear frequently in the literary works that I scrutinise in this thesis, which poses the question regarding the possible implications of this inclusion for the novel as a genre and other textual modes of representation, e.g., the memoir. For example, Thirlwell's novelette, *Kapow!,* constantly refers to various types of visual expression, including the humorous reference to 'miniature movies,' which are short clips filmed by the revolutionaries of their protests and posted on social media (*K* 5, 72). Thirlwell's text is also preoccupied with film as a mode of self-expression that is employed in the text in a variety of ways, including as a measure to the level of freedom in a country (for example, when censorship of films is noted by the narrator after the Egyptian military has come to power in Egypt), as a means to report the revolution (when the narrator mentions that a film is made on the Egyptian revolution) and as an influence on the novel (when Nigora is compared to the heroine of the 1940 film, *The Philadelphia Story,* who has to decide between several men for whom she has feelings) (*K* 50, 52, 55; Wakeman).

In this and other texts in this literature, such as Hamilton's, Haddad's and El Rashidi's, 'film' occasionally refers to short clips on social media and alludes to the availability of film (including classics from the 1940s) via social media and online platforms, for instance, YouTube (Hamilton, *CA* 80, 106, 276; El Rashidi, *C* 80, 83, 87, 89, 91, 94–95). In these novels, film appeals to consumer consumption and, consequently, vies with the novel in terms of accessibility and marketability. In a similar fashion to Thirlwell's text, Hamilton's and El Rashidi's novels depict film as a possible form of self-expression available to the Arab revolutionaries to deliver their uprising to the outside world (Hamilton, *CA* 80, 276; El Rashidi, *C* 94–95). Thus the novel's authority to reflect the gravity of the people's uprisings in this age of immediate and globalised cross-cultural mass communication is questioned by these authors.

This has further implications for postcolonial theory; specifically, in regard to incorporating these new technologies as outlets of discourse and representation in its investigation. Postcolonial theorists can also emulate Said in this regard. He identified a similar problem in the 1980s when he wrote his book, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World* (1981). Said's main concern, which is captured in the title, was that representation of Islam had been transferred from scholars of the Orient (that is Orientalists) to mere experts, which is a problem that is compounded by the change of the medium of delivery from text to television—a medium that broadcasts the message to tremendously large, unprofessional lay audiences. He writes, 'Instead of scholarship, we often find only journalists making extravagant statements, which are instantly picked up and further dramatised by the media' (*CIH* 16; Makdisi 179). This results in a 'coverage' of Islam that also serves to conceal it. Said uses the example of the concept of 'fundamentalism' in order to reveal how the experts have distorted its connotation and its original association with Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism. There was a deliberate creation of a link between Islam and fundamentalism so that the two became essentially one thing. Consequently, with the increasing spread of social media in recent years, postcolonial investigation is required to address not only the change of medium from text and television to smart devices but also that representation in such feeds originates from individuals, rather than Orientalists or even experts, who take it upon themselves to deliver Islam to global audiences. I am hoping that future researchers will find post-Arab Spring literature useful in the discussions regarding these contentious issues and that more research is conducted in this nascent field of literary study.

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